

[Long]: Settipani on Baldwin on the Commagenian DFA link

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Chris Bennett

unread,

Aug 18, 1998, 3:00:00 AM



to

Background –

Anyone on this group who has looked at all seriously at the possibility of there being traceable descents from antiquity (DFA) is aware of Christian Settipani's book "Nos ancetres de l'antiquite" [abbreviated by him as LGA.]. A couple of years ago, as part of a discussion on another proposed DFA, Stewart Baldwin published a critique of some aspects of this work (available in the archives on DejaNews or RootWeb under the title: "Comments on 'Iberian route' DFA line" dated 8 June 1996). In particular, Stewart attacked his proposals to find an Arsacid descent from the Seleucids via the Commagenian kings. As I was in contact with M Settipani at the time about other matters, I forwarded this to him for his interest. He has recently sent me a copy of the most recent addenda and corrigenda to his works, which includes an extensive discussion of the points raised by Stewart on the Commagenian link. With M Settipani's permission I am posting a translation of this discussion. I should note that this response was written two years ago. He tells me that he regards it as perhaps a little heated, and that if he wrote it today it would be a little

less personal. Also, while my translation has been approved by him, my French is certainly imperfect, and I apologise in advance both to him and to the group for any errors that exist.

Chris Bennett

It is appropriate to comment here at greater length on the very interesting criticisms recently raised by Baldwin (1996) on genealogical ascendancies to antiquity in general, more particularly that proposed by Regula (1995) but also to our own work. As far as the "Iberian" route is concerned, we can only agree with the reservations he expresses. We have already written [LGA I, p73 n1] that the genealogy of the Iberian kings according to the Georgian chronicles [now readily accessible in the translation of R W Thomson, 1996] is unacceptable. Toumanoff, the champion of their historicity, has of course explained each of the discrepancies between their data and the data provided by other sources, the greater part of which are contemporary, but it seems to us that the only reasonable attitude to take consists of removing the Georgian data before the end of the 8th century. We should return rather to the study of Marquart (1903, pp391-465, summary pp 431-3) augmented by new epigraphic data such as that made most recently Braund (1994) – see also Martin-Hisard, 1996 (a). A DFA route through the Iberian kings thus seems quite hazardous, the filiation of the dynasty being ultimately incomplete and their links with the Arsacids or the Artaxiads, while probable, obscure

As to ourselves, M Baldwin essentially focusses on our generations 35 to 38. We argue there that Vonones II, king of Media Atropatene, then of Parthia was linked through his anonymous father, possibly a "Darius", to a marriage between the Median king Artavasdes and the daughter of Antiochus I, king of Commagene. Our basis for this is essentially the evidence of Strabo, who wrote, c18-19AD, that the kings of Media Atropatene, descendants of Atropates, reigned again after being successively linked in marriage to the Armenians, the Syrians, and more recently to the Parthians. M Baldwin admits that Vonones II and Artabanus II must have been brothers, although this is, as we noted, unproven. He also admits that of the three Atropatenian marriages cited by Strabo, the first concerns the union of Mithridates with the daughter of Tigranes II of Armenia, and the third that of the (unknown) father of Artabanos II and Vonones II with a Parthian princess. On the other hand, he underscores that the whole filiation would break down if any of the following were true:

- a) That the second marriage concerns an Atropatenian princess and not a prince
- b) That the "Syria" of which Strabo speaks is not Commagene
- c) That, even if we were correct on the above points, Antiochos was not the father of the princess
- d) Or if the prince were the son of a king other than Artavasdes
- e) Or if the father of Vonones II, be he prince or Median king, was not an issue of this union.

In truth, we will not seek here to deny the validity of the objections he has raised. Rather to the contrary, we willingly recognise that they are well-founded. None of these points are proven, and it suffices for any one of them to be in error for the whole linkage to break down. Yet this does not mean that we were wrong to pursue this path, nor is this absence of proof necessarily synonymous with a manifest error.

First, it is appropriate to review the evidence of Strabo, which is at the heart of the problem. If he had simply recounted that in the course of their history the dynasty of Media had concluded marital alliances with the dynasties of Armenia, Syria and Parthia, we could legitimately doubt the exactitude which we have allowed ourselves to draw from him. But this is not exactly so. Here is what this author wrote in 18/9 AD:

"Having been proclaimed king, Atropates organised Media as an independent state, and the dynasty descended from him maintains itself there in our own times, his successors having contracted marriages with the royal families of Armenia, Syria and, more recently, Parthia."

We must press further the exegesis of the Strabonian text. Strabo does not content himself to say that there had been marriages between the Median kings and their neighbours. He states this to explain the survival and longevity of the Median dynasty. If the Greek text does not explicitly note the point (the passage on the marriages is introduced by "further" [pros te]), the sequence of the two facts (survival of the dynasty and the glorious alliances that it has concluded) has certainly been understood by the majority of translators as indicating a cause-and-effect relationship. As a matter of fact:

He gives the marriages in chronological order, as is proved by the phrase "and more recently" for the last.

He means, and the context of the phrase shows it, since the marriages are precisely cited only to this sole end, that they played a role in the maintenance of the dynasty. From this one can legitimately suspect that these alliances concern the unions of Median kings with foreign princesses and not the reverse. Clearly, only in this sense could the Median dynasty have found a motive to pride itself on the marriages, and not in the fact of having furnished a Median princess to the harem of the Armenian, Syrian or Parthian kings. Further, one can suspect that the unions were fertile, since otherwise their political importance would be singularly reduced, and their mention would have much less justification.

[Footnote: On this obvious point, we may note that A Tardieu has translated (interpreted in fact) the passage in question thusly (vol II Paris 1894, 449): "His dynasty has perpetuated itself to our times THANKS to a succession of FORTUNATE unions contracted by his descendants with PRINCESSES of Armenia and Syria, and more recently of Parthia." The words emphasised do not explicitly figure in the Greek text but have been logically inferred by the translator in his interpretation of the passage.]

These considerations are not simply hypotheses or personal preferences, but are really the obvious meaning of Strabo's text placed in context. The principal commentator on this passage, Sullivan (1990, pp295-300) notes moreover, concerning the Syrian union: "But Strabo probably had in mind the well-known ones with effects still visible when he wrote" (op cit n. 62, p. 453). The only "visible" effect of a matrimonial alliance several decades later consists of the descendants who issued from it and/or any territorial or political gain which resulted from it. And indeed two of the three unions are identifiable, the first and the last.

So, what have we established? That they conform to the schema that we have deduced, in their chronological order, in the fact that they indeed consist of marriages between foreign princesses and Median kings, and finally in the fact that the following Median kings were their issue. This being said, we should note that, most often, diplomatic marital alliances were exchanges, and that it is therefore probable that, in the same fashion, Median princesses were given to Armenian, Syrian or Parthian kings. Moreover, we actually know of a (supposed) marriage between a king of Commagene and a Median princess. But if this marriage supports our identification of Commagene as actually being Syria, of which there is elsewhere a question, we do not believe it is the marriage mentioned in Strabo. Thus, while it remains possible that our precision is illusory,

even "ridiculous" as M Baldwin assesses it (p 10), we frankly do not believe so, and, indeed without being assured, it appears to us, to the contrary, that our position has a certain solidity.

Let us reply now to each of the points raised by M Baldwin's analysis:

a) We come to reply to the first point by noting that, in context, it is logical, and in fact extremely probable, that the unions mentioned by Strabo concern Atropatenian princes marrying foreign princesses, which is actually verifiable in two of the cases.

b) We know precisely what Strabo meant by "Syria" since he defines it elsewhere. It consists of Commagene, Seleucid Syria, Coile-Syria and Emesa. Here again our choice does not depend on chance or an arbitrary decision to choose the solution which favours us (of which there are two of the four). Here again, Strabo's context serves as a guide. This Syrian alliance was concluded between the Armenian and Parthian alliances, between 95 and 15 BC, and more likely between 70 and 30 BC (see the following point). And it was politically important and beneficial to Media. This allows us to discard Coile-Syria, which is excluded since it did not have a hereditary dynasty. The same applies to Emesa, which some have sometimes considered a possibility. But it is only a generation later that the semitic dynasty of Emesa, of recent origin, began to ally itself to neighbouring dynasties. Around 40BC, the latest date for the marriage, their dynasty was not yet firmly established, and Strabo (XVI,2,10) still only knew their princes as phylarchs, and did not always give them a royal title. Their kingdom was still in the process of formation (Cf R Sullivan, 1990, p199-200). And, similarly for the Seleucids, whose dynasty was certainly most prestigious, but who were then politically non-existent and about to disappear completely. A diplomatic marriage with the Seleucids is very unlikely after 90, and almost certainly excluded after 65. Only Commagene remains. And it is indeed with a king of Commagene that the Median princess Iotape is joined at this moment.

c) The Armenian marriage concerns Mithridates of Media (...67 to before 65) who had married a daughter of Tigranes II (95-56). The union is attested in 67, but we don't know when it took place. All the same, the name of the Median king Artavasdes (...56-31) allows us to suppose that he was issue from it, since the name Artavasdes seems characteristic of the Armenian dynasty and the descendants of Artvazdes inherited the throne of Armenia [Pace M Schottky, 1989, p73, one cannot reasonably assimilate "Artabazanes" with "Artavasdes"]. Artavasdes of Media, already king in 56, must be born towards 75. As we know that his father was called Ariobarzanes, it is the

latter who must have been born to king Mithridates and the Armenian princess, thus towards 95 [we will correct therefore the dates of birth given in our table (p100) for Tigranes II (c130), his daughter (c110) and his son-in-law Mithridates of Media (c120)]. As to the Parthian marriage, if it indeed concerns the parents of Artabanos II and Vonones II, it occurred around 15BC, the likely birthdate of Artabanos considering his tumultuous career. Thus the second marriage is situated between these two dates. Two or three kings of Media Atropatene are known in this interval: Darius (after 67-65), [Ariobarzanes I (65-before 56)], Artavasdes (...56-31). Whichever of these kings married a Commagenian princess, she was probably a daughter of the king of Commagene who reigned throughout this period --Antiochos I (70-36).

d) We have supposed that of these three kings it was Artavasdes who must have been the spouse of the Syrian princess. If it were in fact his father Ariobarzanes. This would change none of our conclusions. But it is true that it could also have been Darius, probable uncle of Artavasdes, who has no known posterity. We recognise that we don't know enough to be affirmative, and that the ensemble is weakened at this point. But the reign of Darius was very short, less than two years, and perhaps only a few months. He did not leave any known posterity. The likelihood that it was his marriage which was one of the glories of the dynasty seems extremely remote. It is also true that there remains the possibility that the king concerned was the successor of Artavasdes, i.e. Ariobarzanes II (20-8 BC). But what makes this possibility very unlikely is the fact that the third marriage seems to have been quite distant in time from the preceding ones. Strabo says that the Medians kings formed unions with the Armenian, the Syrian, and MORE RECENTLY ("meta tauta") the Parthian kings. It does not seem therefore that the third union could be contemporary, or very close to, the second.

e) That being said, obviously nothing proves that the Median prince (or king), father of Artabanos and Vonones, was issue of the union concluded between one of his predecessors and the Syrian princess. We think so, not because it suits us, but because it is the best way to give full meaning to Strabo's phrase if the contemporary Median kings of whom he speaks were indeed issue of the three unions which he enumerates in connection with them. And again, it is actually verifiable for two of the three marriages which encourages us to accept the same principle for the third.

In this connection, M Baldwin reproaches us for having invented the [Darius] who we give as father of Artabanos II and Vonones II. It is absolutely correct that this personage is hypothetical and that his name could have been anything else, or, better, that he was simply king Ariobarzanes II. It seems to us more prudent not to retain an identification in our table in order to show clearly that it is not necessary. Perhaps we were finally in error and at least we should leave this generation anonymous rather than to dress it up with the name [Darius].

In summary, the data which we deduced from Strabo's text goes well beyond what M Baldwin considers as an arbitrary and preferential choice on our part, on the one hand because we studied this passage based on the text itself, and not in translation, and on the other hand because we have fully considered the context of the citation and the aims of the author.

We come now to the possibility proposed by M Baldwin as an alternative to ours. It is certainly very interesting. Indeed we have already researched a similar route through the Mithridatids, without however adopting this solution, which is nevertheless one of the first which came to mind. The reason is simple, and is noted by M Baldwin himself: we do not know if the daughter of Tigranes II who married Mithridates of Parthia was herself issue of the Mithridatid wife of Tigranes. Now, as M Baldwin always reminds us, multiple marriages were the rule. To decide, then, in the absence of any indicator, that a given child was born to a given mother is totally arbitrary, and risks giving rise to the following reflections: "It is rather disturbing that among all of the possible ways ... the one is chosen which gives the desired conclusion. It is not a proper use of evidence to take the most desirable possibility amongst the numerous alternatives..." Not having found any argument in favour of this hypothesis, it is wiser to abstain from it. Even wiser when one considers the following calculation: Tigranes married the daughter of Mithridates in 89 or 93 (Sullivan, 1990, p346 n. 2). A daughter born of this union would thus see light of day at best in 92, and rather in 88. If this daughter was the link between the Armenian kings and the Atropatid dynasty, then Artavdes I of Media descends from it and can only be her grandson. But Artavasdes was already king in 56 and his first children must have been born around 45/40 or later. It is hardly likely, in consequence, that Artavasdes was descended from the daughter of Mithridates of Pontus. On the other hand, the occurrence of the names of Mithridates and Ariobarzanes among the Atropatids could be an indication that one of their ancestors was a princess of Pontus. Strabo may not have mentioned this alliance because

it was too distant, or because he did not know of it. On yet another tack, suppose that Vonones I of Parthia inherited Armenia because he was issue of a marriage between his father and Cleopatra, and that the latter was a descendant (granddaughter?) of Tigranes II of Armenia and Cleopatra of Pontus. It remains to know whether Vonones II also descended (through his mother) of this marriage between Phraates IV and Cleopatra. Perhaps the phrase of Tacitus, noted by M Baldwin and which escaped us, provides a pointer in this direction?

Finally, a more personal and more general note:

It is surely difficult to remain absolutely impartial, no science being objective, and certainly not History, but I wish to reassure M Baldwin of my intent to be so as far as possible. I know nothing of my ancestors beyond those who I have personally known, and it is therefore quite unimportant to me, in the last analysis, whether a DFA is proven or not. The only pleasure which I have found in it is that of research, and if I am not sparing of hypotheses, I try at least to justify them all and to avoid stacking them up without control. Now, I am certainly mistaken in different places. I am trying to maintain a list of them in these addenda. But, really, I do not believe that it is the generations incriminated here which are the weakest. They remain hypothetical, hence uncertain, but it seems to me with a good degree of probability. In truth, the two weakest points in my book lie elsewhere. In the first place, the ascendance towards Egypt. I ceased to believe in this myself a long time ago, the solution proposed here being possible, surely, but in fact quite improbable. It would be better to renounce it. Other ways may be possible and they should be reviewed. The second arguable point concerns the ascendance of Leo VI of Byzantium. I will return to this later (point 24 of the addenda). Here let us simply say that I remain persuaded that, logically, as a result of our data, he considered himself to be certainly the son of Michael III and therefore made tell of it. And the Mamikonian ascendance of the latter seems to me to be quite well established. All the same, logic is not always a good argument in genealogy, above all if one admits, which is likely, that the three imperial lovers could have come together in the same bed. Chance would then play quite an important role. I judge that, even in this case, the conviction of the protagonists was based on some precise detail, such as a physical or other resemblance. But as I know nothing for sure, it would be better to consider that the paternity of Basil is at least equally likely. And on Basil's side things are less clear. I no longer believe at all today in the Mamikonian or Bagratid ascendance of Basil based on the presence of the names Hmayek or

Bagrat in his family, as was said by Adontz or the late prince Toumanoff. This argument alone is too weak. There is on the other hand a real possibility of a link with Leo V, and whatever Signes Codoner may say, the latter is certainly linked to the Artsruni. All the same, I admit that the link between Basil and Leo V is hypothetical and there is a weakness there that one should not hide. I therefore remind M Baldwin that we could avoid this reef and recover a DFA which does not present this inconvenience, but which nevertheless concerns quite a large portion of western nobility, as noted by Wagner, through the Armenian ancestry of the house of Savoy, let alone some other paths [see Settipani, 1992, 37-8 and 41-3]

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Don Stone

unread,

Aug 19, 1998, 3:00:00 AM



to

Many thanks to Chris Bennett for supplying a translation of a stimulating discussion by Christian Settipani on the reasoning behind his proposed Commagenian DFA link, which I find rather persuasive. Included were the following comments on the interpretation of Strabo's statement that the Median dynasty "contracted marriages with the royal families of Armenia, Syria and, more recently, Parthia":
<< c) The Armenian marriage concerns Mithridates of Media (♦to

before 65) who had married a daughter of Tigranes II (95-56). The union is attested in 67, but we don't know when it took place. All the same,

the name of the Median king Artavasdes (♦31) allows us to suppose

that he was issue from it, since the name Artavasdes seems characteristic of the Armenian dynasty and the descendants of Artvazdes inherited the throne of Armenia [Pace M Schottky, 1989, p73, one cannot reasonably assimilate "Artabazanes" with "Artavasdes"]. Artavasdes of Media, already king in 56, must be born towards 75. As we know that his father was called Ariobarzanes, it is the latter who must have been born to king Mithridates and the Armenian princess, thus towards 95 [we will correct therefore the dates of birth given in our table (p100) for Tigranes II (c130), his daughter (c110) and his son-in-law Mithridates of Media (c120)]. As to the Parthian marriage, if it indeed concerns the parents of Artabanos II and Vonones II, it occurred around 15BC, the

likely birthdate of Artabanos considering his tumultuous career. Thus the second marriage is situated between these two dates. Two or three kings of Media Atropatene are known in this interval: Darius (after 67-65), [Ariobarzanes I (65-before 56)], Artavasdes (c. 31). Whichever

of these kings married a Commagenian princess, she was probably a daughter of the king of Commagene who reigned throughout this period

--Antiochos I (70-36). >>

To summarize, Settipani proposes the following 5-generation pedigree:

1. Mithridates, King of Media Atropatene (c. to before 65), who married an Armenian princess.
2. Ariobarzanes I, King of Media Atropatene (65-before 56).
3. Artavasdes I, King of Media Atropatene (c. 31), who may have married a "Syrian" princess of Commagene.
4. An Atropatenian prince, possibly named Darius, who married an Arsacid princess of Parthia.
5. Vonones II, King of Media Atropatene (AD 11-51), King of Parthia (51).

Settipani later says:

<< We have supposed that of these three kings it was Artavasdes who must have been the spouse of the Syrian princess. If it were in fact his father Ariobarzanes. This would change none of our conclusions. >>

I think that the father Ariobarzanes is somewhat more likely than the son Artavasdes as the spouse of the Syrian princess, given Strabo's wording "Armenia, Syria and, more recently, Parthia". Then the marriage alliances would be with

Armenia (Gen. 1), Syria (Gen. 2) and more recently Parthia (Gen. 4), rather than with

Armenia (Gen. 1), Syria (Gen. 3) and more recently Parthia (Gen. 4).

Settipani himself later says << the third [i.e., Parthian] marriage

seems to have been quite distant in time from the preceding ones. >>

If the Syrian marriage is to Ariobarzanes I in Gen. 2, it seems somewhat more likely that he married a sister rather than a daughter of Antiochus I of Commagene; however, the Seleucid descent through Antiochus's mother Laodice is presumably valid in either case.

Did Settipani have any more comments on Stewart Baldwin's suggestion that Gen. 4 above might actually be not an unknown Atropatenian prince but instead Ariobarzanes II, the King of Media Atropatene and of Armenia who died in AD 4? In a posting to soc.genealogy.medieval on 23 June 1996 Stewart Baldwin offered the hypothesis that Vonones II could be the son of this Ariobarzanes, supplying the following quote concerning Vonones' grandson Vologaeses from the Annals of Tacitus (XII, 50): "For Vologaeses, convinced that the chance was come for an attack on Armenia, once the property of his ancestors, now usurped by a foreign monarch in virtue of a crime, collected a force, and prepared to settle his brother Tiridates on the throne; so that no branch of the family should lack its kingdom." The phrase "once the property of his ancestors" could be interpreted in different ways, said Baldwin, one of them being a claim of descent from the Atropatenian kings who had briefly ruled Armenia. Of these, only Ariobarzanes (d. AD 4) is chronologically possible as a

father of Artabanos II and Vonones II.

However, this Ariobarzanes is known to have had two sons who had associations with Rome: Artavasdes II, King of Media Atropatene and of Armenia (who had a son C. Jul. Artavasdes), and C. Jul. Ariobarzanes (Sullivan 1990, Stemma 9). Thus the hypothesis that Ariobarzanes is also the father of the Parthian kings Artabanos II and Vonones II requires his family to be split between Rome and Parthia in a way that seems somewhat improbable.

-- Don Stone



Chris Bennett

unread,

Aug 20, 1998, 3:00:00 AM



□

□

to

Don Stone <DonS...@plantagenet.com> wrote in article
<35DAECA3...@plantagenet.com>...
<snip>

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> more likely that he married a sister rather than a daughter of Antiochus
> I of Commagene; however, the Seleucid descent through Antiochus's mother
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>

If it were a sister, then Settipani's objection to Baldwin's counter-proposal applies: in a polygamous society we have no a priori reason to favour one mother over another, in the absence of other indicators. So you would have the Commagenian link [and hence a poorly-documented Achaemenid one] but not necessarily the Seleucid link.

While chronologically a sister certainly becomes a possibility with Ariobarzanes, these marriage exchanges tended to be of daughters unless none were available. Also, we have no actual evidence that Ariobarzanes became king -- he may have predeceased Mithridates for all we know --

though I personally think its likely he did become king, since that makes the accession of Artavasdes easier to explain -- otherwise, why not a brother of Ariobarzanes?

Granting the Commagenian hypothesis, I tend to side with Settiani. But I completely agree that its a judgement call.

- > Did Settiani have any more comments on Stewart Baldwin's suggestion
- > that Gen. 4 above might actually be not an unknown Atropatenian prince
- > but instead Ariobarzanes II, the King of Media Atropatene and of Armenia
- > who died in AD 4?

No, I translated the whole addendum note.

<snip>

- > However, this Ariobarzanes is known to have had two sons who had
- > associations with Rome: Artavasdes II, King of Media Atropatene and of
- > Armenia (who had a son C. Jul. Artavasdes), and C. Jul. Ariobarzanes
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- > also the father of the Parthian kings Artabanos II and Vonones II
- > requires his family to be split between Rome and Parthia in a way that
- > seems somewhat improbable.
- >

Perhaps not. The kings who immediately preceded Artabanos were quite philoroman -- Phraates V even married an Italian. This must also have influenced their court. The accession of Artabanos represent an antiroman -- today we would say nationalistic -- reaction. That this split should have reached into Artabanos' own family is perfectly credible. OTOH one must then ask why the Romans did not use C Iul Artavasdes or C Iul Ariobarzanes against their putative brother [or perhaps they did, unsuccessfully, so we don't know about it.]

I think the strongest argument against Ariobarzanes II being the father of Artabanos and Vonones is the onomastic one. C Iul Artavasdes and C Iul Ariobarzanes clearly bear Atropatid royal names; Artabanos and Vonones do not, but rather Arsacid names. This certainly suggests that they had different mothers; perhaps also it suggests they had different fathers. Bringing us back to [Darius].

Chris



Don Stone

unread,

Aug 20, 1998, 3:00:00 AM



to

Chris Bennett wrote:

> Don Stone <DonS...@plantagenet.com> wrote:

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> While chronologically a sister certainly becomes a possibility with
> Ariobarzanes, these marriage exchanges tended to be of daughters unless
> none were available.

Suppose Ariobarzanes I is the one who married the Syrian princess and that his bride is the sister of Antiochus I of Commagene. As far as I can see, this could very well involve a daughter rather than a sister of the reigning Commagenean monarch; the marriage probably took place some time around 75 to 70 BC, and Antiochus's father Mithradates I Kallinikos was king from ca. 100 to ca. 70.

In the following chart (which should be viewed with a mono-spaced font), I am using the corrected estimated dates just supplied by Settipani. (Incidentally, these corrected dates go onto his chart on p. 94, not p.

100, at least of the copy that I have.)

Ariobarzanes, _____, sister of Antiochus I, King of
b. say 95, d. 65/56 = Commagene from 70 to 36, he born say 100.

|

|

Artavazdes, King of = _____

Media, b. say 75, |

d. 20BC |

|

[Darius?], b. say 35BC, married a Parthian princess

Comments:

This configuration is plausible chronologically.

It implements Strabo's "in later times."

Ariobarzanes's marriage may well have taken place ca. 75-70, before Antiochus became king, in which case the bride would have been the daughter of the reigning monarch, Mithradates. There is a possible dau. of Mithradates and Laodice Thea Philadelphos named Philadelphie, mentioned in an inscription found at Nemrud Dagh (see Sullivan's Stemma 5 and the ref. cited there -- IGLSyr 37).

-- Don Stone



cben...@adnc.com

unread,

Aug 21, 1998, 3:00:00 AM

☐

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☐

to

In article <35DDo3A1...@plantagenet.com>,
DonS...@plantagenet.com (Don Stone) wrote:
<snip>

>
 > Suppose Ariobarzanes I is the one who married the Syrian princess and
 > that his bride is the sister of Antiochus I of Commagene. As far as I
 > can see, this could very well involve a daughter rather than a sister of
 > the reigning Commagenean monarch; the marriage probably took place some
 > time around 75 to 70 BC, and Antiochus's father Mithradates I Kallinikos
 > was king from ca. 100 to ca. 70.

The difficulty with this is that Mithridates of Media (who died in 67) was succeeded not by Ariobarzanes but by Darius. In the timeframe you propose, Darius was almost certainly recognised as the heir [by Occam], and therefore a dynastic marriage in this period to a prince would concern him, not his [brother]. Yet Darius is without known descendants. To get around this you must suppose that Ariobarzanes was the heir, or that he predeceased his father, and that Darius' reign was a temporarily successful usurpation -- possible, but without independent evidence.

By the same token, a dynastic marriage to Ariobarzanes is likely to have taken place after his accession [assuming that he did accede]. But, as Settipani points out, Artavasdes was king by 56, and his children must be born by c45/40. The chronology is possible, assuming a minority for Artavasdes till the early 40s, but very tight.

I agree that generationally Ariobarzanes is an attractive candidate, but from what little we know of the politics and the absolute chronology Artavasdes is the better fit, which in turn makes a daughter of Antiochos more likely than a sister for his wife. <snip>

CHris

-----== Posted via Deja News, The Leader in Internet Discussion ==-----
http://www.dejanews.com/rg_mkgrp.xp Create Your Own Free Member Forum



Don Stone

unread,
 Aug 22, 1998, 3:00:00 AM



□

to

cben...@adnc.com wrote:

>

> [snip]

> I agree that generationally Ariobarzanes is an attractive candidate, but
> from what little we know of the politics and the absolute chronology
> Artavasdes is the better fit, which in turn makes a daughter of Antiochos
> more likely than a sister for his wife.

Thanks, Chris. You have persuaded me that Settipani's original proposal is the most likely: Artavasdes of Media Atropatene marries a daughter of Antiochus I of Commagene.

I had been struggling to position the Commagene/Syria connection with Media Atropatene a generation earlier to reflect the phrase "in later times" in Strabo's Geography: "[Atropates's] successors have contracted marriages with the kings of the Armenians and Syrians, and, in later times, with the kings of the Parthians." So, now, I decided I'd better look at Strabo's original Greek for "in later times." The actual wording (using the Roman alphabet) is "meta tayta," which literally means "after these" and is often translated as "thereafter" or (when preceded by "and") as "and then." In this type of context "meta" is used to specify mere sequence or succession and is sometimes translated as "next after" or "next to." So Strabo's wording doesn't seem to me to necessarily imply a gap between the Syrian marriage and the Parthian one; if anything, it looks to me like the connotation might be that the Parthian marriage came in the next generation after the Syrian one, which is consistent with Settipani's construction. I have seen one discussion of this quotation which proposed that the purpose of "meta tayta" was to indicate that the marriage alliances were being given in chronological order from the earliest to the latest; in English we might say "most recently" to accomplish roughly the same result.

I am quite inexperienced in interpreting Greek, so I would welcome any insights from those with more background in this area.

-- Don Stone

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