CHAPTER SEVEN

SAPPHO

1. The tradition

For some ancient authors Sappho was a beautiful poetess, “the Muse of Mytilene,” with bright eyes, smooth skin and “face both gay and grave.” For others she was a dark, unpleasant-looking, short, small and lustful woman, but nevertheless honoured for her wisdom and poetry.

According to tradition, she came from a well-off family, honoured and influential on Lesbos, which was forced to spend some time in exile on Sicily. Her mother’s name is reported to be Cleis; her father, who may have been of foreign origin, is provided with ten different names by tradition, Scamandronymus being the most frequently mentioned among them. Sappho had three brothers called Larichus, Erigyius (or Eurygius), and Charaxus. The latter had a long-lasting and somewhat ruinous relationship with a notorious courtesan called Rhodopis or Doricha, for which he was much reproached by his sister, and which may have led him to become a pirate in the end.

Sappho was reportedly married to Cercylas, an immensely rich businessman from Andros. They had a daughter who was named Cleis after her grandmother. Sappho had many female companions, some of them being her friends, some pupils and some lovers. She was also believed to have had relationships with many men. One of these, a particularly unhappy love-affair with young, handsome Phaon is reported to have led her, broken hearted, to leap to her death from a cliff of Leucas.

Ancient authors synchronized Sappho with the Egyptian pharaohs Mycerinus, Amasis and Psammetichus, the Lydian king Alyattes, the tyrant Pittacus of Lesbos, and with the poets Alcaeus, Anacreon, Archilochus, Stesichorus and Hipponax, placing her therefore in a time span between ca. 2500 BC and the second part of the sixth century BC. Her absolute dates in ancient sources pin her, however, clearly to the turn of the seventh and sixth century BC.
Biographical information in Sappho’s own and in other archaic poetry

Among Sappho’s extant fragments are some which are thought to contain autobiographical material, provided that the “I” in the poems refers to herself,—something which is impossible to prove or disprove.

She mentions her name in at least three fragments, spelling it with initial “psi”: Ψάπ/ΥϊitwΓ’ in fr.r. 1, and 94, and Ψάπ/ΥϊitwΓ’ in fr. 65. In most other ancient sources the name begins with “sigma.” G. Zuntz has explained this inconsistency in spelling by suggesting that Sappho used Ψ to denote a sound not exactly corresponding to Greek “sigma.” He proposes that Sappho’s name is of Asiatic origin, linked to god Ṣapôn, and “psi” in Ψαπ/ΥϊitwΓ’ stands for sibilant s which other Greek authors replaced by ordinary “sigma.”

In fr. 5.1–10 she talks about her brother (probably the one called Charaxus) and his “past mistakes”:³

sappho 

(Cypris and) Nereids, grant that my brother arrive here unharmed and that everything wishes in his heart be fulfilled, and grant too that he atone for all his past mistakes and be a joy to his friends and a bane to his enemies, and may no one ever again be a grief to us; grant that he may be willing to bring honour to his sister ...

According to a corrupt POxy 2506, Sappho seems to have written at least one more poem about her brothers.² She mentions (her) mother in one fragment, and a daughter Cleis in two fragments.³ In a corrupt fragment she (?) complains about (her) old age, and is confident that through her poetry she will be remembered forever.⁶

Other names found in Sappho’s published fragments are actually mostly emendations and suggestions made by modern commentators in very fragmentary papyri which could be read in different ways. In fragment 96, for example, ἄρι/-γνώτα cw has been read as a name Arignota and as an adjective “far-famed” or “infamous.”⁷ The commentators have taken the names from tradition, and this, in turn, has influenced the interpretation of the poems. However, the names possibly mentioned in Sappho’s extant poetry are Doricha the mistress of her brother; (Sappho’s companions) Anactoria, Atthis, Mnasidica, Gyrinno, Iria, Dica, Gongyla, perhaps also Abanthis, Mica, Arignota, Megara, Cydro; and (her rivals?) Andromeda, Gorgo, and Archeanassa (or Pleistodica).⁸

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² POxy 2506 fr. 48, col. iii.(f) 44–45: καταψω [ ] ἵπερ τὸν[ ] ἄδελ/[ ] ψῶν ε[ ] ιῳδημν[ ].

³ Mother in fr. 98(a): ... ὅτε’ α’ γάρ με γέννα[τ. In fr. 102 somebody’s “sweet mother” is mentioned. Daughter in frs. 98(b), 132. Fr. 150 is reported to have been written to the daughter.


⁷ PBerol 9722 fol. 5.5. Schubart & Wilamowitz (1907:16) read it as a name, Lobel and Page (1955), and Campbell (1982) as an adjective. Other extreme examples are Megara (?) in 96 (POxy 1787 fr. 7.22)], α[...]α (Grenfell & Hunt), which has been read as ]μεγαρα[νο[...]α (Lobel, followed by Voigt); Cydro in 19 (POxy 1231 fr. 2, line 11) where ]ταιξαυδ[ has been suggested to contain Κυδ[ν- (West); and Gorgo in 144 if κεκ/Γ;ικΒΓΘρημεν/Γ;ικΒΓΘυστ/Γ;ικΒΓΘς (cod.) is read as ἴμαλα δὴ’ κεκρησμενος ΤΟΡΓΟς (Toup). Also fr. 29 ]γτε ... γ.1 (POxy 2166(a)4B) as γτε ΓΟΡΓΟς (Lobel, followed by Campbell, Voigt), fr. 103 Voigt (PCair Mediol. 7 col. ii.9) ΤΟΡΓΟς[ and commentary in fr. 213.5 ]ηπ[...]φιοι συνεις[ (POxy 2292.5) as τ]ηπ[οι συνεις- (Lobel).

⁸ Doricha may be mentioned in fr. 15 (POxy 1231 fr. 1 col. 1.1–12 + fr. 3) Δωρ[φία τὸ δει[τρ]ο α[ν] ν[ο] πόθε[ν] ν[ο] ξ[ε] α[ν] θε (suppl. Hunt), and very tentatively perhaps also in 7 (POxy 2289 fr. 2) Δωρ[φία[ας[......[ (Lobel-Page [L-P]).

Anactoria: 16 (POxy 1231 fr. 1 col. L.27–32) Άνακττοραί[ας (Hunt).

Atthis: 131 (= 130 Voigt) (in Heph. Ench. 7.7) ΑΤΘΗ; 96 (PBerol 9722 fol. 5.16) "ΑΤΘΗ- ΔΟΣ, and 90 Voigt (POxy 2293) "ΑΤΘΗ-ΔΟΣ. The MS reading “ατε” in fr. 49 is emended as

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In a very damaged section of fr. 98(b) Sappho mentions Mytilene (which was traditionally held as her home town), but the context of the poem is not clear. She also refers to the exile of the Cleanactidae in this fragment. Another important family in Lesbos, the house of Penthilus, is mentioned in fr. 71.

There are also some references to Sappho(?) in the works ascribed to other poets of the Archaic period. First, she is mentioned in a verse:

ιὸπλοιο’ ἀγνα μελλιχωμείδε Σάπφοι.

Violet-haired, holy, sweetly-smiling Sappho.

Hephaestio, whose Enchiridion is the source for the verse, does not mention its author. Modern commentators ascribe the fragment to Alcaeus. 10


Then there are two “dialogues”, first between Alcaeus and Sappho, and the other between Anacreon and Sappho. Alcaeus is reported to have said:

\[\text{θέλω τι τ' εἴπην, ἄλλο με κωλύει αἴδως ...}\]

\[I \text{ wish to say something to you, but shame prevents me ...}\]

and Sappho replied:

\[\text{αἰδ' ἔσλων ἴμερ καὶ μὴ τί τ' εἴπην γλῶσσ' ἐκύκακα κάκων, αἴδως ἄκεν σε οὐκ ἴχεν ὀππατ', ἀλλ' ἔλεγες ἄρει τῷ δικαίῳ.}\]

\[But if you had a desire for what is honourable or good, and your tongue were not stirring up something evil to say, shame would not cover your eyes, but you would state your claim.}\]

The Peripatetic author Chamaeleon of Heraclea transmits the opinion of “some” that Anacreon had addressed a poem about a Lesbian girl to Sappho:

\[\text{σὺ εἶτω ἐν καλλωνυσίμης Ἐφώς νήν ποικιλουσαμβάλω συμβαίζειν προκαλεῖται ἢ δ', ἐστίν γὰρ ἵπτ' εὐκτίτου Λέσβου, τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν κάμην, λευκὴ γάρ, καταμέμϕεται, πρὸς δ' ἄλλην τινά ἀνάφη.}\]

\[Once again golden-haired Love strikes me with his purple ball and summons me to play with the girl in the fancy sandals; but she—she comes from Lesbos with its fine cities—finds fault with my hair because it is white, and gapes after another—girl.}\]

and the poetess had allegedly replied with the lines:

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12 Anacr. 358 PMG.

κεῖνον, ὦ χρυσόθρονε Maύδα, ἔνιοπες
τήμον, ἐκ τῶν καλλιγνάιανος ἐσθλάς
Τύμος χώρας ὑπ' ἄειδε τεμπνός
πρεσβυὸς ἐγαυός.14

You uttered that hymn, oh golden-throned Muse, which from the fine land of fair women the glorious old Teian man delightfully sang.15

2. Ancient portraits and appearance of Sappho

The earliest extant portrait of Sappho is on a hydria from late sixth-century BC: a smiling woman named ΦΣΑΘ/Ω, clad in chiton and himation, is playing the barbitos.16 From the Brygos Painter of Athens (ca. 480–470 BC) we have a stunning painting of Alcaeus and Sappho on a psykter found in Agrigentum. The poets are both standing, Alcaeus (inscribed Ἀλκαῖος) is wearing chiton and headband and is playing a barbitos using a plectrum. Sappho (inscribed Σαπφώ), wearing chiton and himation, and a fillet in her long hair, holding a barbitos in one hand and plectrum in the other hand, is looking at him with somewhat surprised expression.17 The fact that she is represented here together with Alcaeus implies that the Athenian painter believed them to be contemporaries, fellow-citizens, or connected in some other way.

On another vase whose painting recalls, according to Beazley, the “Hector Painter” (440–430 BC), a woman, inscribed Σαπφώ, is sitting on a chair and reading a scroll. Three young women (friends? The Muses?), standing around her are looking at her. One of them (right of Sappho) is holding a lyre.18

On a large mosaic of Roman period found in Sparta, Sappho (inscribed as ΣΑΦΩ) is depicted in front view, wearing chiton, himation and headband,19 and Pollux (2nd c. AD) reports Mytilenean coins on which Sappho’s portrait was engraved and indeed, coins of the first, second and third century AD, on which the poetess is depicted, sometimes holding

14 Adesp. 953 PMG.
15 Chamael. fr. 26 Wehrli, ap. Athen. 13.599c. Campbell's translation. The authorship of Sappho's poem to Anacreon was denied by Athenaeus (13.599d), and the fragment is published as adespoton in 953 PMG.
16 Hydria in Goluchow, Poland. See Richter 1965:171, fig. 263; Beazley 1928:8–10.
19 Richter 1965:71, 1984:196; Megaw 1964:8 and fig. 7.
the lyre, sometimes in bust have been found from Mytilene and Eresus. On some of them her name is engraved next to the picture of her.\textsuperscript{20}

Cicero reports that a bronze statue of Sappho by Silanion (4th c. BC) stood in the prytaneum at Syracuse in Sicily, until Verres carried it off.\textsuperscript{21} Neither the statue nor the description of what it looked like is extant. Another lost statue at Pergamon of Roman date carried an inscription attributed to Antipater of Thessalonica (1st BC/1st AD):

> οὐνομά μεν Ἄστριφω, τόσον δ’ ὑπερέχειν ἀνδρόν
> θῆλειάν, ἀνδρόν ὄσσον ὁ Μαεονίδας.

_My name is Sappho. I surpassed all women in song as much as Maeonides (Homer) surpassed men._\textsuperscript{22}

On all the extant portraits Sappho is remarkably beautiful. This agrees with the widespread tradition that she was a very attractive woman indeed. Plato, too, calls her “beautiful Sappho,” and the Hellenistic poet Hermesianax says that her beauty was supreme among the many women of Lesbos.\textsuperscript{23} On the other hand, there was a strand of tradition, that she was rather ugly, dark, short and small, “like a nightingale with deformed wings enfolding a tiny body.”\textsuperscript{24} This belief appears in the sources of late fourth century BC, and its origin lies probably in Athenian comedy.\textsuperscript{25} Maximus of Tyre brings the two opinions together suggesting that Plato (or Socrates) called her beautiful because of the beauty of her verses and not because of her looks.\textsuperscript{26}

3. **Sappho’s home and family**

The first extant external reference to the poetess’ home town comes from Herodotus who says that Sappho’s brother Charaxus (and therefore also Sappho) came from Mytilene on Lesbos.\textsuperscript{27} Aristotle agrees with

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\textsuperscript{20} Poll. 9.84, Richter 1965:70; Bernoulli 1901:1.62 ff. with the Münztafel I:16–20.

\textsuperscript{21} Cic. Verr. orat. 4.57.125–127.


\textsuperscript{23} Pl. _Phaedr._ 235c, Hermesianax. fr. 2.47–52. Cf. also Max. Tyr. 18.7 Trapp, Athen. 10.425a, Ael. _VH_ 12.19, Iulian. _Epist._ 10 (403CD), Damocharis in _Anth. Plan._ 310.

\textsuperscript{24} Chamael.(?) in POxy 1800 fr. 1, Ov. _Ep. (Her.)_ 15.31–40, Max. Tyr. 18.7 Trapp, schol. Luc. _Imag._ 18.


\textsuperscript{26} Max. Tyr. 18.7 Trapp.

\textsuperscript{27} Hdt. 2.135.
Herodotus and reports that the Mytileneans held Sappho in great honour because of her wisdom and despite the fact that she was a woman.\(^{28}\) The tradition of Mytilene as Sappho’s home town continued to be strong throughout antiquity: it is mentioned by the *Marmor Parium*, the Hellenistic epigrammatist Nossis, in the *Lament for Bion* by [Moschus], by Tullius Laurea, Strabo, Pollux, and others.\(^{29}\)

Another town which claimed to be the home of Sappho was Eresus, mentioned by Dioscorides and Suda.\(^{30}\) Nymphodorus the historian, rationalizing the tradition, links Eresus with “the second Sappho,” a courtesan.\(^{31}\)

Thus, the tradition about Mytilene as Sappho’s home town is attested in the Classical sources, and may well be a historical fact known to biographers since Sappho’s life-time. The tradition about Eresus had developed by the second part of the third century BC at latest, possibly in connection with the formation of the tradition of the “second Sappho.”

**Sappho’s parents**

Sappho does not mention her father in the extant verses. The earliest source for his name is Herodotus who says that Sappho’s father was called Scamandronymus (“named after Scamander”).\(^{32}\) A papyrus of late second or early third century AD reports of two opinions: “some” believed that Sappho’s father was called Scamander, and “others” Scamandronymus.

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\(^{28}\) Arist. *Rhet.* 1398b.


\(^{30}\) Dioscor. 18 Gow-Page; Suda s.v. Σαπφώ[1]. In 13.2.4 (618) Strabo mentions two other famous Eresians, the Peripatetic philosophers Theophrastus and Phaeas, but not Sappho. This concurs with his claim in 13.2.3 (617) that Sappho, along with Alcaeus and Pittacus, lived in Mytilene.

\(^{31}\) Nymphod. 572 F *6, ap. Athen. 13.596e. The manuscript reading for the source referred to by Athenaeus is νῦμοις ἐν περιπλῳ ἀσίας, but the author of the *Voyage around Asia* is named as Nymphodorus in Athen. 13.609ε, cf. 6.265c, 7.322a, 4.331ε. See Jacoby’s commentary ad loc.

\(^{32}\) Hdt. 2.135. Scamander is a river in Troas (either Menderes or Neretva) and, in mythology, the son of Oceanus and Tethys (Hes. *Th.* 337–345). According to Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.12.1–3), Scamander the river was the father of Teucer the ancestor of the Trojan kings, and later also the father of the two Trojan queens, of Callirhoe the wife of Tros, and of Strymo the wife of Laomedon.
mus. This information may perhaps come from Chamaeleon (4th c. BC) who is mentioned in the papyrus as one of its sources. Aelian repeats the information saying that Sappho was a daughter of Scamandronymus, and the Suda provides a long list of his possible names: Simon, Eunomius (or Eumenus), Eerigyus (Erigyius), Ecrytus, Semus, Camon, Etarchus, and Scamandronymus. The scholium on Pindar mentions Eurygyus as her father alongside her mother Cleis. The above mentioned POxy 1800 too refers to Sappho’s mother, saying that the poetess’ daughter Cleis was named after her. The Suda records simply: “Σαπφώ / ... / μητρός δὲ Κλειδός.” No other name for her is recorded. The ancient authors may have taken her name from some local Lesbian record, or perhaps, from a poem in which Sappho explicitly mentioned Cleis as her (or the narrator’s) mother. On the other hand, her name may have been derived from the name of Sappho’s daughter Cleis, in a kind of reverse process of a common practice of naming a child after his or her grandparent.

Sappho’s brothers, and Doricha

Tradition says that Sappho had three brothers, Larichus, Erigyius (Eurygius) and Charaxus. Only the latter is mentioned in Sappho’s extant fragments. According to Athenaeus, Sappho frequently praised Larichus who was a wine-pourer in the prytaneum of Mytilene, a job which was done by handsome young noblemen. Suda lists all three brothers, Larichus, Charaxus, and Eurygius. Also POxy 1800 agrees that the poetess had three brothers and probably also mentions their names. Unfortunately the state of the papyrus allows us to identify only Charaxus and Larichus with any certainty. The third name, of which only one letter has survived, is restored as Erigyius on the basis of tradition.

33 POxy. 1800 fr. 1 = Chamael. fr. 27 Wehrli, if Hunt’s emendation is correct: [πατρός δὲ Σκαμ]άνδρου, καὶ τὰ δὲ τινὰς Σκαμάνδρωνυμίου.
34 Ael. VH 12.19. Suda s.v. Σαπφώ[1].
35 Schol. in Pi. εἰς τοὺς ἐννέα λυρικούς (p. 10f. Dr.): Σαπφώ Κλήδος καὶ πατρός Εὐρυγίου ... .
36 POxy. 1800 fr. 1: θυγατέρα δ’ ἔσχε Κλεῖν ὀμόνυμιον τῇ ἑαυτῆς μητρὶ.
37 Suda s.v. Σαπφώ[1].
38 The manuscript readings in the Suda are Ἡερηγίου and Εὐρυγίου, emended into Ἐρηγίου Ηεμστ., Ἐρηγίου Σχονέ and Ἡερηγίου Αδλέρ. See Suda s.v. Σαπφώ[1] Adler.
39 Frf. 5 and 213A, see p. 168 n. 3.
40 Sappho fr. 203 (ap. Athen. 10.425a) with a schol. T Il. 20.234.
41 Suda s.v. Σαπφώ[1].
42 POxy. 1800 fr. 1: ... ἀδελφοῦ δ’ ἔσχε τρεῖς, [Ἑρί][γ][υ]ν καὶ Λάρ[ι]χου, πρεσ-
Herodotus mentions Charaxus in connection with Rhodopis, a famous courtesan. He says that Rhodopis, Thracian by birth, was, together with the fable-writer Aesop, a slave to Iadmon of Samos. She was taken to Naucratis in Egypt by another Samian, Xanthes, and was there bought at a great price and given freedom by Charaxus,—a deed for which he was bitterly rebuked by his sister when he had returned to Mytilene (without Rhodopis). Rhodopis, now free, continued in her profession and grew wealthy so that she was able to make a significant offering of iron ox-spits to Delphi, and was even believed by some Greeks to have built a pyramid to the pharaoh Mycerinus, son of Cheops.\textsuperscript{43} Herodotus himself, however, does not agree with these Greeks, arguing that, first, as a courtesan Rhodopis could never have been rich enough to build a pyramid, and secondly, that she lived much later, at the time of the pharaoh Amasis.\textsuperscript{44} The offering of ox-spits by Rhodopis was, according to Athenaeus, mentioned also by Cratinus (5th c. BC) in some of his lost works.\textsuperscript{45}

Rhodopis is usually identified as Doricha, mentioned in some of Sappho’s fragments.\textsuperscript{46} Not always, however: Athenaeus, for example, reproached Herodotus for not understanding that Doricha was not the same woman who dedicated the spits at Delphi, i.e. Rhodopis dedicated the spits, but the lover of Charaxus was Doricha.\textsuperscript{47} The early third century BC epigrammatist Posidippus of Pella calls the mistress of Charaxus Doricha in an epigram to her (imaginary) tomb in Naucratis, and Apellus Ponticus (3rd c. BC) seems to have believed that a pyramid in Egypt was built in honour of Rhodopis.\textsuperscript{48} Strabo, reporting of the pyramids of Egypt, explains that one of them, smaller but more expensive as made

\textsuperscript{43} Hdt. 5.46–47.
\textsuperscript{44} Hdt. 5.47.
\textsuperscript{45} Cratin. fr. 369 K.-A. ap. Athen. 13.596b.
\textsuperscript{46} See p. 169 n. 8. It has sometimes been suggested that Rhodopis (“Rosie”) may have been a professional name or nickname for Doricha, see Page 1955:49n. 1, Campbell 1982:15.
\textsuperscript{47} Athen. 13.596b.
\textsuperscript{48} Posid. 17 Gow-Page ap. Athen. 13.596c. Posidippus is also reported to have referred to Doricha many times in his \textit{Aesopeia} (Athen. \textit{loc. cit.}), Apellas 266 F 8 ap. Suda s.v. \textit{’Ροδώπιδος ἀνάσημα.} Suda refers to Herodotus in connection with Apellas’ account but in Herodotus (2.134) the pyramid was built, as told by “some Greeks,” in honour of Mycerinus at Rhodopis’ expense.
of Ethiopian black stone, was believed to have been built by the lovers of a courtesan sometimes called Rhodopis, but to Sappho known as Doricha, the mistress of the poetess’ brother Charaxus when he once, being engaged in wine-business, visited Naucratis. Strabo continues with a Cinderella-story about Rhodopis/Doricha: according to “some,” once when Doricha was bathing, an eagle snatched her sandal, carried it to Memphis, where the king was judging cases in the open air, and dropped it into the king’s lap. The king, amazed by the beauty of the shoe and by the action of the bird, ordered his servants to find a woman who owned the sandal, and when she was brought to Memphis, he married her. Later, when she died, she was honoured with the above-mentioned pyramid. Aelian repeats the story, and identifies the Egyptian king as Psammetichus. In Ovid’s Sappho to Phaon the poetess is made to complain about Charaxus, her impoverished brother who, captured by love of a courtesan spent too much money on her, and now, “reduced to poverty he roams the dark seas, and wealth he lost by evil means he now seeks by evil means,”—perhaps referring to Charaxus’ new activity as a pirate? Hesychius simply states that Rhodopis belonged in Sappho’s family. Finally, the Suda broadly repeats Herodotus’ account of Doricha the Thracian who became a slave to Iadmon, and worked as a courtesan until Charaxus ransomed and married her, and had children by her. At some point in her life, according to the Suda, she gave the offering of spits to Delphi, and a pyramid in Egypt was built in her honour.

Thus, Charaxus and the story of his and Rhodopis/Doricha’s love was known by the beginning of the fifth century, and proved to be very persistent, being retold with variations by many authors all through antiquity. It was at least partly based on Sappho’s poetry. The story functions as an aition, explaining the existence of certain ox-spits in Delphi in the 5th century and giving an account of the ‘history’ of a temple in Egypt.

49 Str. 17.1.33 (808).
50 Str. ibid.
51 Ael. VH 13.33.
53 Hesych. s.v. Ῥοδώπις.
54 Suda, the headwords Ῥοδώπις ἀνάθημα (Photius gives the same text under the same headword), Λίσσος, Ιαδμων and Χάραξες. Under the Ῥοδώπις ἀνάθημα the name of the owner of Doricha before Charaxus freed her, is spelled Ἀδμων.
Sappho’s husband and daughter

Sappho’s husband, Cercylas or Cercolas, mentioned only in the Suda, was believed to have been a very wealthy man from Andros. He and Sappho had, according to tradition, a daughter called Cleis.55 The name of the husband, Cercylas of Andros, “Prick of (the isle) of Man” probably belongs in comic context.56

On the basis of the sources referred to above, it seems that ancient authors believed Sappho to have belonged to an influential and wealthy family: her father bears a significant name linked to the important hero/river of Troas, one of her brothers had the honour to pour wine at the prytaneum, the other had means to ransom a famous courtesan; Sappho herself was married to a rich foreigner. Furthermore, when she (or the whole family) was important enough to be sent to exile, they chose Syracuse as a destination of their exile perhaps because they had connections with the people in power there, and above all, she had enough spare time to compose poetry in peace and quiet (and the topics of her verses are love and festivals, instead of weaving, cooking and other such matters). Modern commentators in general share the view of Sappho’s aristocratic origin.57

The names of Sappho’s parents (Scamandronymus and Cleis) and her brothers are another detail which many modern commentators have readily accepted as historically true, in some cases even without supportive reference in Sappho’s own verses.58 Podlecki has suggested that Sappho’s ancestor, perhaps her grandfather, might have earned distinction in the fighting around Troy’s major river Scamander.59 Ramsay points out that the word Σκαμ in Skam-andros is of eastern derivation mean-

55 Suda s.v. Σαπφώ[1]: ἐγεμίζη δὲ ἄνδρι Κερκύλα (ορ Κερκύλης) πλουσιωτάτω, ὀμιομένω ἀπὸ Ἄνδρου, καὶ υγιατέρα ἐποίησατο ἐξ αὐτοῦ, ἢ Κλεῖς ὀνομάσθη.
59 Podlecki 1984:83. Cf. the long dispute over Sigeum in Troad between Athens and Mytilene, in which also Alcaeus was involved (Hdt. 5.94–95). See also Il. 5.49 where
ing “earth” (Skt. ksham, Gr. χθόν), giving thus some support to the proposal that Sappho and her name have non-Greek origin.\(^{60}\) Also Bauer has placed Sappho’s family among influential immigrants.\(^{61}\) The information about the names of the family members of such an important poet as Sappho, especially if the family held a high position in society, was probably preserved in local tradition. On the other hand, having important parents or ancestors, or a parent with a significant name, is a commonplace in the traditions of poets but it is not easy to see why the particular names for Sappho’s family would have been invented.

4. Sappho and Phaon, her exile and death

There are two stories connecting Sappho with the western parts of the Greek world: the story of her death in Leucadia, and the account of her exile in Sicily.\(^{62}\) According to the former tale, Sappho fell in love with a handsome young Phaon of Mytilene, and as her love remained unanswered, she drowned herself leaping from the Leucadian cliff.\(^{63}\) Two other stories lie in the background of this account. First, the story of Phaon. According to this, Phaon was a good-hearted elderly ferryman on Lesbos who accepted money only from the rich. One day Aphrodite, disguised as an old woman, came to him and wished to cross the strait. Phaon quickly carried her over and asked for nothing. In return Aphrodite gave him an alabaster box which contained myrrh.\(^{64}\) When Phaon rubbed it on,

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60 Ramsay 1904:286. See p. 168 above, and Zuntz 1951:22 n. 68.
63 Pliny (NH 22.20) adds that the poetess fell in love with Phaon under the influence of the root of sea-holly, a rarely-found aphrodisiac: portentosum est quod de ea [sc. erynge] traditur, radicem eius alteratrus sexus similitudinem referre, raro inventu, set si viris contigerit mas, amabilis fieri; ob hoc et Phaonem Lesbium dilectum a Sappho.
64 Cf. the myth, according to which Adonis’ mother was Smyrna or Myrrha (“myrrh”) who was turned into myrrh-tree (Apollod. Bibl. 3.14.4 with Frazer’s commentaries ad loc.).
he was transformed into a most handsome young man. Many women of Lesbos fell in love with him, among them Sappho, but in the end he was caught committing adultery and was executed.65

The other story is an old aetiological legend of Adonis, transmitted as a whole by Ptolemaeus Chennus (ca. 100 AD) in Photius’ *Library*, but referred to already by Anacreon, Stesichorus, Euripides and Praxilla.66

According to it, Aphrodite was looking for her lover Adonis who was killed by a boar, and found his body in the temple of Apollo Erithius on Cyprus. The grieving goddess told Apollo about her love for the dead youth. Apollo took her to a cliff on Leucas, and said that if she wanted to overcome her grief she had to throw herself from the cliff. Aphrodite followed his advice and was healed of love. The astonished goddess asked Apollo how it could happen, and he explained that, being a seer, he knew that every time Zeus falls in love with Hera, he comes to this place and is cured.67

Phaon and Adonis do not have much in common in the extant versions of these stories apart from being connected with Aphrodite. Perhaps there existed other variants that linked the figures of the legends.68

Ancient authors, in fact, did sometimes confuse one with the other. According to Callimachus, Eubulus, and allegedly also Sappho herself, the dead Adonis was, for some reason or other, hidden among lettuces by Aphrodite, while Cratinus said that it was Phaon whom Aphrodite loved

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65 Ael. *VH* 12.18, Servius in *Verg. Aen.* 3.279, Ps.-Palaeph. in *Myth. Gr.* iii.2.69 Festa, Suda s.v. Φαῖων (on a proverb which was used of those who are both lovely and disdainful). Stat. *Silv.* (5.3.154 f.) placed the story in Calchis (or Chalcis, see p. 183 n. 83 below). Cf. Wilamowitz 1913:28; and Lucian (*Nav.* 43, *Nec.* 361) in Chios; Ovid (*Her.* 15.51 f.) linked Phaon with Sicily. About localizing the myth, see Dörrie 1975:33–36.


67 Strabo says (10.2.9 [452]) that, for the sake of averting evil, the Leucadians had an old custom at an annual sacrifice in honour of Apollo to throw from the cliff a criminal to whom they had previously fastened feathers and birds of all kinds which by their fluttering might lighten his fall. A number of men were waiting below in small fishing-boats to pick the scapegoat up (if he survived) and to take him outside their borders. In a version told by Servius, the people were hired once a year to throw themselves from the cliff into the sea (in *Verg. Aen.* 3.279). See also the myth of Cephalus who leapt from the cliffs driven by love for Pterelas son of Deioneus (Str. 10.2.9 [452]). According to Apollodorus, Cephalus was the ancestor of Adonis (*Bibl.* 3.14.3).

68 Phaon has been regarded as a mythical double of Adonis and the myth of Aphrodite and Adonis/Phaon as a double of the myth of Eos and Phaethon (Gerber 1997:158 n. 11, Nagy 1973:137–177), see also Williamson 1995:8, Robinson 1924:40, and Kirkwood 1974:101 f. Dörrie does not share their view, see 1975:29f.
and who was laid out among the lettuces. Although we have no extant verse where Sappho mentions Phaon, she is reported to have often sung about her love for him. Adonis is referred to in her fragments (140a, 168). The first known author to link the stories of Phaon and the Leucadian Leap with Sappho is Menander in his comedy Leucadia. Since there were several other comedies in which the story might have been told, it is mostly believed that the fourth-century Athenian comic poets are responsible for having created, on the basis of Sappho’s poems, the story of Sappho’s love for Phaon and her leap to death from the Leucadian cliff. This may well be true, although on the basis of extant material it is not possible to prove the exact time when the story of Sappho, Phaon and the Leucadian Leap was formed. Menander, at least, seems to refer to it as a well known legend. All we can say is that the story of Sappho’s death must have been formed according to an excellently suitable story-pattern of a poet(ess)’ rather romantic death provided by the legends of Aphrodite, Adonis and Phaon, some time before Menander, i.e. before the end of the fourth century.

There are several hints of old age in Sappho’s extant verses, which would provide an excellent basis for the tradition that the poetess lived a long life. It would fit perfectly well into the general story-pattern of the life of poets, who as well as with philosophers and seers, were usually

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70 Ps.-Palaeph. in Myth. Gr. iii.2.69 Festa. He may have, however, taken this information from tradition without ever seeing the poems of Phaon by Sappho.
71 Also in Sappho or Alcaeus fr. 24(b), and tentatively also in Sappho fr. 96.23 in which ἀ[(...]νίδη/Γ;ikΒΓΘν is supplied as ἀ[. ἀδ]νιδη/Γ;ikΒΓΘν by Edmonds (1928:434, fr. 86A). Cf. Dioscorides who says that Sappho is lamenting with Aphrodite as she mourns the death of Adonis (fr. 18 Gow-Page).
72 Menand. Λευκαδία fr. 1 K.-A.: οὔ δὴ λέγεται πρώτη Σαπφῶ τὸν ύπερψυφηνα φηρῶσα Φάων’ οἰστρόντι πόθῳ ὄψαι πέτρας ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀλλὰ χατ’ εὐχήν σὴν, δὲσποτ’ ἀναξ, εὐφημείσθω τέμενος πέρι Λευκάδος ἀκτῆς.
74 See the references in p. 169 n. 6.
believed to have lived long. In Sappho’s case, however, the hints in poems were not developed any further. We have no ancient account of her doings in her later life. It may be that the story of Phaon and the poetess’ unhappy love affair which led her to commit suicide suppressed the development of the detail of Sappho’s old age in tradition.

Sappho’s exile is another detail in tradition that modern commentators are prepared to accept as a historical fact.75 It is explicitly mentioned, however, only in one source: according to the Marmor Parium, the poetess was banished from Mytilene and she sailed to Sicily at the time when the wealthy landowners (γαμοπόλιτες) held power in Syracuse.76 In addition it is known that there was a sculpture of Sappho at Syracuse up to the time of Cicero (which may, however, have been set up there in any time between the seventh and first century BC).77 Another detail in Sappho’s tradition which may point to her being at Syracuse is her synchronization with Stesichorus the Sicilian.78 Sappho’s banishment (if it ever happened) was probably caused by political reasons.79 It would mean that Sappho’s family took an active part in politics on Lesbos, which, again, supports the view that they held a significant position in society. We do not know, however, on whose side they might have been. Usually it is thought that Sappho was on the same side with Alcaeus and they both were exiled with other members of rebellious families by Myrsilus the Cleanactid when he came to power.80 Bauer, on the other hand, has proposed that Sappho and Pittacus, with their families, were immigrants, the κακοπάτριδες mentioned in Alcaeus fr. 67 L.-P., against whom Alcaeus, who belonged to the “old” nobility, turned in the fight for power in Mytilene.81 He suggests that when the Cleanactidae were defeated by Alcaeus’ faction at the time when Pittacus was engaged in the war for Sigeum, Sappho and her family had to go to exile with

76 Marmor Ep. 36, cit. in p. 179 n. 62. About the γαμοπόλιτες, Hdt. 7.155.
77 See p. 173 n. 21.
78 Suda s.v. Σαπφώ [1].
79 Although the Marmor does not state the reason of her exile, it would most probably have been political banishment as in the case of the poetess’ contemporary and fellow islander Alcaeus.
80 For example, Page 1955:102.
81 Bauer 1963:8 f. He supports his claim that Sappho belonged among immigrants by Sappho’s and her father’s non-Greek name, Sappho’s dark non-Greek(?) appearance, and her husband who came from Andros. See also Saake 1972:37–50.
the Cleanactids, and returned when Pittacus came to power. There is nothing in Sappho’s fragments and her biographical tradition which would give any evidence about Sappho’s political views, or explain the reason of her exile. The account of Sappho’s stay on Sicily may have, however, helped to connect her with Leucas, an island on the ship-route to Italy. Rather surprisingly, there is no account of Sappho’s tomb on Lesbos. It may be explained by the belief that she died far from home, or was lost in the sea after her leap from Leucas or some local White Cliff on Lesbos; or that the tradition that she died in a foreign land developed fairly early and become strong enough to cause her real grave to sink into oblivion, and to prevent the establishment of a fake tomb of hers.

5. Sappho’s reputation, circle, and rivals

Sappho held a twofold reputation in antiquity: on the one hand she was regarded as the best and the most brilliant female poet, equal to the Muses, but on the other hand she was mocked and reproached as the model of a frivolous married woman who had many, both male and female, lovers.

Plato mentions Sappho among “ancient wise men and women.” His respect towards the poetess was shared by Aristotle, and Dioscorides who in addition to calling the poetess the companion of Aphrodite, is the first of the long line of authors who placed Sappho among the Muses. Several authors have listed her among famous people: Antipater of Thessalonica mentions Sappho among the famous poetesses Praxilla, Moero, Anyte, Antipater of Thessalonica, and Tullius Laurea.

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82 Bauer 1963:8–10.
83 In the manuscript of Statius’ Silvae (5.3.154 f.), the place where Sappho “took the manly leap” is Calchis, which may stand for Chalcis as suggested by Bücheler (see Wilamowitz 1913:28). Dörrie (1975:33–42) argues that the “White Cliffs” is a metaphor not linked to any specific place. Sappho’s leap is, however, clearly located on the Leucadian coast in tradition.
84 Robinson (1924:38) transmits (with no reference) a report by the 17th century priest and traveller Edward Pococke that Sappho’s sepulchral urn was once kept in the Turkish mosque on the castle of Mytilene. There are only three Hellenistic and Roman literary epitaphs for Sappho, by Antipater of Sidon (11 Gow-Page ap. Anth. Pal. 9.66), Tullius Laurea (1 Gentili-Prato ap. Anth. Pal. 7.17), and Pinytus (Anth. Pal. 7.16).
85 Pl. Phaedr. 235c.
86 Arist. Rhet. 1398b, Dioscor. 18 Gow-Page; cf. [Plato] 13 FGE, Antipater of Sidon (11, 12 Gow-Page), Tullius Laurea (Anth. Pal. 7.17), Plutarch (Amat. 18), Damocharis (Anth. Plan. 310), and Christodorus (Anth. Pal. 2.69.71), who all call her either the tenth Muse, the mortal Muse, or compare her with the Muses in some other way.
Erinna, Telesilla, Corinna, and Nossis; Dio Chrysostom with Rhodogyne the warrior-princess, Semiramis the queen, Timandra “the beautiful,” and Demonassa the law-giver. The scholiast on Aeschylus’ *Persians* does not limit the list only to remarkable women but includes famous Lesbians such as the severed head of Orpheus(!), Arion, Pittacus, and Alcaeus. Strabo calls her simply the best poetess, and Ovid states that although Sappho was small and ugly she was wise and had a name which “fills the world.” Pinytus claims Sappho’s wise words to be immortal, Lucian calls her “the delicious glory of the Lesbians” and sets her up as a paragon for “ladies of culture and learning.” Galen compares Sappho with Homer: “You have only to say the Poet and the Poetess, and everyone knows you mean Homer and Sappho.” And finally, Aelian relates a famous legend of how Solon, when his nephew sang a song of Sappho’s, liked it so much that he asked the boy to teach it to him; and when someone asked why, he replied, “So that I may learn it and die.” It is clear from the references above that Sappho was held in high esteem. This, however, did not prevent the growth of the tradition of her as an immoral and wanton bisexual woman.

The main theme in Sappho’s personal poetry is certainly love. Sometimes the poems are about love or friendship among women, Sappho mentions the names of her (if she is the “I” in the poems) girl-companions, which makes the poems very intimate and at least seemingly autobiographical. Since so many different opinions about the poetess and her friends have been built on these, it might be worth taking a look at what exactly is said about them in the extant poems and in tradition, and how the tradition has influenced the interpretation of the fragmentary lines.

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87 Antip. Thess. in *Anth. Pal.* 9.26 (Timandra being possibly the mistress of Alcibiades, see Plut. *Alcib.* 39), Dio Chrys. *Or.* 64.2. Clement compares Sappho with the poetesses Corinna, Telesilla, and Myia, and painters Irene the daughter of Cratinus, and Alexandra the daughter of Nealces (Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 4.1.22), Eustathius with Erinna, Praxilla, Corinna and Charixena (Eustath. in *Il.* 326.43–327.9).
89 Str. 13.2.3 (617), Ov. *Ep.* (Her.) 15.31–40.
92 Galen. 4.771 Kühn.
93 Ael. ap Stob. *Flor.* 3.29.58; see the comparable account of Solon and Stesichorus’ poetry in Amm. Marc. (4th c. AD) 28.4.15.
94 Cf. frs. 1, 22, 31, 49, possibly also 16, 23, 48, 62, 126.
95 Cf. frs. 121, 138, 211. No names of (her) male friends are mentioned in the extant fragments.
Anactoria is mentioned in only one papyrus fragment in which she “who is not here” is yearned for and recalled as more beautiful than all the great military displays: “I would rather see her lovely walk and the bright sparkle of her face than the Lydians’ chariots and armed infantry.”96 The poem is full of love and Anactoria is certainly referred to as someone very dear to the poet.

Atthis figures in fragment 131 as a former close friend, perhaps lover, with whom the poet has had a quarrel; she has left her and gone off to Andromeda, and the poet seems to miss her bitterly:

"Ατθή, σοι δ’ ἐμεθεν μὲν ἀπήχθητο
φροντίδην, ἐπὶ δ’ Ἀνδρομέδαν πότην. (fr. 131)97

In fr. 96, written perhaps before the quarrel (if the quarrel ever happened) the poet comforts the “gentle” Atthis, saying that another girl, now in Lydia, has not forgotten her:

πόλλα δὲ ζαφοίτας ἀγάνας ἐπι-
μνάσθειν "Ατθῆδος, ἵμερον
lexer ποι ῥέόνα κήρ ὁσα βόηται.98

All we know about Mnasisidica is that she was more beautiful than “gentle” Gyrinno:

evμορφοτέρα Μνασιδίκα τάς ἀπάλας Γυρίννως … (fr. 82a)99

Gyrinno probably figures also in a corrupt papyrus commentary (fr. 90) in which the word “proud” may be associated with her, and perhaps in fr. 29.100

96 Fr. 16 (POxy 1231 fr. 1 col. I: 13–34, ll. 15–20), Campbell’s translation. About conjectures, see Grenfell & Hunt in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri x:23 f. and Lobel-Page 1955:14 f. Campbell (1967:270) has suggested that Anactoria might be the Milesian Anagoramation in the Suda s.v. Σαπφων [1].
97 Fr. 131 ap. Heph. Ench. 7.7.
98 Fr. 96 (PBrerol 9722 fol. 5.16, Schubart and Wilamowitz 1907). About fr. 49, in which the codices’ ἀτοι or ἀτε has been emended as Ἀτθή purely on the basis of tradition, see Parker 2006. It has been suggested that Atthis is mentioned also in three more very corrupt papyrus fragments: fr. 8.3, S 476.3 SLG, and in Alc. fr. 256.5, see p. 169 n. 8.
99 Fr. 82 in Heph. Ench. 11.5.
100 Fr. 90 (POxy 2293 fr. 1(a) col. iii 13 ff.): ἅγε[ρόχου[ ... ἅγαν ἐχο[ις γέρας ... καὶ Γυρίν[ ... τας τοιούτας ... ἐ]γῶ το χάλλος ἐπετ. […] μὲ(σ)δον κτλ. (L-P, followed by Campbell), see Lobel & Page 1955:68 f. Fr. 29 (POxy 2166(a) 1231.1.3): Γύριννοι (Lobel).
Iranamaybementionedtwice,firstinfr.inwhichsheisfoundtobe
annoyingorharmful:

ἀσαρ/Γ;ikΒΓΘτέρας/Γ;ikΒΓΘὐδάμαπΩἴρανασέ/tϊetatwΓεντύ/kϊi/Γ;ikΒΓΘισαν,

and in fr. 135 where the poet addresses Irana asking her about Procne the
daughter of Pandion:

tί με Πανδίονις, Ὡμάρανα, χελίδων ... 102

Dica in fr. 81 is encouraged, possibly in connection with some ritual, to
wear garlandsmade of anise on her locks: 103

... and you, Dica, put lovely garlands around your locks, binding together
stems of anise with your soft hands; for the blessed Graces look rather on
what is adorned with flowers and turn away from the ungarlanded. 105

In the fourth line of another poem of yearning, fr. 95, Gongyla is men-
tioned (Γογ'γυλα. []). Some lines on the text go: “I get no pleasure from
being above the earth, and a longing grips me to die and see the dewy,
lotus-covered banks of Acheron ...” (95.10–13). 106 Unfortunately, the
text above the lines is damaged and it cannot be said with any certainty
whether it is Gongyla who is missed by the poet. 107 Gongyla may perhaps
be mentioned also in fr. 22 lines 9–14 (POxy 1231 fr.15.2):

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101 Fr. 91 ap. Heph. Ench. 11.5. πώρανανα cod. A, ὄφανανα cod. I, εἰρὴνανα cod U, ἀπώρανα
   cod. K—πΩἴρανα L.-P. (see also Choroboscus’ commentary to the line ad loc.).
102 Fr. 135 (ibid. 12.2) ὄφανανα cod.—Ωμάρανα (Lobel).
103 Fr. 81 ap. Athen. 15.674e with Athenaeus’ commentary ad loc.
104 προτόρην cod. A, προτόρην Lobel, προτήρην Seidler, followed by Campbell.
105 Campbell’s translation.
106 Fr. 95 ap. PBerol 9722 fol. 4.4 (see Schubart & Wilamowitz 1907:15, Lobel &
107 Page 1955:86: “It is an obvious but unverifiable conjecture that it was unsatisfied love
   for Gongyla which was the cause of Sappho’s despair expressed in the last more or less
   complete stanza; the common opinion is that she is merely the person to whom Sappho
   is speaking.”
Campbell translates: “I bid you, Abanthis, take (your lyre?) and sing of Gongyla, while desire once again flies around you, the lovely one—for her dress excited you when you saw it; and I rejoice: …”. It is a poem about love, but whether it is love between Gongyla and Abanthis, depends on rather tentative conjectures.109

It has been suggested that the papyri fragments may contain four further names of Sappho’s companions. In fr. 71 (POxy 1787 fr. 6) a girl called Mica seems to be reproached (?) for having chosen the “friendship of the ladies of the house of Penthilus,” and is possibly described both “villain” and “soft-voiced.”110 The relationship between Sappho(?) and Mica(?) in the poem depends on whether the Penthilids were regarded as a friendly family, or as one housing rivals. There are no other references about Mica either in Sappho’s poetry or in tradition. The exceedingly fragile readings which have been suggested to be names Arignota, Megara, Cydro and Gorgo have been already discussed above (p. 169).

Another two names figure in the poems, and perhaps not in the same positive manner as in the case of the above-mentioned girls. In the

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108 Grenfell & Hunt, vol. x, p. 30:

[.]. η[........].έλομαι[ ...
[...]. Γ[...].υλα[...].ν[θλαβοισαμα,[...
π[θνανγκευηπεδοθ] [ αμ][θται[ ....
κτινα.[νσεδήντε][ μα]
αμ/Υ[θται[ τανκαλν[γ]αιρω\(\)
... 

About the conjectures, see Lobel & Page 1955:20.

109 If [...].νή stands for Abanthis (as suggested by Wilamowitz and Lobel & Page). Cf. Edmonds 1928:216 f. (fr. 45), who restores the lines 10–11 as [Γόγ]υλα β[θδ]αινθι, λαβοισα Δύδ[α.ν ] /πα[κτιν’ ...], i.e. he omits Abanthis and interprets the poem as a poet’s address to Gongyla. Abanthis is mentioned also in Alc. fr. 261(b),—a fragment which Campbell would ascribe to Sappho rather than to Alcaeus (1982:329 n. 1 at fr. 256(a), and 331 n. 1 at fr. 261(b)). Gongyla may be mentioned also in another scrap of papyrus: Γυλα[ν (fr. 213A(a)) line 4 in POxy 2506 fr. 8.4.

110 See the readings in Grenfell & Hunt (vol. xv:32), and Lobel & Page 1955, and Campbell 1982.
fr. 133(a) Sappho says that Andromeda has (received) a good recompense or payment: ἔχει μὲν Ἀνδρομέδα κἀλὰν ὠμοίβαν.\textsuperscript{111} It does not necessarily follow that the piece is “sharp-toned” as claimed by Kirkwood, or that Andromeda was necessarily a rival to Sappho.\textsuperscript{112} In fr. 131 Andromeda is mentioned as a person for whom Atthis left Sappho, but again, without any context it is impossible to decide whether Andromeda is here mentioned as Sappho’s rival, whether in profession or in love. According to Athenaeus, Sappho derides Andromeda for her “country-clothes” in fr. 57, but the verses cited \textit{in loco} are unmetrical and the context is missing, therefore we can only take the word of Athenaeus that Andromeda is mocked in the poem. In the introduction to fragment 155, Maximus Tyre, thanks to whom the fragment has come down to us and who probably had the whole poem in his possession, asserts that Sappho censures Andromeda and Gorgo who seem to have belonged to the house of Polyanax, and uses irony saying: “I wish the daughter of the house of Polyanax a very good day.”\textsuperscript{113} In the case of Gorgo the situation is even more vague. In fragment 213 an Archeanassa and perhaps also Gongylyla are called Gorgo’s yoke-mates (οὐνεψε), possibly with pejorative meaning, as is usually presumed, but it really depends on the context which we do not have.\textsuperscript{114} Fragment 144 has been read μάλα δὴ κεκρητημένος Γόργος, but even if the reading is correct, we do not know who has had enough of Gorgo and why.\textsuperscript{115} As we can see, the names of the girls in fragments are in many cases highly conjectural and more than often drawn from tradition.

The character of the circle of Sappho is discussed by Maximus of Tyre (2nd c. AD). He compares the preferences of Sappho and Socrates, and concludes that the only difference is that Socrates loved men, Sappho women: what Alcibiades, Charmides, and Phaedrus were to Socrates, Gyrinno,\textsuperscript{116} Atthis and Anactoria were to Sappho; and what the rival craftsmen (ἀντίτεχνοι) Prodicus, Gorgias, Thrasytus and Protagoras were to him, Gorgo and Andromeda were to her. Maximus says that the poetess sometimes censured them, sometimes questioned them,

\textsuperscript{111} Fr. 133(a) Campbell (or 133.1 L-P) ap. Heph. \textit{Ench.} 14.7.
\textsuperscript{112} Kirkwood 1974:131.
\textsuperscript{113} Fr. 155 ap. Max. Tyr. 18.9. Translation by Campbell. Polyanactis or “a Polyanactid” is mentioned in fr. 99 (P\textit{Oxy} 2219 col. i.2).
\textsuperscript{114} Fr. 213 in P\textit{Oxy} 2292.
\textsuperscript{115} About the reading see p. 169.
\textsuperscript{116} Spelt as Gyrinna by Maximus.
sometimes treated them with sarcasm,—just as Socrates did.\footnote{Max. Tyr. Or. 8.9 Trapp. He continues by saying that, just as Socrates was angry with Xanthippe for wailing when he was dying, Sappho told her daughter not to lament in the house of those who serve the Muses (Max. Tyr. Or. 18.9 Trapp = Sappho fr. 155).} Maximus obviously interprets Sappho’s poetry and is helping to create a strand of tradition about the rival poetesses and their groups. We have, however, only one other ancient reference about the other groups: Philostratus (2nd/3rd c. AD) mentions a Pamphylian poetess Damophyla (unknown from Sappho’s fragments or any other source), who was said to have been associated with Sappho, to have had girl-companions as she had, and to have composed love-poems and hymns just as Sappho did.\footnote{Philostr. Vita Apoll. 1.30.} Philostratus does not say anything about the nature of the relationship between Sappho and Damophyla. Somewhat surprisingly, most modern commentators have, on the basis of these two late and fairly vague sources and on unreliable readings of papyri fragments, come to the almost unanimous conclusion that the existence of rival groups and their leaders Andromeda and Gorgo is a historical fact.\footnote{See Aly in RE s.v. Sappho, Smith in DGRBM s.v. Sappho p. 703, Robinson 1924:30, Schmid-Stählin 1929:418, Schadewaldt 1936:365, Page 1955:133 f. ("Andromeda was a dangerous rival, who made important conquests in Sappho’s territory," and "There was another leader of a rival society, Gorgo …"), Merkelbach 1957:5, West 1970:320, Kirkwood 1974:101 and 131, Campbell 1982:xiii, Burnett 1983:212 f., Podlecki 1984:88, Gentili 1988:82 f., Gerber 1997:156 f., Hutchinson 2001:145. But see Parker (1993) who does not accept the existence of thiasos of Sappho.} In my view, all we can say is that in later antiquity an opinion was formed that other groups of women engaged in activities similar to those of the group of Sappho existed in archaic era. Of the two sources which mention these groups and their leaders, Maximus regards Andromeda and Gorgo as rivals of Sappho only in their art,\footnote{καὶ ὁ τί περ Σωκράτης οἱ ἀντίτηχοι Πρόδικος καὶ Γοργίας καὶ Θρασύμαχος καὶ Πρωτογόρας, τούτῳ τῷ Σαπφοὶ Γοργῷ καὶ Ἀνδρομέδα (Max. Tyr. 18.9).} and Philostratus does not mention rivalry between Sappho and Damophyla at all.

It seems that Sappho’s homoeroticism did not trouble early authors. Anacreon’s attitude to the love between girls from Lesbos does not sound reproachful (358 PMG); Herodotus, Aristotle, Plato, and other classical authors (except the comedy-writers) do not refer to Sappho’s alleged homosexuality at all. The lesbian eroticism simply does not seem to be anything that the early authors would have found disturbing.

The first sources to hint at the development of Sappho’s ill-repute are the fourth-century Athenian comedies. We know that several of them
were titled *Sappho*. Although we have not enough extant material to decide how exactly she was represented in them, we can imagine that a character important enough to give a title to these most probably lewd comedies could not have been described as a modest house-wife. Instead she was probably treated in these plays as a stock-character of a lascivious woman with many partners. Diphilus made the erotic poets Archilochus and Hipponax her lovers; Hermesianax added Alcaeus and Anacreon in the list of Sappho's partners. A character in Epicrates' comedy claims to have “learned thoroughly all the love-affairs (τὰ ωρινία) of Sappho.”

As is mentioned above, there were also comedies in which Sappho's love for the handsome ferryman with dubious reputation may have been treated. Thus, the direct evidence, scanty as it is, indicates that comic writers often represented Sappho as a lustful woman with many male partners. The evidence does not show that the Late-Classical comic poets would have represented her as a homosexual poetess.

Nor does the tradition of the “second Sappho” have anything to do with Sappho's alleged ill-repute caused by her homosexuality. The earliest author to refer to this tradition is the Hellenistic historian Nymphodorus, who says that there was a courtesan from Eresus who had the same name as (the poetess) Sappho, and she was famous for having loved the handsome Phaon. Later sources make the “second Sappho” a harp-player of Mytilene who threw herself from the Leucadian cliff for love of Phaon. Didymus the Grammarian is reported to have written a treatise on the topic whether Sappho was a prostitute. It seems that the tradition of the “second Sappho” developed as a reaction to the exaggerated and unpleasant image of the poetess as a woman with many male-lovers, which the comic writers had created for her.

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123 Epicr. Ἀντιλαΐς fr. 4 K.-A. Cf. the hints about the bad reputation of the Lesbians in sexual matters in Aristophanes' comedies: the verb λεοβάτιειν/λεβαβίαν as “to suck” in the *Frogs* (v. 1308) and the *Wasps* (v. 1346). He does not mention Sappho in the context though. See also Lucian *Pseudol.* 28 about λεβαβίαν and φοινικίζειν.
124 Cf. p. 181 n. 73.
125 Nymphod. 572 F *6 (= Nymphis 432 F 18) ap. Athen. 13.596e (see also p. 174 n. 31 above).
126 Suda s.v. Σαπ/Υϊτω/γο [2], and Φώνων.
127 Didym. ap Sen. Epist. 88.37. Aelian repeats the information given by Didymus that the “other” Sappho was a courtesan from Lesbos (*VH* 12.18).
By the Roman time Sappho’s notoriety has expanded to a new level: now she is regarded as having been not only heterosexually but also homosexually lascivious. Horace calls her *mascula Sappho*, who is singing about the girls of her city. Ovid asks: “what else did Sappho of Lesbos teach her girls but love?” and proclaims her wanton; Martial calls Sappho simply *amatrix*. In his *Heroides* Ovid makes the poetess accuse her fellow-islanders of causing her bad reputation, and to state that she no longer takes pleasure in the maids of Lesbos. Ovid also gives the names of three of these women: Anactoria, Cydro, and Atthis. It seems that, contrary to the authors of the Classical period, the sexuality in Sappho’s poetry troubled the Roman authors.

The topic continued to be popular: in a papyrus from the turn of the second and third century AD, Sappho is reported to have been accused of being irregular in her ways and a woman-lover. The Suda mentions three of her companions and friends: Atthis, Megara, and Telesippa, and adds that Sappho was falsely accused of shameful friendship with them. The Suda names also three of her pupils: Anagora of Miletus, Gongyla of Colophon, and Eunica of Salamis. And finally, in a piece of papyrus of 2nd century AD it is said that Sappho was involved with teaching the noblest girls not only from the local families but also from families in Ionia.

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132 See also Williamson 1995:23 f.

133 POxy 1800 fr. 1.

134 Suda s.v. Σαπ/ΥϊitwΓώ[1]. According to Zuntz, Atthis is an Asiatic name (1951:22). Telesippa might perhaps be Telesilla, the late-sixth century lyric poetess of Argos who has here become a part of Sappho’s tradition? She is mentioned with Sappho by Antipater of Thessalonica (*Anth. Pal*. 7.15) and by Clement (*Strom*. 4.122).

135 Suda s.v. Σαπ/ΥϊitwΓώ[1]. Eunica is not known from other sources. The Suda (s.v. Ἡριννα) and Eustathius (in *Il*. 326.43–327.9) mention also an epic poetess Erinna of Teos, Lesbos or Rhodes, who was, according to them, a friend of Sappho, and who died when she was only nineteen years old. Erinna lived, in fact, probably in the fourth century BC, and is here simply linked to the tradition of the most famous female poetess of old. In two epigrams ascribed to Sappho (157, 158 Diehl) Arista and Timas are mentioned. But these epigrams are probably Hellenistic imitations of Sappho’s style and the girls mentioned in them have probably nothing to do with the poetess, see Gow & Page 1965 ii:597.

136 PColon 5860 (Sappho fr. 214B = S 261 A SLG).
Modern opinions about the nature of the circle, and the relationship between Sappho and the girls vary extensively and have considerably changed during the last 100–150 years, owing to the changes in the attitudes towards sexuality in society. In the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, as a reaction to an image of Sappho as a lascivious bisexual woman, a theory of “Sappho’s school” appeared, according to which she was a leader of a girls’ “boarding-school” where lessons in music, poetry, and in moral and social topics were taught, and the girls were prepared for their adult life as brides, wives and mothers.\(^{137}\) Since then many different suggestions have been made about Sappho’s circle, the most influential of them, perhaps, the one according to which the girls formed a closed group, \(\text{thiasos}\), whose main purpose was to worship Aphrodite and the Muses, and that Sappho was a priestess of Aphrodite.\(^{138}\) In Sappho’s extant fragments Aphrodite, Hera, Artemis, Apollo, Zeus, Ares, Hermes, Dionysus, and the Dioscuri are mentioned, but only in the case of fr. 2 and 140(a) (Aphrodite), and fr. 17 (Hera) can it be said with some certainty that these are ritual songs.\(^{139}\) Neither has any ancient author recorded that Sappho might have been a priestess. The lack of evidence has led to a current general opinion that Sappho’s circle consisted the choruses whose leader she was and included her young lovers,\(^{140}\) or was a fairly informal group of young women, friends of Sappho rather than formal pupils, and that although Sappho certainly composed for and performed at ritual events, the circle of Sappho does not seem to have been formally dedicated to any particular service, and


\(^{140}\) Lardinois 1994.
the poetess did not hold any official post as a priestess.\textsuperscript{141} In my view, Sappho, as with many other early non-professional poets (Archilochus, for example), composed for religious ceremonies and public occasions when necessary, and she and the girls took part in the rituals on the same basis and as frequently as other women and girls in the community.\textsuperscript{142}

\textbf{6. Sappho's inventions and music}

As with other famous poets, some inventions were ascribed to Sappho. All of them are connected with music or poetry. First, Menaechmus of Sicyon (\textit{ca}. 300 BC) reports that she invented the \textit{pectis}, which, he and Aristoxenus say, is the same as the \textit{magadis}.\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Pectis} is probably a harp-type triangular string-instrument of Lydian origin, which could be played without a plectrum, by simply plucking the strings with the fingers.\textsuperscript{144} The \textit{pectis} is mentioned in fr. 156 by Sappho.\textsuperscript{145}

Aristoxenus ascribes to her the invention of the Mixolydian mode (elsewhere believed to be invented by Terpander or Pythocleides the aulete); and the Suda reports that Sappho invented the plectrum for plucking the strings.\textsuperscript{146} It is possible that the Mixolydian mode became linked to Sappho because it was frequently used in her songs. We have only two late sources to describe how Sappho's poetry was performed in antiquity, by Plutarch and Gellius: both say that it was sung at the symposium after dinner.\textsuperscript{147} I do not think there can be any doubt that her poems were usually sung to the accompaniment of some instrument from the start and probably throughout antiquity.\textsuperscript{148} In addition to the \textit{pectis}, the lyre (frr. 58, 118), aulos (fr. 44), the \textit{baromos} or \textit{barbitos} (fr. 176), and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See also Parker 1993:341–346.
\item Menaechm. 131 F 4, Aristox. fr. 98 Wehrli, both ap. Athen. 14.635e.
\item See also fr. 117A(1) Campbell (194A Voigt).
\item The Mixolydian mode by Sappho: Aristox. fr. 81 Wehrli ap. [Plut.] \textit{Mus.} \textit{16.1136c}; Terpander as an inventor of the mode: [Plut.] \textit{Mus.} \textit{28.1140f.}; and Pythocleides: \textit{Ibid.} 16.1136d. About the Mixolydian mode see West \textit{1992:174f.} and 182. The plectrum: Suda s.v. \textit{Σαπ/ΥϊιτωΓώ[1].} Smith (in DGRBM s.v. \textit{Sappho}) and Campbell (1982:7) have suggested that the Suda may have confused the plectrum with the \textit{pectis}.
\item Plut. \textit{Mor.} 622c, Aul. Gell. \textit{NA} 19.9.3.
\item See also West \textit{1970:307f.}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
castanets (fr. 44) are mentioned in Sappho’s extant fragments,—all of these instruments may have been used to accompany her songs.

Sappho’s main metre, the Sapphic hendecasyllable was, however, believed to have been invented by Alcaeus, but as there was a discussion over this matter, it seems that there were those as well who ascribed the invention of this metre to her.149

7. The ancient editions of Sappho’s poetry, and the treatises on her life

The fact that the initial “psi” in Sappho’s name in the fragments of her poetry has survived despite the habit of other ancient authors to spell her name with an initial “sigma” may indicate that the first written text of her poetry was made locally, or even that Sappho herself wrote her poems down. In the latter case, there must have existed a 7th/6th century manuscript of Sappho’s poetry. The transcriptions of this manuscript could have been a basis for the edition which was used by Plato, Aristotle, and other Classical authors. A Lesbian edition based on the original manuscript (and a similar edition of Alcaeus’ poetry) may have been used by Callias of Mytilene (ca. 200 BC) when he was writing his commentaries on the (poetry of the) Lesbian poets.150 We do not know, however, any details about this possible early manuscript or edition.151 The edition which became canonical and was used by the majority of later authors was made in Alexandria (possibly on the basis of the local Lesbian edition). It probably included nine books, eight of them arranged by metre and the ninth including the epithalamia.152

150 Callias ap. Str. 13.2.4 (618).
151 The earliest known copies of Sappho’s poems, preserved not as citations in other authors’ works, are fr. 58 and 65 (PColon 21351), fr. 2 on a potsherd (Ostracon Flor.), and fr. 98 (PHAun 301), all from the third century BC and some of her poems were included in Meleager’s Garland (1 Gow-Page). But these were single poems not a compact edition. About PColon 21351 see Gronewald & Daniel 2004a:1–8 and 2004b:1–4, and West 2005b; about PPHAun 301 see Vogliano 1941 and Page 1955:98, about the ostracon, Gallavotti 1941.
152 Lobel 1925:xiii–xvii, Page 1955:112–116. All nine books are referred to by Tullius Laurea (1 Gentilli-Prato), the Suda (s.v. Σαπ/ΥϊιτωΓώ[1]), and possibly in POxy 1800 fr. 1; Photius mentions the eighth book (Bibl. 161), whose contents may be shown on POxy 2294 (Sappho fr. 103). Hephaestio (Ench. 10.5) and M. Plotius Sacerdus (Ars gramm. in GL vi.546) talk about the metre of her seventh book; the fifth book is mentioned by Caesius Bassus (De metr. in GL vi.258), Pollux (7.73), Athenaeus (9.410e), and Attilius...
Apart from the editions of her poems, occasional references in other authors’ works, and comedies on her, there were also many treatises on Sappho and her songs. Some information about them has come down to us: Chamaeleon (4th/3rd c. BC) is known to have written a book Περὶ Σαπφοῦς which presumably contained information also about her life;\(^\text{153}\) Didymus the grammarian, who is said to have written four thousand books, had one on the topic of whether Sappho was a prostitute;\(^\text{154}\) and from the turn of the second and third century AD we have a biographical papyrus on her.\(^\text{155}\) Also the Byzantine lexicographers mention her in several articles.\(^\text{156}\)

Her music was studied by Aristoxenus and Menaechmus, style and poetry by Demetrius of Phaleron, Clearchus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, [Longinus], Plutarch, and Menander the Rhetor.\(^\text{157}\) Sappho’s metre was investigated in Draco of Stratonicea’s book Περὶ τῶν Σαπφοῦς μέτρων, and also by Marius Victorinus and Atilius Fortunatianus.\(^\text{158}\)

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**8. The date of Sappho**

Herodotus reports the opinion of “some Greeks” that Rhodopis the mistress of Sappho’s brother, and consequently a contemporary of the poetess, lived in the time of the pharaoh Mycerinus.\(^\text{159}\) Since Mycerinus

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\(^\text{153}\) Chamael. fr. 26, 27 Wehrli. He is known to have written on several other early poets, such as Homer (fr. 14), Alcman (frr. 24, 25), Stesichorus (28, 29), Pindar (31, 32), Simonides (33–35), Anacreon (36), and Aeschylus (39–42) as well. About ancient criticism on Sappho see Dörrie 1975:19–28, Williamson 1995:34–49.

\(^\text{154}\) Didymus ap. Sen. *Ep.* 88.37. He, too, wrote on other poets’ lives, for example, on Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Bacchylides, *et al.*, see OCD 3rd ed. s.v. *Didymus* (1).

\(^\text{155}\) POxy 1800 fr. 1. One of the sources of this compilation is Chamaeleon, cited in the end of the scrap.

\(^\text{156}\) Photius’ *Lexicon* s.v. Ἐρεσίας, Suda s.v. Σαφφώ[1] and [2], s.v. Φῶν, Ἡριννα, Ἐρεσίας, Αἴσωνος, Ἰάκιμος, and Χάμξιος.


\(^\text{159}\) Hdt. 2.134. Herodotus synchronizes Rhodopis (and consequently Charaxus and Sappho) also with Aesop the fable-teller. Plutarch (*Mor.* 152c) synchronizes Aesop with Solon (i.e. with the Seven Sages), Diogenes Laertius (1.72) with Chilon (another Sage).
belonged in the fourth dynasty (*ca. 2613–2498 BC*) this date is certainly too early for Sappho, as Herodotus himself asserts.\(^{160}\) He provides also another synchronism for Rhodopis (and Sappho): the famous courtesan had lived in the time of Amasis.\(^{161}\) Amasis, or Ahmose II, the last great pharaoh of Egypt, was probably the fifth ruler in the 26th dynasty, and Eusebius dates his reign to Ol.53.2 (567/6)—Ol.63.4 (525/4).\(^{162}\) It is probable that behind Herodotus’ synchronism Sappho-Amasis there lies the opinion that the Seven Sages lived at the time of Croesus, whom Herodotus synchronizes with Amasis the Egyptian.\(^{163}\) Among the Sages belonged Pittacus of Mytilene whom Alcaeus is reported to have reviled in his poetry for political reasons.\(^{164}\) Alcaeus, again, was firmly believed to have been contemporary to Sappho: according to Aristotle, Alcaeus had addressed one of his poems (fr. 137) to her, who also replied to him.\(^{165}\)

Aelian, in turn, synchronizes Rhodopis (and therefore also Sappho) with the pharaoh Psammetichus, while Athenaeus places Sappho loosely within the Lydian king Alyattes’ rule.\(^{166}\) Psammetichus (or Psamatik) I reigned, according to Eusebius, from Ol.30.3 (658) to Ol.41.2 (615), and Psammetichus II from Ol.43.1 (608) to Ol.45.4 (597).\(^{167}\) Eusebius

and says that Aesop’s *akme* was in Ol.52 (572/69) when Chilon was already an old man. The Suda in s.v. Άισωπος (alphaiota,334) synchronizes Aesop with Croesus and gives Ol.40 (620/17) as his *akme* and Ol.54 (564/1) as the date of his death, and mentions him also in connection of Rhodopis, Charaxus and Sappho.

\(^{160}\) Hdt. *ibid.* About Mycerinus (or rather Menkaure) see CAH\(^2\) i.2:169, 176, 995.

\(^{161}\) Hdt. 2.134.

\(^{162}\) Or Ol.53.3 (566/5)—Ol.64.1 (524/3) in the Armenian version. See CAH\(^1\) iii:302 ff., CAH\(^2\) iii:2: 414, 708 ff., 719 and OCD 3rd ed. s.v. *Amasis* who both give 570–526 BC as the period of Amasis’ reign.

\(^{163}\) See Solon’s visits to Amasis and Croesus in Hdt. 1.30–33; Bias of Priene and Pittacus of Mytilene and Croesus in 1.27, the Seven Sages and Croesus in 1.28.


\(^{165}\) Arist. *Rhet.* 1367a with Stephanus’ schol. *ad loc.* Cf. also the 5th century vase painting in which Sappho and Alcaeus are represented together (see p. 172 above), and Alcaeus’ poem (fr. 384) allegedly about Sappho (p. 170 above). About Sappho’s, Alcaeus’ and Pittacus’ date, see Mosshammer 1979:246–254 and Jacoby 1902:156–165.

\(^{166}\) Ael. *VH* 13.33, Athen. 13.599c. Aelian does not mention Sappho in the passage, but his source seems to be Strabo who tells the same story and links Rhodopis with Sappho in 17.1.33 (808).

\(^{167}\) The Armenian version gives Ol.30.4 (657)—Ol.41.3 (613) for Psammetichus I, and Ol.43.2 (606)—Ol.47.2 (591) to Psammetichus II. The modern dates for the pharaohs are
regarded Psammetichus II as contemporary to Alyattes, giving the latter the dates Ol.42.1 (611) to Ol.54.2 (563). In the time of Alyattes he located, probably following Apollodorus, the Seven Sages (incl. Pittacus), and also Sappho and Alcaeus.\textsuperscript{168} The \textit{Marmor Parium}’s statement that Sappho went into exile between 604/3 and 596/5, at the time when Critias I was an archon in Athens, leads approximately to the same period and is probably based on the same synchronisms between Alyattes-Pittacus, Pittacus-Alcaeus, and Alcaeus-Sappho.\textsuperscript{169} Alcaeus and Sappho are synchronized with Pittacus also in Strabo and the Suda, the latter adding them Stesichorus and locating the synchronism in Ol.42 (612/608).\textsuperscript{170} It is the same date as the one he gives for Pittacus’ victory over Melanchrus the tyrant of Mytilene, and over the Athenian commander Phrynon at the war for Sigeum, regarding this date obviously as Pittacus’ \textit{akme}.\textsuperscript{171} Stesichorus’ date was usually expressed by the synchronism Stesichorus’ death—Simonides’ birth, which the Suda (following Apollodorus) placed in Ol.56 (556/2). In Ol.42 (Sappho’s, Alcaeus’ and Pittacus’ \textit{akme} in the Suda) Stesichorus would be twenty years old, and therefore conveniently contemporary to the Lesbians.\textsuperscript{172}

\begin{itemize}
\item 664–610 (Psammetichus I) and 595–589 (Psammetichus II), see CAH\textsuperscript{1} iii:289 ff., CAH\textsuperscript{2} iii.2:471, 708 ff., 726 ff., 749, Kuhrt 1995:ii:638.
\item The Eusebian date for Sappho and Alcaeus is Ol.45.1 (600) or Ol.46.2 (596) in the Armenian version: \textit{Sappho et Alcaeus poetae clari habentur}. His date for Pittacus is Ol.43.2 (607): \textit{Pittacus Mitylenaeus, qui de septem sapientibus fuit, cum Frynone Atheniensis Olympionice congressus cum interfecit}.—cf. Plut. \textit{Mor.} 859ab, Str. 13.1.38 (599–600) (= Alc. fr. 428a), and the Suda s.v. \textit{Πιττακος}. The Eusebian date for Solon is Ol.46.3 (594); for Thales: Ol.48.3 (586); Ol.50.2 (579) is for the naming of the Seven Sages (\textit{Septem sapientes appellati}); and Stesichorus’ date is Ol.42.1 (611). Apollodorus, the most likely source of Eusebius’ dates, probably took into account also the information about the war between the Athenians and Mytileneans for Sigeum in which Alcaeus lost his shield, Pittacus killed the Athenian commander Phrynon, and Periander of Corinth (another sage) served as an arbitrator, see Alc. fr. 428, Hdt. 5.94–95 and Suda s.v. \textit{Πιττακος}. Cf. Mosshammer 1979:246–254 and Jacoby 1902:157–165 with his commentary on 239 F 36 FG\textsc{Hist}.
\item \textit{Marmor} Ep. 36, \textit{cit.} in p. 179 n. 62. The date in the \textit{Marmor} is lost in the lacuna and the date of Critias’ archonship is not known from other sources. The dates in the Ep. 35 and Ep. 37 show, however, that Sappho’s exile must have taken place between 604/3 and 591/0, and the years 594/3 to 592/1 can be excluded as already associated with other archons’ names, see Jacoby 1904a:165, Mosshammer 1979:250.
\item Suda s.v. \textit{Σαπφο}|[1]: ‘... 
\begin{itemize}
\item γεγονότα κατά τήν μη’ Ὀλυμπιάδα, ὅτε καὶ Ἀλκαῖος ἦν καὶ Στήριγμος καὶ Πιττακος.
\end{itemize}
\item Suda s.v. \textit{Πιττακος}. The small discrepancy between the Suda’s and \textit{Marmor}’s dates could be explained, perhaps, with the confusion about the dates of the two Psammetichus,—the Suda synchronizing Pittacus (and Sappho and Alcaeus) with the end of the reign of Psammetichus I, and the \textit{Marmor} with the beginning of Psammetichus II?
\item For more about Stesichorus’ date see p. 79.
\end{itemize}
synchronism was supported by the tradition that Sappho visited Stesichorus’ home-land Sicily.\textsuperscript{173}

Therefore, in general we have three ancient dates for Sappho, all correlated with the pharaohs, presumably because of Rhodopis’ Egyptian connection:

1. The extreme synchronism with Mycerinus, reported by Herodotus, which places Sappho in \textit{ca.} 2500 BC.
2. The synchronism with Psammetichus (either the First or the Second) in the turn of the seventh and sixth century, which is another way of saying that Sappho lived in the time of Alyattes, the Seven Sages, and Alcaeus. This synchronism is expressed by the \textit{Marmor Parium}, Strabo, Ovid, Athenaeus, Aelian, Eusebius, and the Suda.
3. The synchronism between Sappho and Amasis in the sixth century BC, based on Herodotus’ view that the Seven Sages (and consequently also Sappho and Alcaeus who were associated with Pittacus) belong in the time of Croesus the contemporary of Amasis.\textsuperscript{174}

9. Conclusions

Sappho’s biographical tradition has to a great extent grown around the details found in her poems. The tradition was formed early and continued to develop throughout antiquity. By the end of the sixth and the beginning of the fifth century BC, Sappho as a poet and musician was known widely and well enough to be represented on vases with her name inscribed next to the portrait. Classical authors had a clear understanding about her origin and family: they knew that she was a native of Mytilene on Lesbos, that her father was called Scamandronymus, and that her brother Charaxus had a relationship with a courtesan Rhodopis. The names of her second brother Larichus, Sappho’s daughter Cleis, and most of the names of the poetess’ female companions must have been known to Classical authors as well since they are mentioned or reported

\textsuperscript{173} Suda s.v. \textit{Σαπφώ[1]}, see Mosshammer 1979:221.

to have been mentioned in Sappho’s verses, but we do not know whether any stories were told in connection with these names yet. At least one invention, the Mixolydian mode, is ascribed to Sappho by a Classical author. On the basis of the story of Rhodopis, she was synchronized with the Egyptian pharaohs Mycerinus and Amasis, and also the synchronism Sappho-Alcaeus-Pittacus (drawn possibly from the local tradition of Lesbos) was known by that time. The fourth century Attic comic writers are probably responsible for creating the strand of tradition about Sappho as an ugly woman who had many affairs with men (including Archilochus and Hipponax), and who died because of love for young Phaon. By the Roman time the tradition of Sappho’s bad reputation had grown to the extent that she was scornfully called a “woman-lover.” As a reaction the tradition of the “second” Sappho, a prostitute of Eresus was developed.

Other new details mentioned in Hellenistic and later sources are some of the names of Sappho’s companions (taken perhaps from her lost poems), some of whom are specified as her pupils. We also hear of another eight further names for Sappho’s father in later sources. In addition we hear about her husband Cercylas. The latter detail may too have its origin in Attic comedies.

Thus we can conclude that Sappho’s biographical tradition began to develop already in the Archaic period and continued to develop throughout antiquity. The essential features concerning her life were known to the authors of the Classical period, and later only the details and the stories about her reputation were added. Sappho’s biographical tradition is typical of a poet, and it was formed around the hints found in her poetry, which were arranged and developed further according to the traditional formulaic conventions and story-patterns. The makers of the tradition seem to have, however, completely ignored the hints about her old age in the poems. This potential topic, which, in general, is very typical to the biographical traditions of poets, was probably suppressed by the development of the strong tradition that Sappho committed suicide by leaping from a cliff when a fairly young woman. This may also explain the lack of information about any grave of Sappho. It is sometimes very difficult to distinguish between conventional themes and possible historical events in Sappho’s case: for example, her link with Alcaeus and the exile to Sicily may well be historical facts. At the same time, her association with Anacreon is most probably a formulaic connection between two famous poets, just as her death in Leucas and possibly also her inventions and pupils are conventional topics in the tradition.
In a way, Sappho’s tradition has continued to develop even in the recent past, as modern commentators while examining the papyri found in Egypt have supplied letters and sometimes words in them. In this way, for example, they have helped to fix the names of Sappho’s friends known from a very few ancient sources in the fragments of Sappho’s poetry.