



## STATEIRA

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**STATEIRA**, name attested for several royal women of the [Achaemenid](#) period.

1. **Stateira**, daughter of [Hydarnes](#), descended from one of the men who had put [Darius I](#) on the throne (DB 4.84-85: Vidarna), and sister of (*inter aliis*) Tissaphernes and Terituchmes (Ctesias, 53-55). She was married to the later [Artaxerxes II](#) (r. 405-359/8) before he became king. When Terituchmes seemed to be plotting revolt and had divorced [Darius II](#)'s (r. 424-405/4) daughter, Darius wanted to kill all the children of Hydarnes. Plutarch (*Art.* 2.1-2), following [Ctesias](#), paints a moving picture of the crown prince successfully imploring his mother Parysatis to spare Stateira's life. Tissaphernes, who had probably informed against his brother, was the only member of the family who was not executed. (An unnamed brother of Tissaphernes mentioned in 401 [Xen., *Anab.* 2.5.35] is probably fictitious.)

At some time when Stateira was queen, the king of [Egypt](#) (no name is given) sent her a beautiful slave girl as a gift (Athenaeus, 13.89, citing the historian Phylarchus). The incident seems to attest a diplomatic effort to avert a threatened Persian invasion to regain control of Egypt. (No attack was in fact launched until the 370s; Diod., 15.41-42; see Briant, pp. 652-55; for Artaxerxes' wars in this period, see also [CYPRUS in the Achaemenid Period](#).) Stateira, like Parysatis, is said to have had a great deal of influence over the king. She was also popular, since the king allowed her to sit in her carriage with the curtains open, so that anyone passing by could greet her (Plut., *Art.* 5.3).

A conflict between the two royal women developed over the revolt of



Artaxerxes' younger brother, **Cyrus**. He had been accused of planning rebellion at the king's coronation, and his mother, who preferred Cyrus to his brother, saved him from execution (Plut., *Art.* 3; cf. Xen., *Anab.* 1.1.3-4). When he then secretly prepared to launch a full-scale attack on his brother, the king was warned by Stateira's brother, Tissaphernes, and this gave him time to prepare the forces that ultimately defeated and killed Cyrus (Xen., *Anab.* 1.2.4-5; Plut., *Art.* 6.4). Stateira stoked suspicion against Parysatis and her followers. The conflict was intensified by differences over the treatment of the Greek commanders who had been captured, especially **Clearchus**, their leader. Parysatis wanted to save their lives, but Stateira, seeing that they would present a danger to the king, secured their execution, except for one, who had assisted Tissaphernes (Plut., *Art.* 18.3; Xen., *Anab.* 2.5-6; highly rhetorical).

Parysatis proceeded to eliminate some courtiers who had been particularly hostile to Cyrus and who were, no doubt, therefore followers of Stateira (Plut., *Art.* 14 ff.). She then decided she could eliminate Stateira herself and succeeded in having her poisoned at a banquet (Plut., *Art.* 19 reproduces Ctesias's fanciful details). Artaxerxes had the slave girl who had prepared the poison put to death, but Parysatis was merely allowed to withdraw to the western capital, **Babylon** (Plut., *Art.* 19.6). She was soon allowed to return (*ibid.*, 23.1) and resumed her influence.

There is no modern, full-scale biography of Stateira. The main ancient sources are the fragments of Ctesias's *Persica* (Jacoby, 688 F15), which are, essentially, well informed, since Ctesias was living at the Persian court at the time; but, like all of Ctesias's narrative, they are heavily embroidered. Plutarch's *Artaxerxes* is largely based on Ctesias's work. **Xenophon's** *Anabasis* adds one or two details.

2. **Stateira**, wife of Codomannus, probably before he was raised to the throne as **Darius III**. She was, at least officially, his sister (Arrian, *Anab.* 2.11.9), which could make her a daughter of Arsanes, who is named as father of Darius III and nephew of Artaxerxes II (Diod., 17.5.5; on the geneology, see Badian, 2000; Briant, 2002, pp. 772-73). (For the name, cf. Avestan <sup>2</sup>Aršan, Bartholomae, col. 204; Justi, pp. 29-30; Judeich, col. 1271; it is often regarded as a variant for the common Arsames, Old Persian **Aršāma**.) Similarly, Stateira's natural or adoptive mother could be **Sisigambis**.

Plutarch (*Alex.* 30.3) is the only source that mentions Stateira by name. She

was Darius's second wife and bore him a son, whom they named Ochus, after the king—[Artaxerxes \[III\]](#) Ochus—who had discovered and promoted Codomannus. Along with the rest of the royal family, Stateira had to accompany Darius when he marched out to meet [Alexander the Great](#) in 333 (Curt., 3.3.22), and, with the rest of the royal family, she was captured after the battle of Issus (Arr., *Anab.* 2.11.9; Plut., *Alex.* 21.1; Curt., 3.11.21 ff.) and was reassured by Alexander about the fate of Darius. (On all this, see on SISIGAMBIS). Like Sisigambis, she was treated with the honor and dignity becoming a queen. She was said to be the most beautiful woman in Asia, but Alexander, perhaps for that very reason, chose not to look at her. According to [Quintus Curtius Rufus](#) (4.10.24), he saw her only once, when he entered the royal women's tent in order to reassure them. Ptolemy and Aristobulus do not mention that visit (Arr., *Anab.* 2.12.6), and in a letter quoted by Plutarch (*Alex.* 22.3), Alexander writes that he never set eyes on Stateira. Whether or not the letter is authentic, the fact may be regarded as confirmed by the testimony of Arrian's two principal sources.

Stateira died in the spring or summer of 331, about the time of Darius's final peace offer to Alexander (Plut., *Alex.* 29.4-30.1; Justin, 11.12.6; Curt., 4.10-11). According to Plutarch, she died in childbirth; according to Justin, of a miscarriage. An escaped [eunuch](#) reached Darius and informed him of her death and of the royal burial she had been granted by Alexander; Darius, after initial doubt, is convinced that Alexander did not violate her and that the special privileges granted her had been due to Alexander's generosity. This, of course, cannot be reconciled with the manner of her death, as reported by Plutarch and Justin. Curtius (4.10.19), no doubt aware of this and convinced of Alexander's honorable nature, puts her death down to fatigue and depression, which is likely to be correct.

The accounts in the standard reference works (*Realencyclopädie* and *Der Neue Pauly*; *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* has no entry for her) fail to scrutinize the rise of Darius to power, which is clearly depicted in the sources (see Badian, 2000). H. Berve (II, no. 721, p. 363) accepts the accounts of her death connecting it with childbirth and is thus forced to postulate, against the sources, that it happened soon after the battle of Issus, after which she did not see her husband again. He refers to Arrian, *Anab.* 4.20, which is irrelevant to her death: at that point Stateira was alive, and the eunuch related that she was just as Darius had left her. Both this story and the story of a eunuch's report after her death and burial are clearly fiction tailored to lead up to Darius's



extravagant praise of Alexander. But Stateira's death is reported—by all the sources that mention it—in association with Darius's final peace offer, and that unanimous testimony must be accepted.

It follows that the reason Curtius gives for her death is likely to be correct. Diodorus (17.54), probably from the same source as Curtius, also puts Stateira's death at the time of Darius's last peace offer but gives no cause of death. The two sources connecting her death with childbirth may go back to a writer hostile to Alexander, giving an account implying “that Alexander had not taken as good care of her as was generally believed” (C. B. Welles in the Loeb Diodorus, VIII, pp. 275-77, n. 3)—an account which should be regarded as fiction based on gossip. J. Wiesehöfer follows Berve on the date of her death.

3. **Stateira**, daughter of Darius III, elder sister of **Drypetis**. Whether she was the daughter of Stateira (2) is not certain. She was born probably about 345 BCE; the two sisters are described as *adultae uirgines* (Curt., 3.11.25) in 331, and the younger must therefore have been at least 12 or 13 (cf. *parvulas ... filias*, in Justin, 11.12.7). Both were made to follow Darius, along with the rest of the royal family, when he marched out against Alexander (333), and, along with them, they were captured after Issus and well treated by Alexander. In Darius's new peace offer, in addition to the vast territorial and financial concessions it made, Alexander was invited either to marry Stateira or else, at his choice, either one of the daughters (Arr., *Anab.*, 2.25.1; Diod., 17.54.2; Curt., 4.11.5 [confused]; Plut., *Alex.* 29.7); but he refused everything short of submission. Before his moving against the **Uxii** and then farther east, the sisters, together with their brother Ochus and their grandmother Sisigambis, were left at **Susa** (Diod., 17.67.1; Curt., 5.2.17, with fanciful expansion).

At the great marriage ceremony at Susa after his return from India, Alexander married Stateira (Diod. 17.107.6; Curt. 10.3.12); on this point there is confusion with an earlier wife or lover called Barsine, in Arr. *Anab.* 7.4.4, which also mentions another marriage, with Parysatis, a daughter of Artaxerxes Ochus. Her sister Drypetis he gave to Hephaestion, in order to join him more closely to himself (Arr., Diod., loc. cit.). Left helpless after Alexander's death, the two sisters were killed by Roxane (Plut., *Alex.* 77.6), to whom Alexander's Achaemenid connection presented an obvious danger, with the assistance of Perdikkas, who could not leave two highly marriageable widows of royal Achaemenid stock free to become the wives of another of the Successors. Their death marks the end of the royal Achaemenid line.

The luxury and splendor at the Susa marriages are described in a memorable tableau of a major Persian celebration by [Athenaeus](#) (12.538b-539a), in a long extract from [Chares of Mitylene](#), who must have helped in organizing the ceremonies.

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