Notes and Documents

THE ORIGIN OF THE SEMIRAMIS LEGEND.

MR. ROBERTSON SMITH in an interesting article, p. 308 *sq.* in the present volume of this Review, on 'Ctesias and the Semiramis Legend,' has somewhat unfavourably criticised some views which I expressed in an article which appeared at p. 97 of the same volume. It may seem presumptuous for me to attempt to controvert the opinions of so distinguished a scholar, yet I feel bound to say that I cannot see that his arguments have shaken the positions I sought to maintain. Most of the evidence he adduces I was already acquainted with, and I cannot think that it is sufficient to justify the conclusions he draws from it.

Mr. Freeman, in his 'Methods of Historical Study,' has warned us by a striking example against the danger of writing history by putting two and two together; but when we are dealing with a remote and little known epoch like the eighth century B.C. there is no other course open to us, and the practice seems legitimate provided we at the same time submit the evidence on which our conclusions rest. I was far from contending that the views I adopted were certain; but I thought, and still think, that the weight of evidence is in their favour. I shall now proceed to examine Mr. Smith's paper in detail so far as it deals with the same subjects as my own.

Following some high authorities, I asserted the identity of the Semiramis of Herodotus, i. 184, with Sammuramat, a royal lady who is mentioned in an Assyrian inscription. Herodotus says Semiramis, a queen who engaged in certain engineering works at Babylon, lived about five generations before Nitokris, whom he apparently regards as the wife of Nabopolassar (B.C. 626–605) or Nebuchadrezzar (B.C. 605–562). This brings us to the first half of the eighth century B.C. Sammuramat was a queen (probably more than a mere queen consort, as she is mentioned in an inscription) who, even according to Mr. Smith (p. 303), was 'connected with the first introduction at Niniveh of the Babylonian worship of Nebo,' and who lived about B.C. 783. We cannot prove the identity of these two, but the circumstantial evidence for it is strong. I further maintained that the popular Greek account of Semiramis originated with Ktesias, who engrafted on the little that he knew of the real queen mentioned by Herodotus, materials derived partly from Babylonian popular mythology, partly from his own imagination; Mr. Smith, on the contrary, looks on the Ktesian account as older than Ktesias, and considers that it is to it Herodotus refers, and further that it rests almost entirely on Persian

recensions of myths relating to the Asiatic love goddess; myths which in some form certainly play a large part in Ktesias' narrative. To prove the identity of the Semiramis of Herodotus with Ishtar rather than Sammuramat, he asserts that the name Semiramis represents not Sammuramat but Shĕmīrām, a supposed appellation of Astarte; but it certainly might represent Sammuramat; and if Astarte really bore a name which to the Greeks sounded somewhat similar, that is merely an additional reason why Ktesias should incorporate her legends into the history of the real queen. Mr. Smith's discovery (for the reasons in support of which I must refer to his own article, pp. 303–305) thus fits in admirably with the view he opposes. Mr. Smith further says that the Semiramis of Herodotus is in all respects identical with the personage described by Ktesias, because both erected earthworks; and that both are identical with Astarte, because some of those erected against inundations by Ktesias' Semiramis are said by a Byzantine writer to have been really the tombs of her lovers, who belong to the part of her history which comes from the myths relating to Ishtar or Astarte. By this method of reasoning, however, we could equally well prove that Nitokris was a form of the goddess; I prefer to suppose that Herodotus refers (as we should certainly conclude from his description) to a real embankment along the Euphrates, which he was—very probably correctly—told was erected by Sammuramat or her husband, and that Ktesias acting on this hint ascribed to her most of the public works in Babylonia erected by a whole series of kings. In the genuine narrative of Ktesias as preserved by Diodorus[1] (ii. 14), the tumuli of Semiramis' lovers are carefully distinguished from the works at Babylon which are described in Diod. ii. 8 *sq.* and by Herodotus. Mr. Smith endeavours to support his case by the opinion of certain commentators who see in the *συνετωτέρη* of Herodot. i. 184 a reference to the immorality of Ktesias' Semiramis, but I am not aware of any instance in which *συνετός=σώφρων* in the sense of 'modest' which this interpretation requires. Herodotus evidently merely means to say that Nitokris' engineering efforts were better directed.

Mr. Smith cites the names of certain places in Armenia and countries still more to the east, as evidence that the character in which Semiramis appears in Ktesias was not invented by him. These, however, prove at most that there may have been a goddess called Shemiram, which, as I have already said, does not in the least interfere with the view I am endeavouring to maintain, but in most cases the resemblance of name is slight and probably accidental. The appellation of Shamīrāmagerd given to Van only dates from a period when the Armenians had been familiarised with the account of Ktesias, which with some modifications, drawn chiefly from the Bible, has supplied the outline of the earlier portions of the narratives of the Armenian historians such as Moses of Chorene, a few native legends being interwoven. Of one of these, that of Arai, son of Aram, which in Moses, i. 14 is brought into connexion with Semiramis, we have an earlier form in Plato, 'Rep.' x., Plutarch, 'Symp.' xi. 7, and Macrobius, 'Somn. Scip.' i. 1, in which no connexion with the Assyrian queen or with Astarte is hinted at.

[1] I cannot agree with Mr. Smith in preferring the Byzantine version.

As to the argument that the narrative of Deinon (frag. 1) implies the existence of the fully developed Semiramis legend before the appearance of the 'Persika' of Ktesias, I should be more inclined to hold that Deinon had the account of the latter before him and deliberately applied himself to eliminate the marvellous and poetical elements in it.

'If Ktesias had been inventing history for the Greeks instead of recounting a legend, he would never have given the first and third parts of his story,[2] and the conclusion is therefore inevitable that in eastern legend Semiramis was a goddess and a form of Astarte' (Mr. Robertson Smith in the ENGLISH HISTORICAL REVIEW, p. 305). He was in part relating a legend, but he was using it to embellish history. The argument might equally well be retorted by saying that if Ktesias had been only recounting a legend he would never have given the *second* part of his story. Mr. Smith endeavours to meet this by adopting a theory put forward by Jacobs (whose article in the *Rheinisches Museum* for 1855 I am unfortunately unable to consult) that the history of Ktesias was only known to Diodorus in a recension by Kleitarchus, in which the account of the conquests of Ninus and Semiramis was modified with reference to those of Alexander. This is possible, but it is to be observed, (1) that for these conquests Diodorus (who in some passages refers to Kleitarchus) *expressly quotes Ktesias* (ii. 2, Τὰ δ' ἐπισημότατα τῶν ἐθνῶν ἀκολούθως Κτησίᾳ τῷ Κνιδίῳ πειρασόμεθα συντόμως ἐπιδραμεῖν). (2) The nations enumerated are almost exactly the same as those subject to Artaxerxes II. (3) The name of the Baktrian king Oxyartes which offers a point of contact with the history of Alexander (Arrian, 'Exped. Alex.' iv. 19; Diodorus, xviii. 3) appears to be a false reading in Ktesias, frag. 6. The manuscripts of Diod. ii. 6 vary greatly in the name; and Arnobius, who also quotes the fragment, has Zoroastres instead. As to the allusion in Ktesias, frag. 11, to monuments of Semiramis at Behistun the reference is probably not to the famous relief and inscription of Darius I, but to some older Assyrian works. The description as preserved by Diodorus suggests a stele containing the figure of a monarch such as the Assyrians were in the habit of sculpturing on the borders of their empire, accompanied by other figures; it is said that on the upper part of the principal mass of rock are the remains of three figures and above them traces of characters.

I certainly never contended that 'the Semiramis and Ninus story formed' part of the 'official historical traditions of the Assyrian and Babylonian priests;' all I maintained was that Ktesias heard accounts, probably exaggerated, of the greatness of Queen Sammuramat, and also some of the myths relating to Ishtar, and then put them together. The evidence in support of this is not absolutely conclusive, but that brought forward by Mr. Robertson Smith for the Iranian origin of the legend is weak in the extreme. As far as I can follow his remarks on the subject, it is somewhat as follows. Zela in Pontus is said by Strabo (xii. 3) to have been situated on a mound erected by Semiramis, to whom, or to Sesostris, most of the ancient works in Asia Minor, of Assyrian or Hittite origin, were ascribed by the later Greeks. He further says that before the time of Pompey, οἱ βασιλεῖς οὐχ ὡς πόλιν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἱερὸν διῴκουν τῶν Περ-

[2] Those relating to the birth and death of Semiramis, the second part being the account of her conquests, and, I suppose, of her buildings.

σικῶν θεῶν τὰ Ζῆλα. In another place (xv. 3) he says that the magi performed certain rites in the temple of Anaitis (i.e. the Mazdean female angel Ardvisura—Anahita) and in that of Omanus, and that the image of the latter was carried in procession. Artaxerxes II first set up statues of Anahita (Berosus, iii. frag. 16), and by process of corruption her rites became in some places, especially in the west, assimilated to those of Astarte, with which they had properly nothing to do. Mr. Smith concludes that in the time of Artaxerxes II the Persians related of Anahita the myths which Ktesias has connected with the name of Semiramis, because the 'Persian gods' (of whom Anahita was not improbably one) were worshipped at a place standing on one of the many mounds attributed to Semiramis, and because her worship is in another place mentioned along with that of Omanus, whose image was carried in procession, as was that of Adonis, from which he infers the identity of these two deities, and the Adonis myth is of the same class as some of the legends of Astarte which have been incorporated in Ktesias' account of Semiramis. But in the first place Omanus is the Mazdean archangel Vohumano, 'the Good Mind,' who has a close connexion with Anahita, but none whatever with Adonis; and in the second place the carrying of images in procession was not peculiar to the ritual of Adonis, but was practised by most heathen nations in that of a number of their gods, a fact so well known that it would be a waste of space to cite examples.

Mr. Smith presses into service the statement of some Greek writers that at Susa, which was one of the seats of the worship of Anahita, there was a tomb (most of his authorities say a palace or fortress, see Herodotus, v. 53; Ktesias, frag. 18; Diodorus, ii. 22; Strabo, xv. 3. p. 317, compare Hyginus, 223) of Memnon, whom he also identifies with Adonis. It seems simpler to suppose that the Greeks looked for Memnon in Susiana for the same reason as on the Nile, because the poets had described him as an Ethiopian, and they were not ignorant of the Ethiopian (Cushite, Kissian) character of the Elamites (Æschylus, 'Psychostasia,' frag. 279; Strabo, xv. 3. p. 317 &c.) As those who had made up their mind that he came from the banks of the Nile found evidence of the fact in the statue of *Amenophis* III, and the palace-temple of Rameses *Miamun*, so those who, like Ktesias, looked for him at Susa were satisfied with vague traditions and similar verbal coincidences.[3] Mr. Smith's ingenious suggestion that Memnoneia=places of Naaman 'the beloved one' (*i.e.* Adonis) furnishes an analogous and excellent explanation of the numerous Syrian Memnoneia, but it does not meet the cases of those at Thebes and Susa. Ktesias in no way connects the legend of Memnon with that of Semiramis, which he would have done if Mr. Smith's view be correct.

The third proof alleged in support of the Iranian character of the Semiramis legend is the statement of Strabo (xi. 13) that Medea invented the Median dress which Ktesias (ap. Diod. ii. 6) ascribes to Semiramis; both these statements are evidently mere guesses of the Greeks of no value whatever; we need not, therefore, trouble ourselves to inquire whether the *heroa* which they supposed were dedicated to Jason and Medea belonged to Astarte and Adonis.

[3] Sayce (*Records of the Past*, vii. p. 83) suggests that Susa may have been known as Umman-Amman = 'house of the god Amman' in Elamite.

But the strongest evidence against the Persian origin of Ktesias' statements is that, though we have abundant remains of Iranian legendary lore both in the Zendavesta (parts of which, especially the Yashts, which are the portions richest in matter of this kind, belong probably to a period not far removed from the reign of Artaxerxes II) and in the traditions collected by Firdusi, there is not a trace of anything resembling what Ktesias tells us about Semiramis, though there are legends resembling those which embellish the Median portion of his work. The nearest approach to a Persian legend on the subject is that occurring in Hellanikus, frag. 168, which tells of Atossa, a Persian (not an Assyrian), queen daughter of King Ariaspes, who assumed male attire and conquered many nations. Ktesias was doubtless acquainted with this story, and it may have given him some hints.

Mr. Robertson Smith says that the legend of Semiramis is really of Aramæan origin, and has nothing to do with Assyrian history. In support of this proposition he adduces (1) the legend of her birth, in which occurs the name Derketo, which according to Strabo, xvi. 4. p. 412 is equivalent to Atargate or Atargatis, the first part of which is the Aramæan (Hittite ?) form of Ishtar, and which he says could not have been used at Babylon. It is possible that Ktesias, who used materials drawn from several different sources, may have here utilised an Aramæan myth, but the occurrence in this part of the story of the name Onnes or Oannes, which belongs to Babylonian mythology, makes it more probable that he heard the whole from some of the Babylonian priests. The Assyrians seem to have recognised the identity of the great goddess of Carchemiah, the city which Hierapolis represented, with their own Ishtar, and the process of religious syncretism which went on under the Persians may have caused a Hierapolitan myth to be incorporated into the unofficial creed of Babylon, where there was a large Aramæan population.

It is, however, exceedingly difficult to arrive at what Ktesias really said. This passage of his work is preserved not only in Diodorus' epitome of his first six books (Diod. ii. 4), but also by Eratosthenes, Hyginus, and the anonymous writer on women famous in war, and their versions of it differ greatly, not even agreeing as to the scene of the events related, which was Askalon according to Diodorus, Bambyke or Hierapolis according to Eratosthenes; probably Ktesias merely said Syria. Aphrodite in his narrative is distinguished from and represented as hostile to Derketo, which would scarcely have been the case if he had derived his information direct from the Hierapolitans. From the way in which the Oannes legend is used it is evident that he allowed himself great freedom in dealing with the myths he heard, when working them into his history.

(2) As further evidence of the Aramæan origin of the legend, Mr. Smith endeavours to prove that the city Ninus of Ktesias is not Niniveh but Hierapolis. It is for typographical reasons impossible adequately to discuss in these pages the question whether the Assyrians really called Hercules Nin, but probability is in favour of their having done so, an opinion held not merely by Rawlinson, as Mr. Smith seems to imply, but by other eminent scholars also. By the tomb of Ninus, Ktesias probably meant the *ziggurat* or sacred tower at Kalah [4] (Nimrud), which was included in

[4] Or possibly the whole mount of Nimrud.

what he understood by Niniveh, adjoining a temple supposed by Rawlinson (Herodotus, i. p. 147) to have been Bit-zira, one of the temples known to have been dedicated to Nin at that place. Its remains are still a conspicuous object in all views of the mount of Nimrud, and it is mentioned by Xenophon, 'Anab.' iii. 4, παρὰ ταύτην τὴν πόλιν (Larissa) ἦν πυραμὶς λιθίνη, τὸ μὲν εὖρος ἑνὸς πλέθρου, τὸ δὲ ὕψος δύο πλέθρων. The exaggerated dimensions given by the Knidian historian are characteristic of him. With regard to the statement that he places 'Ninus' on the Euphrates, that is just such a stupid blunder as we frequently find in Diodorus: the true reading is preserved in Nikolaus of Damascus, frag. 9 (a passage which Mr. Smith seems to have overlooked), which comes from Ktesias. There can be no doubt that the latter regarded the capitals of Ninus and Sardanapalus as identical.

As to the passages of Philostratus, Ninus was certainly not the *usual* name of Hierapolis in his time. It is clear that the use of Niniveh and Ninivite for the city and its inhabitants could only be due to a pedantic antiquarianism. The critical conjectures of a Greek antiquary of the third century of our era on a point of this kind are not worth much. As to the evidence of Ammianus, Mr. Smith himself discredits it. The name of Niniveh was applied in a general way by pedantic writers to various cities in its neighbourhood. Eusebius applies it to Nisibis, Moses of Chorene (i. 8) to some Parthian city.

There thus appears to be no reason for abandoning the view almost universally held, that Ninus in Ktesias means the same city as the Niniveh of the Bible and the Assyrian monuments. JOHN GILMORE.

ROMAN DACIA.

IN the present volume of this Review (pp. 100–103), Mr. Hodgkin discusses the size of the Roman province of Dacia, and concludes that it was far smaller than is usually represented on maps. I venture to offer one or two remarks on his arguments.

1. His main point is that when Ptolemy (iii. 8) describes Dacia, he means the land of the Daci, not the Roman province. Some sort of support for this view can be found in Ptolemy himself. The geographer, when describing a Roman province, almost always alludes to the Roman legions and colonies. In this case no legions or colonies are mentioned, while Sarmizegetusa itself is called βασίλειον. It must be confessed, indeed, that four towns appear with Roman names, Ulpianum, Salinæ, Prætoria Aug., and Aquæ (ad Aquas), and Ptolemy can hardly have written before the Roman conquest.

2. Dr. Hodgkin rejects the Tibiscus as the west boundary of Roman Dacia, because 'a strategist like Trajan would not have left unoccupied the long and narrow strip between Danube and Theiss.' But the Tibiscus must be the Temes, and the interval between the latter river and the Danube is considerable.

3. He substitutes for the Tibiscus, 'the vallum which runs,' he says, 'from near Temesvár to the Danube near Kostolatz (Viminacium) and