



**Greek Personal Names, Unnamed Characters and
Pseudonyms in the Ninos Novel**

María Paz López Martínez

in

Proceedings of the 28th Congress of Papyrology

Barcelona 1-6 August 2016

Edited by Alberto Nodar & Sofía Torallas Tovar

Coedited by María Jesús Albarrán Martínez, Raquel Martín Hernández,
Irene Pajón Leyra, José-Domingo Rodríguez Martín & Marco Antonio Santamaría

**Scripta Orientalia 3
Barcelona, 2019**

Coordinación y edición: Alberto Nodar – Sofía Torallas Tovar
Coedición: María Jesús Albarrán Martínez, Raquel Martín Hernández, Irene Pajón Leyra,
José Domingo Rodríguez Martín, Marco Antonio Santamaría
Diseño de cubierta: Sergio Carro Martín



Montserrat



Publicacions
de l'Abadia
de Montserrat



Universitat
Pompeu Fabra
Barcelona

Primera edició, junio 2019

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Ausiàs Marc 92-98 – 08013 Barcelona

ISBN 978-84-9191-079-4 (Pamsa)

ISBN 978-84-88042-89-7 (UPF)

Edición digital

<http://hdl.handle.net/10230/41902>

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Greek Personal Names, Unnamed Characters and Pseudonyms in the Ninos Novel*

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The present article concerns the subject of onomastics in the first novel in the history of Greek literature.¹ The main character is Ninos, the legendary king of the Assyrians according to Greek sources.² I will try not only to explain the origin of the proper names appearing in this fictional work (i.e. Νίνος, Θάμβη and Δερκεία) but also to connect them with Greek literary tradition, epigraphic testimonies and a number of oriental sources. Regarding Νίνος, my starting hypothesis is that this Greek form may have had an archetypal or aulic value at some point in the history of this word, such as the name Σεμίραμις or perhaps even Μίνως. I will also suggest possible reasons why two important characters remain unnamed in the papyri (more precisely, Nino's betrothed and his father), and pose a separate question about the name of some of the authors, wondering if they could be pseudonyms.

Personal names in the *Vita Aesopi*, the *Ephesiaka* by Xenophon Ephesius, *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius, the *Satyricon* by Petronius and other works still preserved in their complete form have long been the subject of study.³ My starting point is that the novel genre comprises fiction in prose where authors have complete freedom when naming their characters. However, most of the personal names found in papyrus fragments of novels are real and are attested in inscriptions and other sources.⁴

The corpus of lost novels now comprises ca. 40 papyri which include over fifty personal names (approximately 30 of them male and the other 20 female).⁵ While a number of these names appear in other novels preserved in their complete form (such as Ἀνθεία, Δρύας, Θεμιστώ, Ἰππασος, Καλλιγόνη and Κλέανδρος), others stem from historiographical sources or can be identified with historical figures (Νίνος, Μητίοχος, Πολυκράτης, Ἡγησιπύλη, Ἀναξιμένης, Σεσόγγος and Θεανώ, to cite but a few), still others correspond to the Epic

* I thank the two anonymous reviewers for their interesting comments, as well as M.A. Santamaría from the University of Salamanca and F. Aura from the University of Alicante. All of them have made highly valuable and useful suggestions that have helped to improve this paper, but of course they are not responsible for any mistakes that I may have made.

¹ The original text is lost. Only three fragments corresponding to two papyri have been preserved (P.Berol. 6926 + P.Gen. 2.85 and PSI 13.1305). O.Edfou. 2.306, whose reading is uncertain, may correspond to a school exercise inspired by the novel, as is the case of the ostrakon corresponding to the romance Parthenope. Editions of Ninos by Kussl (1991) 13-101 and (1997); Stephens and Winkler (1995) 23-71; López-Martínez (1998a) 37-80; Bastianini (2010). Recent studies: Gärtner (2010); Kanavou (2016); López-Martínez (2017a); (2017b). In López-Martínez (forthcoming), I argue that the original text may have been written in the region of Parthia halfway through the 1st century BCE. Bowie (2002), Tilg (2010) and Laplace (2011) offer different dates for the first novels.

² Mignona (2000) presents an overview of all the sources.

³ Brotherton (1934); Hägg (1971); Priuli (1975); Hijmans (1978); Barchiesi (1984); Rodríguez-Morales (1989); Ruiz-Montero (1994); (2017); Herrero Ingelmo (1996); Bowie (1995); Kanavou (2006); (2010); Cioffi / Trnka-Arnrhein (2010). See also Booth / Maltby (2002).

⁴ I have used data from the TLG, LGPN, Trismegistos (People), ETCSL (Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature), CIG, and the Dizionario Etimologico della Mitologia Greca Online (DEMGOL).

⁵ For an explanation of the criteria employed to include fragments within the corpus, see López Martínez (1997); (1998b); (2010).

Cycle (appearing in fragments of the Ephemeris by Dictys) and a final group includes those hitherto unattested (Θάμβη, Μαγώας, Μεαμήρις, Ουέβηελις, Πανιονίς or Τινουφίς, among others).

The proper name Νίνος is not associated with any historical Assyrian king.⁶ According to the most widely held view, the Greek form Νίνος corresponds to the eponymous hero of the city of Nineveh.⁷ The fact that the character already appears in the works of Herodotus and Ctesias suggests that the legend may have been invented before the 5th century.⁸ Phocylides is cited as the earliest reference: Καὶ τόδε Φωκυλίδου· πόλις ἐν σκοπέλωι κατὰ κόσμον / οἰκεῖσα σμικρὴ κρέσσων Νίνου ἀφραινούσης.⁹

Concerning the origin of the proper name Νίνος,¹⁰ I incline towards the proposal made by the Assyriologist Speiser (1958). The short forms of proper names tend to replace the long forms both in the name's place of origin and in foreign territories, especially within a family context;¹¹ thus, Nimrod and the Greek form Νίνος come from a hypocoristic form Ninurta, which is in turn a simplification of the compound name Tukulti-Ninurta,¹² borne by an Assyrian king around whom a native legend could have developed.¹³ Hence my speculation about the possibility that in the time of Ctesias or even earlier, any native Greek speaker travelling around Persia would understand and use the Greek form Νίνος as a title referring to an archetypal Assyrian king from a particular period –perhaps the Bronze Age.

To this must be added that the form Νίνος might have a connection with the name of another legendary king, the Cretan Μίνως¹⁴ –also interpreted as an aulic name. The difference with respect to the ending could be due to the obscure origin of the form Μίνως. It may be documented in Mycenaean texts in the form *me-nu-wa*, which can appear as a title and as a personal name in Linear B tablets, and probably also preserves a pre-Greek substratum.¹⁵

The form Μίνως (which already appears in Homer, f. ex. Il. 13.450-451, 14.322) may also have facilitated the use of Νίνος as a dynastic title. Νίνος could be a standardised form with *omicron* of an older form, *Νίνως. The personal name Νίνος appears in Herodotus, and according to the LGPN, the oldest epigraphic testimony of Νίνος, found in Miletus (Caria), dates back to the 3rd century BCE.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the form Νίνων with omega is already

⁶ Weidner (1936); Roscher (1965).

⁷ Regarding the Akkadian and Aramaic etymology of the name of the city of Nineveh, cf. Baden / Najman / Tigchelaar (2017) 437-438.

⁸ Hdt. 1.7 and Ctes. 688 F 1b FGh (ap. D.S. 2.1-21). Cf. Dalley (2013) 121.

⁹ Fr. 4 Gentili / Prato. See Rollinger / Korenjak (2001).

¹⁰ Νίνος is not mentioned by Chantraine (1999) or Beekes (2009).

¹¹ Matthews (2012).

¹² «My trust is in (the god) Ninurta». The simple ‘Ninurta’ is the standardised form of the Sumerian divine name ‘nin-urta’, cf. ETCSL, s.v. nin-urta.

¹³ Tukulti-Ninurta I (1242-1206 BCE).

¹⁴ Chantraine (1999) 705, s.v. Μίνως: «Terme de substrat sans etymologie. Hypothèse de Brandenstein, Jahrb. Kleinas. Forsch. 2,13 s.qq., qui pense que le mot signifierait “roi”». Μίνως does not appear in Beekes (2010).

¹⁵ Aura Jorro (1985) 436-437; Krieter-Spiro (2009) 149-150; Kanavou (2015) 51 and n. 127. Carnoy (1957) 129 compared Minos with the Hindu Manu, the first man in Indian mythology. Zufferli / Marzari s.v. Μίνως: «Un’etimologia sicura non è stata ancora trovata. Secondo Chantraine (1999) questo nome appartiene al sostrato. Von Kamptz (Homerische Personennamen, p. 353) ritiene che si tratti di un nome pregreco dell’ Asia Minore. Carnoy (1957) pensa che sia possibile un confronto con *Manu-*, divinità degli Indù, figlio di Vivasvat, “il sole nascente”, anche se con cautela: ipotizza che un’uscita forte in *-ōus* > *ōs* abbia potuto rendere la *a* una vocale vaga, che in pelasgico sarebbe stata resa con *u*; dalla forma **munōus* ci sarebbe stato il passaggio a *mynōus*, quindi a *minōs*».

¹⁶ LGPN, s.v. Νίνος. Two papyri from Alexandria dated to the 2nd century CE shed light on the social status of some people named Νίνος: the first (P.Bingen 77, TM 78045) contains a record of the cargo ships that arrived in Alexandria from Ostia and the ports in the eastern Mediterranean. In this case, one of the ship owners is named

found in the 5th century BCE in southern Italy, and more specifically in Croton (LGPN, s.v. Νίνων). In addition, the form Μίνοϰ appears in Amargetti (Cyprus) halfway through the 3rd century BCE.¹⁷

All the above-mentioned variants and evidence allow me to propose a hypothesis which undoubtedly entails a certain degree of risk: could the term Μίνωϰ/Μίνοϰ have facilitated the forms Νίνων/Νίνοϰ?¹⁸ Herodotus claims that Ninos is third in descent from Herakles and places him in the context of the Trojan War and the ensuing settlement stage.¹⁹

A similar process regarding a historical figure –the Pharaoh Sesostri of the Twelfth Dynasty in Egypt, whose name was also used as an aulic name²⁰– deserves to be borne in mind. He too played the leading role in a lost Greek novel that we only know in part thanks to five papyri conserving fragments of the original text.²¹

Despite the distance between them, Sesostri and Ninos share several features that I would categorise as curious because we have testimonies of the relationships between the Middle East (Anatolia and Asia Minor) and Egypt.²² Tukulti-Ninurta I reigned between 1243 and 1207 BCE,²³ and a significant volume of archaeological and literary evidence referring to important buildings has been preserved describing the foundation of a new capital together with the implementation of an aggressive foreign policy.²⁴ While still alive, Tukulti Ninurta I was honoured with an epic poem entitled *The epic of Tukulti-Ninurta*,²⁵ and recent studies have argued that this text was used in Mesopotamian education in the 1st millennium BCE.²⁶

A similar process would have taken place in the case of the Greek name of Sammu-ramat:²⁷ the Assyrian queen became an archetype of queens married to kings from exotic and faraway

Νίνοϰ and his ship was loaded with wine from Anemourion, Cilicia, the southernmost point of Asia Minor, opposite Cyprus. The other (BGU 2 462, M 9190) details an application filed with the *epistrategus* Gaius Statilius Maximus in the city of Arsinoites, Egypt, ca. 155-156 CE. In this text, the soldier Gaius Iulius Apollinarius requests that the tenants pay him a rent for the land that had been confiscated from his family, his father and his brother Ninos.

¹⁷ Date and reading (the last vowel could be *omicron* or *omega*) are not completely sure. Cf. LGPN, s.v. Μίνοϰ.

¹⁸ Regarding the form Μίνωϰ from Perinthos-Herakleia, in the 4th century BCE, cf. LGPN, s.v. Μίνωϰ.

¹⁹ Hdt. 1.7. Yildirim (2004) 23-52.

²⁰ Senwosret I (1920-1875 BCE), Senwosret II (1845-1837 BCE) and Senwosret III (1837-1819 BCE), cf. Hornung / Krauss / Warburton (2006) 491-492. Senwosret I and after Senwosret III earned a such an enduring reputation for his military skills, the importance of his conquests and his qualities as a leader that literary texts inspired by this dynasty were written during the Middle Kingdom, cf. Posener (1996); Simpson (1996); Parkinson (2002); (2009), among others. As for the legend of Sesostri in classical sources, see Malaise (1966). Greek texts present variants in the transcription of this name: Σέσωστριϰ (Hdt. 2.102-111), Σεσόωσιϰ (D.S. 1.53-59), and Σεσογγωσιϰ / Σεσοχγωσιϰ (P.Oxy. XXVII 2466, P.Oxy. XLVII 3319, P.Oxy. XV 1826, P.Oxy. XXXI 2562 and P.Oxy. XXXI 2563), among others. Herodotus and Diodorus are the main Greek sources on Sesostri, Sesosis and Sesonchosis. According to Ryholt (2010) 432: «a further measure of the great popularity enjoyed by these stories is the number of people, both Egyptian and Greek, who were named after Sesostri».

²¹ P.Oxy. 2466, XLVIII 3319 and P.Oxy. XV 1826 were edited by Stephens / Winkler (1995) 246-266 and López-Martínez (1998a) 357-375. P.Oxy. XXXI 2562 and P.Oxy. XXXI 2563 have been edited by Trnka-Amrhein (2016a); (2016b).

²² And also Crete, cf. Matthews / Roemer (2016), among others.

²³ Klengel (1961); Streck (2014), among others.

²⁴ Gilibert (2008).

²⁵ Machinist (1978); Foster (1993) 209-230, 318-323; Carr (2011).

²⁶ Carr (2011) 312.

²⁷ 810-782 BCE. Regarding the identification Sammu-ramat–Semiramis, cf. Rollinger / Korenjak (2001) 201-206 and Rollinger (2010) 385-386.

lands. Hence, the Hellenised form of her name, Σεμίραμις, was applied to other prestigious historical Assyrian queens, particularly Naqi'a-Zakutu, Sennacherib's second wife.²⁸

My hypothesis can be summarised as follows: according to Greek sources, it is possible that anthroponyms such as Σέσωστρις, Μίνως, Νίνος or Σεμίραμις served as aulic names designating emblematic figures in native legends about historical kings and queens from the Bronze Age transmitted through the oral and written tradition.

Also according to Greek sources,²⁹ Queen Semiramis was Ninos' consort and later his widow.³⁰ A number of scholars have claimed that the historical Assyrian Queen Sammu-ramat (c. 809-806) is behind the legendary character of Semiramis. Diodorus (2.4.4-6) describes her baptism: her mother abandoned her while she was still a newborn baby, but she managed to survive thanks to the care of doves. She was later found by shepherds, who delivered her to the guard, who in turn delivered her to the king. The king adopted her and gave her a speaking name, Semiramis, which according to Diodorus means 'dove' in Assyrian.³¹ Greek sources describe her as an intelligent, active and ambitious person, sometimes depicting her as a masculine woman with libertine and even depraved sexual habits (Dino 690 F7 FGrH; Ath.Hist. 681 F1 FGrH; Cono 26, narr. 9 FGrH; and Plu. Amat. 753DE).³²

However, it is an important fact that «the most famous of all the women we know»³³ is an anonymous character in the Greek papyri of the lost Ninos novel,³⁴ in which she is only referred to as ἡ παῖς (P.Berol. Inv. 6926 II.146 and II.175), ἡ παρθένος (P.Berol. Inv. 6926 II.251, II.278 and II.205) and ἡ κόρη (P.Berol. Inv. 6926 II.248 and II.296). The absence of the name may be due to chance, because no fragment containing the form Σεμίραμις has been preserved, but might equally be due to a deliberate plan to erase her name with this *damnatio memoriae*, remove all traces of the famous Assyrian queen's inappropriate past and focus all attention on the young prince Ninos instead.³⁵

The Ninos novel is usually studied in relation to Parthenope, another lost historical novel that corresponds to the early stages of development of this genre and has Metiochos and Parthenope as its main characters.³⁶ He is the young son of Miltiades, the hero of Marathon, and she, the daughter of the tyrant Polycrates of Samos, unnamed in Herodotus' third book

²⁸ Dalley (2005); (2013).

²⁹ Ctes. Persica 1-2 = FGrH 688 F1 a-n; D.S. 2.4-20 and Nic.Dam. FGrH 90 F1. Other sources: Hdt. 1.184; Dino FGrH 690 F7; Polyae. 8.26; Luc. Syr.D. 14; Pompeius Trogus (Just. Epit. 1.1-2); and Sud. s.v. Σεμίραμις.

³⁰ Cappomacchia (1986) 17-48 and Gera (1997) 65-83 provide a review of classical sources. There are many monographs and partial studies on Semiramis and the couple Ninos–Semiramis: Lehmann-Haupt (1910); Eilers (1971); Nagel (1982); Pettinato (1985); Kussl (1991); Gera (1997); Mignona (2000); Dalley (2005); (2013); Asher-Greve (2006); Bernbeck (2008); Rollinger (2010); López-Martínez (2017a); (2017b), among others. Three studies from a gender perspective merit special mention: Asher-Greve (2006); Bernbeck (2008); López-Martínez (2017b). A historiographical review of studies on the Ancient Near East from a gender perspective was carried out by Justel (2011). Regarding the possibility that P.Oxy. XXXI 2564 is a fragment from a lost Semiramis novel, see: Trnka-Amrhein (2016c); López-Martínez (2017c). The iconography provides several testimonies about this couple in the Roman Empire, cf. Yildirim (2004).

³¹ On the Syro-Palestinian background of the names Semiramis and Derketo, cf. Weinfeld (1991); Bernbeck (2008).

³² Cf. Gera (1997) 76-77 and 82-83; Mignona (2000) 323-324.

³³ D.S. 2.4.1.

³⁴ Τὴν ἐπιφανεστάτην ἀπασῶν τῶν γυναικῶν ὧν παρελήφαμεν, D.S. 2.4.1.

³⁵ One possible explanation from a political point of view can be found in: López-Martínez (2017a); (2017b). In relation to Semiramis' shame, see: Anderson (2009); López-Martínez (2010); Kanavou (2016).

³⁶ A complete study by Hägg / Utas (2003). Editions by Kussl (1991) 165-167; Stephens / Winkler (1995) 72-100; López-Martínez (1998a) 121-144. See also López-Martínez / Ruiz-Montero (2016a); (2016b).

but called Parthenope in the papyri.³⁷ I allude to Parthenope at this point because the novel is the opposite of Ninos: Polycrates' daughter is unnamed in historiographical sources (Herodotus) but bears a name in the papyri. Furthermore, curiously enough, Μητίοχος and Πολυκράτης bear speaking names in the episode narrated by Herodotus.³⁸

Semiramis also remains present with variants of her name. The legend subsequently passed on to Armenia;³⁹ thus, in the History of Armenia by Moses Chorenensis (5th century CE), the Assyrian queen, King Ninos' widow, is named Shamiran. She fell in love with Ara the Beautiful, the Armenian prince who founded the Armenian nation.⁴⁰ Centuries later, the Persian poet Neẓāmi wrote a romantic epic *Ḳosrow o Širin*, which has Shirin as its main character. Shirin –the niece and heir of Shamirā, queen of Armenia and Arrān– is a strong girl who receives a careful and thorough education comparable to that received by the female protagonist of a Persian epic poem based on the aforementioned lost Greek novel, Parthenope. The Persian version of Parthenope entitled *Vāmiq u 'Adhrā* (The Virgin and her Lover) was written by 'Unṣurī in the 11th century.⁴¹ To my mind, a lost Greek novel with the Assyrian Queen Semiramis as its protagonist was the source for the Armenian chronicle written by Moses Chorenensis and the Persian epic poem authored by Neẓāmi.⁴² Moreover, P.Oxy. XXXI 2564⁴³ mentions the conquest of Egypt and the construction of pyramids by a powerful woman –probably a queen– whose name does not appear. Based on Greek tradition, the editor of this papyrus offers several possibilities regarding her identification, notably including the Assyrian Semiramis. I wonder if the fragment P.Köln. 6.248 might be another papyrus from a hypothetical Semiramis novel (3rd century BCE).

Ninos' father is mentioned in the Greek papyri, albeit not by name (P.Berol. 6926 B II.3 and A.II.11). This may be due to pure chance, but such anonymity might also have been intended to focus attention exclusively on his son. According to the novel, Ninos and Semiramis are cousins (P.Berol. 6926 A I.35, II.43, 55). Their mothers –whose names are Δερκεία (P.Berol. 6926 A II.37-38, IV 128-129 and V 190-191) and Θάμβη (P.Berol. 6926 A IV.136 and V.159-160)– are sisters.

The name Θάμβη constitutes a *hapax*. It is probably associated with θάμβος, 'amazement' and 'astonishment', and θαμβέω, 'to remain astonished, amazed'.⁴⁴ Θάμβος has been connected to θαῦμα and τέθηπα,⁴⁵ but the etymology remains obscure.⁴⁶ As for the proper name Ἄθαμβος, this has been attested as a very frequent personal name in Delphi between 290 and 280 BCE.⁴⁷ As is well known, this oracle played an important role in the process of colonisation, strongly suggesting that this name circulated throughout a large territory that reached as far as Mesopotamia. The male form Ἄθαμβητος appears in mid-5th century BCE Thasos as well as in Styra, Euboea, from the 4th to the 3rd centuries BCE.⁴⁸

³⁷ Hdt. 3.124 (Polycrates' daughter, here unnamed) and 6.39-41. See How / Well (1979); Asheri / Lloyd / Corcella (2007).

³⁸ I thank Prof. Maehler for this comment. On personal names and ancient historians, cf. Hornblower (2000).

³⁹ Maciuszak (2011).

⁴⁰ Moses Chorenensis 1.16. Armenia also plays an important role in the papyri of the Ninos novel (P.Berol. 6926 II.35 and II.69).

⁴¹ Hägg / Utas (2003); Davies (2002).

⁴² López-Martínez (2017c).

⁴³ Edited by Trnka-Amrhein (2016a).

⁴⁴ Chantraine (1999) 421-422.

⁴⁵ Beekes (2010) 535, s.v. θαῦμα.

⁴⁶ Beekes (2010) 532-533, s.v. θάμβος: the etymology is unclear and the origin could be pre-Greek.

⁴⁷ CIG, Ἄθαμβος. I have found neither Θάμβη nor Ἄθαμβος in TM-people.

⁴⁸ CIG, Ἄθαμβητος.

Given that the origin of Θάμβη remains unclear, I have attempted to extract information from the last part of this form. The ending of Θάμβη is similar to ἴαμβος and Ἰάμβη.⁴⁹ I do not think I am going too far in suggesting that this personal name could be inspired by the name of one of the protagonists of a legend in which another mythical maternal figure appears, the inconsolable Demeter, Δη-μήτηρ, whom only Ἰάμβη could make laugh with her obscene jokes.

In light of this information, it may be no coincidence that there are three proper names with a common origin, Ἰάμβη, Ἰαμβούλος and Ἰάμβλιχος,⁵⁰ which also present undeniably literary and even novelistic echoes. The first is the writer Ἰαμβούλος (c. 3rd century BCE, regardless of whether he is a historical figure or not, or a Syrian native or not), who can be placed within the same geographical context as the Ninos novel.⁵¹ The second is Ἰάμβη, which may have been the inspiration for the name the novelist created for the mother of the legendary Assyrian King Ninos, Θάμβη, which in turn is a *hapax*. The last is Iamblichus from Syria,⁵² who wrote the *Babyloniaka* (Τὰ Βαβυλωνιακά) between 164 and 180 CE, more than a century after Ninos. The adventures of the leading couple, Rhodanes and Sinonis, also unfold in Mesopotamia.⁵³

In the light of coinciding names such as Xenophon of Ephesus and Xenophon of Athens⁵⁴ or Lollianos the author of *Phoinikika* and Lollianos the professor of rhetoric,⁵⁵ I wonder the extent to which ancient novelists selected names from literary tradition as a pseudonym.⁵⁶ Could the author of the *Babyloniaka* have chosen a pseudonym due to local and fictional associations with a name such as Ἰάμβλιχος? More specifically, if we accept the possibility that the personal name Ἰάμβη may have been the inspiration for Θάμβη, could both names – Ἰάμβη and Θάμβη – have influenced the choice of the pseudonym Ἰάμβλιχος by the author of the *Babyloniaka*?⁵⁷

Even though the complete text of *Babyloniaka* has been lost and we have no papyri from this novel, we know the plot from a summary in the *Bibliothèque* by Photios and some quotations

⁴⁹ Regarding ἴαμβος, Chantraine (1999) 453; Beekes (2010) 572, s.v. See also LGPN, s.v. ἴαμβος Regarding Ἰάμβη, see Zufferli s.v.

⁵⁰ LGPN and TM-People, s.v. Ἰάμβλιχος. The proper names Ἰάμβεια (LGPN, s.v.) and Ἰάμβλοχος (LGPN, s.v.) also exist.

⁵¹ We know him because of the information provided by D.S. 2.55-60 and Luc. VH 1.3.4.

⁵² This name has a considerable literary tradition. According to the online version of the *Diccionario Griego-Español* (DGE), there are three Greek authors called Iamblichus: *alchemista*, *philosophus* and *scriptor eroticus*.

⁵³ On the context of this novel, see Morales (2006); Rojas Álvarez (2016), among others.

⁵⁴ See also Herrero Ingelmo (2001) 66.

⁵⁵ The name Lollianos often appears in documents from Greco-Roman Egypt, but I wonder if the fact that four particularly highly educated people (three of them connected to Oxyrhynchus) were called Lollianos is a mere coincidence: 1. The sophist Hoerdonius Lollianus (in Ephesos, 2nd century CE); 2. The novelist (papyri found in Oxyrhynchus and dated in the 2nd-3rd centuries CE); 3. The teacher (γραμματικὸς δημόσιος at Oxyrhynchus in 253-260 CE); and 4. The lettered woman Lolliana (called Aurelia Taisous, who is mentioned in an Oxyrhynchus papyrus dated on 15 July 263 CE), as I note in López-Martínez (forthcoming). According to data from the LGPN, there was also an orator from Aphrodisias named Χαίρεας in the 2nd-3rd century CE. He is the main character in the novel written by Chariton of Aphrodisias and dated to the 1st-2nd century CE. However, this information is not enormously significant because the total number of Χαίρεας in this database amounts to 190-198 in Aphrodisias.

⁵⁶ It might be interesting to consider this question in relation to the presence of an author's name attached to his text, see the study by Ni Mheallaigh K (2006), which discusses this subject in the *Verae Historiae* by Lucianus.

⁵⁷ In the event that this name is indeed a pseudonym voluntarily chosen by the author of the novel and not his real name. It is interesting to note the presence in 2nd century CE Egypt, specifically in Elephantine, of a Ἰάμβλιχος who worked as a γραμματεὺς, cf. O.Eleph. DAIK 13, O.Eleph. DAIK 56 and O.Eleph. DAIK 14. Recall the opening of Chariton's novel: Χαρίτων Ἀφροδισιεύς, Ἀθηναγόρου τοῦ ῥήτορος ὑπογραφεὺς (1.1.1).

from the Suda.⁵⁸ According to the information provided by the author himself, Iamblichos was Babylonian; he knew the language and customs of Syria and Babylonia but had also been trained in the Greek *paideia*. In addition, Russell has suggested an Armenian connection for this novel and the Ninos novel, which I have dated to I BCE, earlier than the Babyloniaka. Ninos also alludes to Armenia in fragment B (Ἀρμενί[B.I.35; Ἀρμενίους B.II.31) and refers to the Hippos River beside the Phasis (ἐπ’ ἄκτῆς Ἴππου, D.1) and Kolchis (εἰς τῆ[ν Κ]ολχίδος ἄκτῆν, D.12-13), also close to Armenia. In the case of the Babyloniaka,⁵⁹ Rhodanes and Sinonis are Persian epic heroes and the personal name Rhodanes could be a Hellenised form of the Armenian *Hruden*. Russell also mentions the value of Sinonis as a speaking name, as well as the link with the Akkadian form *sinuntu* and the Aramaic *senunit*, which means ‘swallow’:⁶⁰ as I already said above, the speaking name ‘Semiramis’ means ‘dove’ in the Syrian language. The etymology is probably based on the Akkadian word for ‘dove’, *summu/summatu*.⁶¹ Although this does not provide a conclusive answer to my previously posed question, it does at least evidence Iamblichus’ onomastic sensitivity.⁶²

Δερκεία (Semiramis’ mother) is a variant of Δερκετώ, the leading goddess in Lucian’s *De Syria dea*.⁶³ It also seems to have «Semitic roots and apparently means ‘ruler of the sea’». ⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the Greek form might have echoes of the verb δέркоμαι, ‘to see clearly, to have sight’, and is also present in personal names such as Δερκέτης, Δέρκετος, Δερκέτυς, Δερκύλος, Δέρκων and many others. Of note among these is Derkyllis, who was the main character in another lost Greek novel, *Incredible things beyond Thule* (Τὰ ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἄπιστα), written by Antonio Diogenes and very popular in Antiquity.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Δερκ- names appear to be popular literary choices, especially in comedy.⁶⁶

I conclude by noting that although I have been unable to answer all the questions I have raised, I hope that the present paper has helped to show that onomastics in Ninos forms a rich and complex network of references to an even greater extent than the relative to water and fish.⁶⁷

⁵⁸ Stephens / Winkler (1995) 179-245.

⁵⁹ Russell (1994); Morales (2006).

⁶⁰ Schneider-Menzel (1948) 79; Stephens / Winkler (1995) 199; Morales (2006).

⁶¹ Frahm (2017) 436. Other relationships can be established (Onnes, Semiramis’ first husband / Assyrian Uanna) but I cannot elaborate further on this subject here.

⁶² By way of example, the names given to the two brothers Tigris and Euphrates in chapter 11 could also be added.

⁶³ Syr.D. Cf. Lightfoot (2003) 217-218, 335-351.

⁶⁴ Gera (1997) 70. See also Weinfeld (1991); Bernbeck (2008).

⁶⁵ Ruiz-Montero (forthcoming).

⁶⁶ I thank the anonymous reviewer for this information.

⁶⁷ Water plays an important role in the Semiramis legend: her mother was called Δερκετώ, which means ‘ruler of the sea’ in Semitic, and excavations have confirmed the existence of a pond at Ascalon (cf. Lenfant [2004] 236). Meanwhile, Derketo has been identified as a goddess, a woman and a nymph who eventually becomes amphibian when, tormented by the feelings she has for the handsome mortal with whom she conceived her daughter, Semiramis, she throws herself into a lake (D.S. 2.4.2-3). Note also that Moses Chorenensis’ *History of Armenia* tells us that when the Assyrian Queen Shamiran became King Ninos’ widow, she fell in love with a prince and invaded Armenia to kidnap him, but he died on the battlefield and Shamiran headed south until reaching Lake Van, where she founded a city. Given the foregoing, I have concluded this paper taking into account the suggestion of another recent scholar regarding this legend, Frahm (2017) 437-438: «An additional dimension to this network of piscine references is provided by the name of the city of Nineveh. It is written in cuneiform with the grapheme NINA, which includes the sign KU₆, ‘fish’, and was pronounced as *Ninu(w)a* or *Ninâ*, which sounds quite similar to *nūnu* and *nunya*, the respective Akkadian and Aramaic terms for ‘fish’».

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