Ninus, the founder of Nineveh, and his greater spouse Semiramis, who was first the wife of his captain, Onnes, but won the king’s love by an heroic exploit, the capture of Bactra, which had defied the royal forces. Ninus died, and Semiramis, succeeding to his power, traversed all parts of the empire, erecting great cities (especially Babylon) and stupendous monuments or opening roads through savage mountains. She was unsuccessful only in an attack on India. At length, after a reign of forty-two years, she delivered up the kingdom to her son Ninyas and dis­appeared, or, according to what seems to be the original form of the story, was turned into a dove and was thence­forth worshipped as a deity. This legend is certainly not Assyrian or Babylonian ; Ctesias must have had it from Persians or Medes, and the fulness of detail, the multi­tude of proper names, favour the conjecture that Ninus and Semiramis were celebrated in some Median epic tale which went on to tell of the fall of Assyria before the Medes (Duncker, *Gesch. d. Alt.,* 5th ed., ii. 18 *sq.).* In this legend all the conquests of Assyria were crowded together into one lifetime, and King Ninus and his son Ninyas are mere eponyms of Nineveh, personifications of the Assyrian monarchy. But it is round the figure of Semiramis that all the real interest of the legend gathers; nor can she be the arbitrary creation of a poet, for it is certain that her name was popularly connected with many famous places and monuments. “ The works of Semiramis,” says Strabo (xvi. 1, 2), “are pointed out through almost the whole continent, earthworks bearing her name, walls and strong­holds, aqueducts, and stair-like roads over mountains, canals, roads, and bridges.” Ultimately every stupendous work of antiquity by the Euphrates or in Iran seems to have been ascribed to her,—even the Behistun inscriptions of Darius (Diod., ii. 13). Of this we already have evi­dence in Herodotus, who, though he does not know the legend afterwards told by Ctesias, ascribes to her the banks that confined the Euphrates (i. 184) and knows her name as borne by a gate of Babylon (iii. 155). Various places in Media bore the name of Semiramis, but slightly changed, even in the Middle Ages (Hoffmann, *Syrische Akten,* p. 137), and the old name of Van was Shamirama- gerd, Armenian tradition regarding her as its founder (St Martin, *Mém. sur L'Arménie,* i. 138). These facts are to be explained by observing that in her birth as well as in her disappearance from earth Semiramis clearly appears not as a mere woman but as a great goddess. In Diodorus’s account she is the daughter of the Derceto of Ascalon and miraculously brought up by doves, and again she is finally transformed into a dove, and therefore the Assyrians pay divine honours to this bird. Semiramis, therefore, is a dove-goddess associated with Derceto the fish-goddess. The same association of the fish and dove goddesses appears at Hierapolis (Bambyce, Mabbug), the great temple at which according to one legend was founded by Semi­ramis *(De Dea Syria,* 14), and where her statue was shown with a golden dove on her head *(ibid.,* 33, comp. 39). @@1 But the Semitic dove-goddess is Ishtar or Astarte, the great goddess of Assyria and Babylon, and the irresistible charms of Semiramis, her sexual excesses (see especially Dinon in Ælian, *V. H.,* vii. 1 ), and other features of the legend all bear out the view that she is primarily a form of Astarte, and so fittingly conceived as the great queen of Assyria. The word Semirāmis in Semitic form, as the Syrians write it, is Shĕmirâm (Hoffmann, *ut supra*)*,* an epithet rather than a proper name, which may be rendered “ the highly celebrated,” or perhaps rather “ name [mani­festation] of [the god] Rām.” @@2 The historical inference

from all this is that Semitic worship was carried by the Assyrians far into Media and Armenia.

On an Assyrian inscription the name Sammuramat appears as borne by the “lady of the palace” of Rammannivar (812-783 b.c.) ; see Schrader, *K.A.T.,* 2d ed., p. 366. E. Meyer *(Gesch. des Alterth.,* p. 409) combines this with the statement of Herodotus that Semi­ramis lived five generations before Nitocris, which would make her date 766 b.c. Possibly Herodotus identified the two names, but it is very doubtful whether they are really connected. Shemiramoth (1 Chron. xv. 18) perhaps means “ statues of Semiramis,” and, if so, was originally a place-name (Ewald, *a.l*.).

SEMIRYETCHENSK, a province of Russian Turkestan, including the steppes south of Lake Balkash and parts of the Tian-Shan Mountains around Lake Issik-kul. It has an area of 155,300 square miles and is bounded by Semipalatinsk on the N., by China (Jugutchak, Kuldja, Aksu, and Kashgaria) on the E. and S., and by the Russian provinces of Ferganah, Syr-Daria, and Akmolinsk on the W. It owes its name *(Jity-su, Semi-ryetchie, i.e., “*Seven Rivers ”) to the rivers which flow from the south-east into Lake Balkash. The Jungarian Ala-tau, which separates it from north-western Kuldja, penetrates into its central por­tions, extending south-west towards the river Ili, with an average height of 6000 feet above the sea, several isolated snow-clad peaks reaching about 12,000 feet. In the south Semiryetchensk embraces the intricate systems of the Trans­ili Ala-tau and the Tian-Shan (see Turkestan). Two ranges of the former, connected about their middle by a single mountain-mass, extend east-north-eastwards along the northern shore of Lake Issik-kul, both ranging from 10,000 to about 15,000 feet and both partially snow-clad. To the south of the lake two immense ranges of the Tian- Shan, separated by the valley of the Naryn, stretch in the same direction, raising their icy peaks to above 15,000 and 16,000 feet; while westwards from the lake the vast walls of the Alexandrovskiy ridge, 9000 to 10,000 feet high, with peaks rising some 2000 feet higher, extend to the province of Syr-Daria. Another mountain complex of much lower elevation runs north-westwards from the Trans-Ilian Ala-tau towards the southern extremity of Lake Balkash. In the north, λvhere the province borders Semipalatinsk, it includes the western parts of the Tarbagatai range, the summits of which (10,000 feet) do not reach the limit of perpetual snow. The remainder of the province consists of a rich steppe in the north-east (Serghiopol), and vast uninhabitable sand-steppes on the south-east of Lake Bal­kash. Southwards from the last-named, however, at the foot of the mountains and at the entrance to the valleys, there are rich areas of fertile land, which are rapidly being colonized by Russian immigrants, who have also spread into the Tian-Shan, to the east of Lake Issik-kul. The climate is relatively temperate (average yearly temperature 44° Fahr. at Vyernyi, 2500 feet above the sea) and the vegetation rich.

The chief river is the Ili. which enters the province from Kuldja, makes its way through the spurs of the Trans-Ilian Ala-tau, flows north-west in a bed varying from 200 to 1000 yards in width, and waters the province for 250 miles before it enters Lake Balkash by several mouths forming a wide delta. Its tributaries from the left are the Naryn, the Tchilik, and the Kurtu ; several others become lost in the sands. The Karatal, the Aksu, and the Lepsa likewise fall into Lake Balkash. The Tchu rises in the Tian-Shan Mountains and flows north-westwards to Lake Saumal-kul ; and the Naryn flows south-westwards along a longitudinal valley of the Tian-Shan, and enters Ferganah to join the Syr-Daria. The province contains several important lakes. Lake Balkash, or Denghiz, in the north (8880 square miles), is crescent-shaped, 400 miles long and 55 wide in its broader part ; but its area is much less than it for­merly was, and it is rapidly drying up,—notably since 1853. Lake Ala-kul, which was connected with Balkash in the Post-Pliocene period, now stands some hundred feet higher, and is connected by a chain of smaller lakes with Sisik-kul. Lake Issik-kul (2260 square miles) is a deep mountain lake, 120 miles long and 37 wide, 5300 feet above the sea. The alpine lakes Son-kul (9400 feet) and Tchatyr-kul (11,100) lie south-west of Issik-kul.

The population, which was estimated at 748,800 by M. Kostenko in 1880 (139,660 being in the Kuldja region), has since increased,

@@@1 It is noteworthy in this connexion that Mabbug is the *Ninus vetus* of Ammianus and Philostratus. .

@@@2 Cp. the Phoenician “Astarte ⅛l2Dt}D, (C.I.S. i. 1, No. 3, 1. 18).