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THE POETS JULIA BALBILLA AND DAMO AT THE COLOSSUS OF MEMNON

In this paper I offer a general historical and (admittedly speculative) prosopographical introduction to two women poets of the Roman empire who, in the modern period, have never been widely known and who, even now, surprisingly are seldom discussed. The more important is Julia Balbilla, who composed in the Aeolic dialect. We have from her four complete poems, elegiacs totalling 54 lines, with an additional pentameter tacked onto the last of these verses, seemingly as an afterthought. These Balbilla had carved on the "Colossus of Memnon" outside Egyptian Thebes in A.D. 130, while in the company of the emperor Hadrian and his wife Sabina. The other poet I discuss (and attempt to identify) is a certain Damo, who has left two elegiac couplets on the Memnon statue, also in the Aeolic dialect. These graffiti—and the inscriptions of about a hundred other visitors to the statue, in Greek and Latin, prose and verse—have been collected, with French translation and commentary, in the great edition of Memnon inscriptions by A. and É. Bernand. The poems of Julia Balbilla and Damo are unlikely to excite anyone because of literary style, and perhaps not even because of their content. But I argue that both these poets are important, not so much as writers but as individuals, for they shed remarkable light on the competitive ethos—both political and literary—of the Roman elite in the age of Hadrian.

The story of the Memnon Colossus is well enough known so as not to require a lengthy discussion here. This 65-foot high mono-
lithic figure was set up (along with a companion statue) around 1400 B.C. to honor Amenophis III. At some point the upper part toppled to the ground; an earthquake of 26 B.C. is generally held to blame. The mishap was to launch the statue into real fame. A high-pitched noise started emanating from what remained on the statue base, especially in the early morning. An eyewitness from ca. 24 B.C.—none other than the geographer Strabo, in the company of the Prefect of Egypt and a horde of officers and soldiers—reports: “I too . . . heard the noise at about the first hour [that is, soon after sunrise], but whether it came from the base or from the colossus—or whether the noise was made on purpose by one of the men who were standing all round and near the base—I am unable positively to assert.”

Plenty of later sightseers made up for Strabo’s skepticism. Pausanias was quite impressed with the statue, comparing the sound to “that of a kithara or lyre when a string has been broken.” Indeed, there was a long series of curiosity seekers who came to see the colossus, including Germanicus in A.D. 19 and, as I noted, the emperor Hadrian, in November 130, soon after the death by drowning of his favorite Antinous. We do not know for certain precisely when or why Greek-speaking visitors to Egypt started equating the statue with Memnon, but it may have been well before it started to “speak.”

For better or worse, some who came carved their impressions of the weird sound right onto the figure of Memnon. Many of these interpreted the musical note the statue gave forth at the first rays of the sun as Memnon’s greeting to his mother, the Dawn. (In actuality, the noise probably had something to do with the moisture which had collected overnight in the fissured stone; the base expanded when warmed by the rising sun.) It appears that local priests managed the site, providing information to tourists, and—as one source tells us—encouraging visitors to sacrifice to “the sun of Aethiopia and to Memnon of the Dawn.” The priests surely profited for their troubles.

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3 Strabo 17.1.46 (the translation is that of H. L. Jones in the Loeb edition).

* Paus. 1.42.3.

7 For the basic chronology of Hadrian’s visit, see H. Halfmann, *Itinera principum. Geschichte und Typologie der Kaiserreisen im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart 1986) 188–210, esp. 193–94 and 207–08; Birley, *Hadrian* (above, n.1) 235–58.

8 On this question, see most recently A. Théodoridès, “Pèlerinage au Colosse de Memnon,” *CE* 64 (1989) 267–82, esp. 269–79; Foertmeyer (above, n.2) 23–24.

9 See Bowersock (above, n.2) 23.

10 Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll. 6.4; for the priests see also Balbilla in Bernand 28.3–4.
In particular, I am convinced that they charged handsomely for the privilege of writing on the stone. It can be no accident that the overwhelming majority of signatories are Roman administrators of rank—for instance, prefects of Egypt and governors of Thebes (and their wives) count for fully a fifth of the inscriptions. There is also no writing in demotic. True, about two dozen Roman military officers and soldiers also signed the statue over the years; but they were in a position to bypass the usual procedures and not care how they looked doing so. Whatever the case, the practice of carving graffiti onto the rock came to an end in the early third century. And eventually the statue stopped singing, perhaps, as G. W. Bowersock has argued, sometime shortly before the year 272: Queen Zenobia of Palmyra had "rehabilitated" the seated figure in a makeshift manner with some blocks of stone. 

II

Four women have left verses on the statue. Besides Julia Balbilla (Bernand 28–31) and Damo (Bernand 83), there is a certain Caecilia Trebulla, who writes splendid iambic trimeters, thirteen of which are extant (= Bernand 92–94). All these women carved their poetry on the left leg of the Memnon—the choice part of the statue, for that is where the sun (i.e., Dawn) would first strike. In addition, a Dionysia has left a single iambic trimeter on the right leg (= Bernand 66). The only one of these poets who admits precise identification is Julia Balbilla. She was an important member of Hadrian’s inner circle who could boast of blood ties, through her father, with the royalty of all the Near Eastern dynasties which mattered. I provide a simplified stemma of her immediate family:

Ti. Claudius Balbillus (Prefect Egypt 55–59) –> Antiochus IV of Commagene (king 37–72)
Claudia Capitolina = C. Iulius Antiochus (Iulius) Kallinikos (Iulia) = C. Iulius Laco
Claudia Capitolina = C. Iulius Antiochus Iulia Balbilla
Claudia Capitolina = C. Iulius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappus

Iulius Laco

11 Or rather, for masons to do the writing on behalf of visitors; with Memnon, "unlike the graffiti at other [Egyptian] sites . . . the inscriptions were not scratched onto the rock, but were engraved by professional stone-cutters" (Foertmeyer [above n.2] 25).

12 Bowersock (above, n.2) 21–32.

13 For Herculanus as anepsios ("cousin") of Balbilla, see IG V 1 489 + 575 with A. J. S. Spawforth, "Balbilla, the Euryclids and Memorials for a Greek Magnate," ABSA 73 (1978) 249–60 and plates 34–35. Spawforth (254) makes Herculanus
Julia Balbilla had as her maternal grandfather a man who served as prefect of Egypt under Nero, in which capacity he showed a deep interest in antiquities by having the Sphinx cleared of sand (for the first time in perhaps a millennium). He was also an expert in astrology—indeed, the son of Tiberius' astrologer Thrasyllus—who for a time headed the famous Museum in Alexandria. Seneca calls this man, Balbillus, "exceptionally accomplished in every type of literature." As for her father's side, that complex story will be told below (Section III). But I note here that the praenomen "Gaius" which the menfolk carry should indicate that the family got its citizenship from Augustus.

Balbilla's brother, Philopappus, was one of the first dozen or so men of eastern descent to reach the Roman consulship. We know that Balbilla herself made a costly dedication in Sparta, in memory of a cousin, Herculanus, who belonged to one of the earlier (though not the earliest) families from Old Greece to reach the Roman Senate. Plutarch befriended both Balbilla's brother and cousin. To Philopappus Plutarch dedicated his work How to Distinguish a Friend from a Flatterer. Herculanus, on the other hand, received the treatise on How to Praise Yourself without Incurring Discredit.

Both the brother and cousin were old friends of the emperor Hadrian, who in some particulars emulated them. Hadrian had become an Athenian citizen through Philopappus' agency, and like Philopappus, had exercised simultaneously the Athenian archonship and the position of agonothetes. As regards the Spartan Herculanus, he was one of the first to promote the cult of Hadrian's deified lover Antinous, who in late October 130 had drowned while traveling with the emperor in Egypt. Herculanus remembered Hadrian in his will by leaving him the island of Cythera, which had been a family possession. There is also reason to believe that the example of Philopappus and Herculanus prompted Hadrian to be initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, which he did in autumn of the year 124.


See HA Hadrian 13.1 (Hadrian): Eleusinia sacra exemplo Herculis Philippique suscepit with J. H. Oliver, AJPh 71 (1950) 295-99, who plausibly argues that be-
When Balbilla wrote in the Aeolic dialect, it must have been in
direct emulation of Sappho.\textsuperscript{18} Now, we have independent evidence
from Balbilla’s general era that entertainment at a dinner party might
include the performance of Sappho’s love poetry.\textsuperscript{19} And we know
that, for Roman men, it was a standard compliment to compare women
writers to Sappho, sincerely or not.\textsuperscript{20} But it really seems more than
a coincidence that both Balbilla and Damo were well enough ac-
quainted with the Lesbian dialect to be able to imitate Sappho for
the occasion. Besides the verse of these two women, as far as I
know, we have no other example from the Empire of original verse
composition in Aeolic Greek.

Perhaps Balbilla’s and Damo’s choice of literary dialect might
not seem so strange, if we had more women’s poetry. But in this
period, the long-dead Lesbian dialect may have had an attraction in
itself.\textsuperscript{21} As E. L. Bowie and now S. Swain have demonstrated in
detail, starting especially in the late first century A.D., we find a
craze for archaism among Greek elites, a fashion which manifests
hind the \textit{HA’s} “Philippus” lurks Philopappus. Oliver’s suggestion soon met fierce
opposition (see W. Den Boer, \textit{Mnemosyne} 8 [1955] 129), but it is entertained by
Birley, \textit{Hadrian} (above, n.1) 175–77 and “Senators” (above, n.1) 219, n.71. I think it
must be right. Indeed, I would go further than Oliver and suggest that “Philippi”
is a deliberate corruption by the author of the \textit{Vita}—adding that “Herculis” must
also be a malformation, of “Herculani.” Though there evidently was a tradition that
Hercules had been initiated into the mysteries—see \textit{IG II/III} 3575 with Birley,
\textit{Hadrian} (above, n.1) 175—the author of the \textit{HA} was hardly likely to find that item
on his own (unless perhaps Hadrian mentioned it in his autobiography). For the
\textit{HA’s} (lavishly attested) habit of deliberately perverting proper names see R. Syme,
\textit{Ammianus and the Historia Augusta} (Oxford 1968) 167–68; \textit{Emperors and Biogra-
phy} (Oxford 1971) 8–11.

\textsuperscript{18} Sappho was an obvious literary model for any woman poet in the classical
world. Besides Nossis in \textit{Anth. Pal.} 7.718 (who explicitly expresses the wish to be
compared to Sappho and to make her native Locris in south Italy the Mytilene of
the West), the outstanding example is Melinno, whose “Hymn to Rome”—preserved
by chance in the \textit{Florilegium} of John Stobaeus (fifth century A.D.)—is written in
Sapphic stanzas (but in the hybrid dialect of Greek choral lyrics): see C. M. Bowra,
\textit{JRS} 47 (1957) 21–28 for text and basic discussion. Melinno probably dates to the
second century A.D. (thus, most recently, A. Dihle, \textit{Greek and Latin Literature of
many scholars argue for a date as early as the second century B.C.; see J.-L. Ferrary,

\textsuperscript{19} See the sources collected in G. Nagy, \textit{Poetry as Performance} (Cambridge
1996) 219, n.41.

\textsuperscript{20} Luc. \textit{De Mercede Cond.} 36; see Prop. 2.3.19, Mart. 7.69.10 and in general
(on insincere comparisons to Sappho), B. J. Brooten, \textit{Love between Women} (Chicago
1996) 36. Throughout antiquity, there was a marked tendency to assign Lesbos au-
tomatically as the provenance of female poets of the first order (Ferrary, above,
n.18, 268 n.15)—which is precisely what Stobaeus does for Melinno (\textit{Flor.} 3.7.12).

\textsuperscript{21} Note Apul. \textit{Apol.} 9: mulier Lesbia, lascive illa quidem tantaque gratia, ut
nobis insolentiam linguae suae dulcedine carminum commendet. See also Swain (above,
n.1) 60 on Galen’s insistence (\textit{Thrasyb.} V.868.1–869.7 K; \textit{De diff. puls.} VIII.585.9–11 K)
that for a proper knowledge of Greek, it is necessary for the educated person to
have a thorough command not just of Attic but also secondary knowledge of the
Aeolic, Doric, and Ionic dialects. Galen’s view, probably meant as a riposte to the
powerful atticizing movement of his day, may be idiosyncratic; at any rate, he does
not expect anything approaching fluency in the secondary dialects (V.869.5–7).
itself in almost all their cultural activities. And so it comes as no surprise to find that in this general period the people of Lesbos themselves were eagerly reviving the archaic forms of their dialect. The results, known to us from a long series of inscriptions that start in the mid-first century B.C., show Hellenistic κοινή forms and hyperdialectisms cheek-by-jowl; scholars of dialects have traditionally considered them of little use for a reconstruction of the living Lesbian language of any time.

As is well known, Latin had its own archaizing movement which was gathering steam precisely in Hadrian’s time. The emperor personally sought to revive archaic and forgotten authors, both Latin and Greek. For instance, our sources tell us he championed against Homer the “obscure” Antimachus of Colophon, the pioneer scholar-poet of the early fourth century B.C., who took an obsessive interest in recondite points of mythology, language (including dialects), and geography—being especially eager to “correct” earlier tradition. All this would have appealed to Hadrian, who, by all accounts, was intellectually competitive to an extreme. The Life of Hadrian in the Historia Augusta tells us he painted, sang, played the kithara, studied astrology, arithmetic, and geometry—and surrounded himself with intellectuals only to mock, scorn, and grind them down. Hadrian’s

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23 For a dismissive view, see e.g., A. Thumb, Handbuch der griechischen Dialekte I (Heidelberg 1909) 247–48, 254. But for some quite productive studies of this material in its own right, see W. Blümel, Die asiatischen Dialekte (Göttingen 1982) and R. Hodot, Le dialecte éolien d’Asie (Paris 1990); see also V. Bubeník, Hellenistic and Roman Greece as a Sociolinguistic Area (Amsterdam and Philadelphia 1989), esp. 147–51.

24 For an adequate sketch of the main features of the phenomenon (with previous bibliography), see D. W. T. Vessey, ANRW II 34.2 (1994) 1863–1917 (esp. 1871–73 on Marcus Aurelius’ delight in learning a Hernican dialect word); see also M. Astarita, La cultura nelle “Notices Atticae” (Catania 1993), who investigates Gellius’ intellectual and literary interests through a systematic analysis of his citations. Fein (above, n.1) 86, n.4, gives references to the principal studies of Latin archaism in this period.


26 Dio 69.4.6; HA Hadrian 16.2. In the edition of V. J. Matthews (Antimachus of Colophon [Leiden 1996]), see e.g. frags. 183 (61 Wyss) and 81 (69 W.) (geography); fr. 3 (3 W.), see also 78 (67 W.) (dialects); frags. 69, 71, 131 (58, 60, 53 W.) (“correction”). For the later study of Antimachus, see Matthews 64–76.

27 HA Hadrian 14.8–11, 15.10, 16.7; see also Marius Maximus ap. Ael. 3.9.
actual Greek verse—of which we possess a fair bit—betrays a pains-taking study of the diction of Homer and Aeschylus, with some learned innovations of his own, just like Antimachus and the Alexandrians.28 However, we have no way of knowing whether he competed with Julia Balbilla in the Aeolic dialect.

E. L. Bowie, who has long worked in this period, sums up the prevailing view on Julia Balbilla as poet: “none of Balbilla’s verse is great poetry, and some is atrocious.”29 Yet we must remember this is very much occasional poetry, really meant as panegyrics of Hadrian and his wife Sabina, known to us only through chance survival. From a technical perspective, Balbilla’s verses are blameless. Julia Balbilla was at least in her forties, though probably a bit older by the time of her visit to Egypt. She obviously had a good deal of experience as a poet by this time, as her sophisticated, mostly unrepetitive, metrically flawless inscriptions show. As for the dialect, Balbilla’s poetry is the one example from the Imperial period which A. Thumb admitted as a legitimate source in his discussion of Aeolic Greek.30

Indeed, I suspect these poems were not entirely impromptu. The Memnon Colossus and the pyramids were arguably the top two tourist destinations in Egypt during this era.31 Hadrian, known to Tertullian as “the explorer of all curiosities,” was not going to pass up the opportunity to meet a singing statue. On this same trip, after all, he would handsomely reward the magician and poet Pachrates for using a spell to kill a man in seven hours.32 The emperor had a real taste for the macabre. And Balbilla surely knew all about the statue, for she had both a grandfather and stepfather who were Prefects of Egypt. It also appears from graffiti in the Valley of the Kings that her brother had previously visited Egypt.33

The question naturally arises what Julia Balbilla was doing on this trip in the first place. Bowie conjectured from “her visit to Memnon with Sabina” that Balbilla was the empress’ answer to Hadrian’s lover and companion Antinous.34 But I suggest that Hadrian at least originally insisted on Balbilla’s presence. Eight years previous, on the

28 See Anth. Pal. 6.332, 7.674, 9.137, 387, 402 and Kaibel (above, n.1) nos. 811 and 1089 with Fein (above, n.1) 47–60. (Fein 51–52 rightly assigns Kaibel no. 888a to the later sophist Hadrianus of Tyre.)
29 Bowie (above, n.1) 62.
30 Thumb (above, n.23) 62-51. On Balbilla’s age, see further below, n.34.
31 See Lucian Toxaris 27.
32 See Tert. Apol. 5.7: omnium curiositatum explorator, with the comments of A. Birley, “Hadrian’s Farewell to Life,” Laverna 5 (1994) 176–205, at 196, n.78 (“the plural is in fact not found earlier . . . and the use of curiousus and curiositas in a pejorative—and religious—sense is very common”). On Pachrates, see Birley 195–96 and his Hadrian (above, n.1) 240–46; see also C. P. Jones, Culture and Society in Lucian (Cambridge, Mass., 1986) 48–50.
33 M. J. Baillet, Inscriptions grecques et latines des tombeaux des rois ou Syringes (Cairo 1920) I no. 76, 22–23, on which see Baslez (above, n.16) 93–97 (suggesting a date between A.D. 94 and 96).
34 Bowie (above, n.1) 62. I assume that Bowie was thinking in particular of the language of Bernand 30, where the reference in line 3 to Sabina’s “lovely form”
trip to Britain which resulted in his Wall, the emperor had dismissed
the praetorian prefects Septicius Clarus and Suetonius—both noted
literary figures—for carrying on with Sabina against his orders. On
this later tour of the east, perhaps Hadrian planned for his wife
to consort with fewer men and more women of letters. But there
may be other reasons, which I shall offer below.

III

Of Balbilla's four poems, the first (Bernand 28 = 20 November 130) commemorates Hadrian's encounter with Memnon around 7 in the morning. Balbilla's second poem (Bernand 29 = 19 November) is really a programmatic piece, though it is inscribed below number 28, in deference to the emperor. It is an elaborate prayer in traditional hymn style to the statue, begging it to sing for the empress Sabina. In the event, Balbilla did not succeed in getting the statue to talk, and rationalizes why in her third poem (Bernand 30 = 20 November); here she also records that the statue let out a sound about 6 A.M. for Sabina on her second visit. Poem 4 (Bernand 31), which is carved in much larger and deeper letters than the others, records the fact that Balbilla was present with Sabina on 21 November when Memnon again made his noise. It is hard not to wonder whether these poems were performed for the statue before they were engraved.

In the poem which concerns us here, Bernand 29, Balbilla follows the erroneous tradition, repeated in a few other Memnon inscriptions, that the Persian king Cambyses mutilated the Memnon-statue in the sixth century B.C. Balbilla is careful to point out that Cambyses did not get away scot-free. Though the Persian king went on to slay theApis bull, sacred to the Egyptians, Balbilla tells us he paid requital for his impious acts when he later jabbed himself with his own sword—a story well-known from Herodotus.

(ἐράται μήφα, modelled on Sappho 96.21-22 L.-P) does leap out; see also 31.3 (ἐράται βασιλήδι τυίδε Σαβίννα). It is hard to find another instance of a Roman empress addressed in such intimate language (duly noted by A. Carandini, *Vibia Sabina* [Florence 1969] 83). E. Badian—while stressing the hazards of using verse for autobiography—has suggested to me that Balbilla by casting herself (surely) as Sappho and Sabina as one of her "maidens" may reveal that she is older than the empress. (Sabina was at least in her early forties at this point: see *HA Hadr.* 2.10 for her marriage to Hadrian ca. A.D. 100.) That of course would upset any parallel with Hadrian and Antinous.
The genealogy which then ends this poem is of extreme interest. Here is the relevant passage:39

"Αλλ' ἔγει σὺ δοκίμασι σέθεν τοδ' ὀλεσθ' ἄν ἄγαλμα,
ψυχαν δ' ἀθανάταν λοίκον ἐσωθ' νόμο.
Εὐσέβεις γάρ ἔμοι γένεσαί πάκποι τ' ἐγένοντο,
Βαλβίλλος τ' ὁ σόφος κ' Ἀντίοχος βασίλευς,
Βαλβίλλος γενεταις μάτρος βασιλήδος ἄμμας,
τῷ πάτερος δὲ πατὴρ Ἀντίοχος βασίλευς
κήνων ἐκ γενέας κάγῳ λόχον αἴμα τό κάλλον,
Βαλβίλλας δ' ἐμεθεν γρόπτα τάδ' εὐσέβειος.

But I do not think this statue of you would (thereupon) perish, and I sense within a soul hereafter immortal. For pious were my parents and grandparents, Balbillus the Wise and King Antiochus: Balbillus the father of my mother—a queen; and King Antiochus, father of my father. From their stock I too have obtained noble blood, and these are my writings, Balbilla the Pious.

No claims to distant or legendary ancestors here: Balbilla gives us only three generations. But Balbilla’s paternal grandfather, as she tells us, was Antiochus, who happens to have been the last ruler of Commagene, the small but strategically important kingdom situated west of the Euphrates between Cappadocia and Syria.40 Commagene was a possession of the Seleucids, but it eventually (ca. 163 B.C.) managed to assert its independence. For a long time, it was counted as the richest land in Anatolia—right up to A.D. 72, the time of its total absorption by Rome, when (amazingly) Balbilla’s father and uncle offered armed resistance to forces sent by the emperor Vespasian.

The kings of Commagene looked toward both east and west. They exploited a lineage which was made to go back to the Persian king Darius. This came in handy when dealing with their powerful Parthian neighbors, who also thought of themselves as descended from the old Persian kings. A policy of intermarriage with the Seleucids brought in Macedonian royal ties as well. The Commagenian rulers advertised these exalted origins in their throne names, which, starting in the early first century B.C., alternated between the Iranian

39 For line 12 text see M. L. West, ZPE 25 (1977) 120. In my translations in this paper, italics indicate that only a part of the word is preserved in the original.
40 For a general introduction to the history of Commagene and its rulers (with full citation of the sources for the sketch below), see Sullivan (above, n.16) 732-98, esp. 734 (topography and wealth of Commagene), 736 (descent claims of its dynasty), and 783 (the kings’ alternation of names).
"Mithridates" and the Macedonian "Antiochus." Additional dynastic epithets announced personal qualities and allegiances. Mithridates I was "Callinicus," "splendid in victory": the official suggestion seems to have been that he had endured labors comparable to those of his patron, Heracles. But that must be only part of the picture. This Mithridates had married a daughter of the powerful Seleucid ruler Antiochus VIII:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seleucids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antiochus VIII Epiphanes Philometer Kallinikos Grypus (125–96 B.C.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laodice Thea Philadelphos = Mithridates I Kallinikos (ca. 100–ca. 70 B.C.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiochus I Theos Dikaios Epiphanes Philoromaioi Philhellen (ca. 70–ca. 36 B.C.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

His new father-in-law had as one of his cult names Callinicus. Mithridates' assumption of Callinicus was thus a strong policy statement. The tag was well established for the Seleucids, dating back over 150 years. The son of this new union, the later Antiochus I, fashioned himself—at least after death—as Theos Dikaios Epiphanes Philoromaioi Philhellen. Particularly interesting is Antiochus' employment of "Theos" (note his Seleucid mother) and "Epiphanes," another traditional Seleucid epithet—which one can see his maternal grandfather had used.

A century and a half later, we find the princes of Commagene making the same assertive claims. Julia Balbilla had an uncle called...

41 A list of Commagenian rulers might be useful here (adapted from E. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World* [London 1980] 165):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mithridates I Kallinikos</th>
<th>ca. 100–c. 70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antiochus I Theos Dikaios Epiphanes Philoromaioi Philhellen</td>
<td>ca. 70–c. 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mithridates II</td>
<td>ca. 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Antiochus II, did not reign)</td>
<td>d. 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mithridates III</td>
<td>ca. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiochus III</td>
<td>d. A.D. 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Commagene under direct rule by Rome]</td>
<td>A.D. 17–37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiochus IV</td>
<td>A.D. 37–72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42 On the (otherwise exclusively) Seleucid use of "Callinicus," see E. Breccia, *Il diritto dinastico nelle monarchie dei successori d'Alessandro Magno* (Rome 1903) 97 with 113. Breccia's treatment of throne names in the major Hellenistic dynasties is still standard, though a revision (with expansion into evidence from the lesser kingdoms) is long overdue.

43 As for "Lover of Rome" and "Lover of Greece," he is the first monarch ever to join these two epithets: Ferrary (above, n.18) 500–1. It is an extension of the same attitude which we see in this dynasty's scrupulous oscillation of Iranian and Macedonian throne names (above, n.41, with text).
“King” Callinicus; and her own father’s name was Julius Antiochus Epiphanes. Tacitus knew of her father also as a “king,” though he never had a kingdom. Epiphanes married a daughter of Balbillus the prefect, called Claudia Capitolina, who in consequence got the title of regina, “queen,” keeping it even after her husband’s death, when she married another man who would be prefect of Egypt.

Balbilla’s brother also was allowed to retain the title of “king.” His full name was C. Iulius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappus, that is, “lover of his grandfather,” the last proper Commagenian ruler. Now, as is well known, Hellenistic princes sometimes used the epithet “Philopator” (as well as “Philometor”) to assert their dynastic claims, emphasizing—especially to younger siblings—a claim to lineal succession. “Philopappus” must have served the same purpose. I should note that the epithet “lover of his grandfather” is unique to this individual. No other Hellenistic dynast seems to have used it, probably because it seemed quite strained.

Philopappus’ funerary monument, still quite conspicuous on the Musaion Hill in Athens, provides confirmation of his dynastic pretensions. There his statue is flanked by that of Seleucus I as well as (now missing) that of his grandfather, Antiochus—an arrangement surely meant to signify that Philopappus was the last of the Seleucid line. The inscription on the monument shows that Balbilla’s brother used the title basileus (“king”). The flamboyant tomb of Philopappus was within the city walls (so surely built by special dispensation) and, most unusually, at a height. As it happens, it is one of the few grand construction projects in Athens in the first and early second centuries A.D., a time of local cultural and economic recession.

Scholars have long suspected that the chief architectural source for this amazing structure is none other than the massive tomb which Philopappus’ ancestor, King Antiochus I, built for himself in Commagene. That was situated on Nemrud Dagh, the highest peak in the kingdom (2200 meters in altitude), and was clearly visible from his capital city of Samosata.

In 1983 D. E. E. Kleiner devoted a monograph to the Philopappus tomb in which she concludes that Philopappus had “not lost sight of

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44 Hist. 2.25.
45 Sources in PIR, 2nd ed., C 1086.
46 See F. Muccioli, Historia 43 (1994) 421.
47 D. E. E. Kleiner, The Monument of Philopappos in Athens (Rome 1983) offers a detailed study of the tomb and Philopappus’ tomb inscriptions (OGIS 409-13, of which see esp. 410 for his use of Βασιλεύς). The date of Philopappus’ death is generally thought to be ca. 115, for in OGIS 409 Trajan is “Germanicus” and “Dacicus” (used after 114), but not “Parthicus” (received in 116); see also S. Follet, Athènes au IIe et au Ille siècle (Paris 1976) 56–57. But see below, n.50.
49 Widely discussed: see the bibliography collected by M. Weiskopf in E. Jarshater (ed.), Encyclopaedia Iranica VI (Costa Mesa 1993) 57.
his Commagenian origins, of the kingship he claims on his tomb, or of the divinization and worship that was the Commagenian king's due after his death." Since Philopappus probably had no heir, Kleiner suggests the possibility that it was none other than Julia Balbilla who commissioned the tomb, oversaw its architectural and sculptural program, and might even have been buried there.50

This brings us back to Balbilla's verse genealogy. With this, Balbilla caps her poem with a powerful personal statement. Though Memnon had been mutilated by Cambyses, Balbilla says,

I do not think this statue of you would thereupon perish, and I sense within a soul hereafter immortal. For pious (eusebeis) were my parents and grandparents, Balbillus the Wise and King Antiochus; Balbillus the father of my mother—a queen; and King Antiochus, father of my father. From their stock I too have obtained noble blood, and these are my writings, Balbilla the Pious (eusebes).

The basic sense is that Balbilla is able to perceive Memnon's soul, something an irreligious person would not be able to do (as Martin West has argued51). But there is more. Like her brother Philopappus, Julia Balbilla is proud of her grandfather the king. Indeed, grandparents and parents alike—including her mother "the queen"—are called eusebeis. The adjective must have held some special significance for our poet, since Balbilla applies it also to herself, in emphatic position at the end of the poem. This prompted J. Gagé52 to suggest that "Julia Balbilla was a priestess and served Hadrian in this capacity in 130." I think that this explanation takes us in the wrong direction.

Now, it seems unlikely that Balbilla could call herself queen. The royal privilege, after Rome's annexation of Commagene, must have been strictly confined, presumably to the one male who would have been king (and probably his spouse as queen). No collaterals should have been able to use the title; the Emperor would not allow

50 Kleiner (above, n.47) passim, esp. 9–17 on the Commagenian dynasty and Philopappus' life; also 52 and 95 for the suggestion that Balbilla had built his tomb; the quote comes from 89–90. Evidence of Balbilla's honors for her cousin Herculanus at Sparta, ca. 136–37 (on which see the article of Spawforth, above, n.13), would seem to support Kleiner's hypothesis. But A. Birley (per litteras) cautions that we cannot rule out the alternate possibility that Philopappus, in true eastern style, himself set up the monument (inscriptions and all!) in his own lifetime (i.e., ca. 115, to judge from OGIS 409; see above, n.47). In that case, his precise year of death would be obviously irrecoverable. But a date before 118 seems likely: see Baslez (above, n.16) 99 (also assuming that Philopappus outlived the inscription on his tomb). The exemplum it is suggested he provided of initiation at Eleusis (n.17) would have outlived his death.

51 Above, n.39.

52 Basiléia (Paris 1968) 80–85; see also Sullivan (above, n.16) 796, and Baslez (above, n.16) 96 and 100.
that dignity to be spread too widely. In her poetry, Balbilla does not use a royal title—and I am sure it was not simply tact. But Eusebes is a well-known Hellenistic dynastic epithet. Though it is not attested in the actual nomenclature of any of the rulers of Commagene, it was used by the Seleucid Antiochus X (95–83 B.C.), whose sister had married into the Commagenian royal house.53 Balbilla in this passage must be exploiting the evocative adjective eusebes to draw attention to her Seleucid connections. For confirmation, one ought to remember her father, her uncle, and of course her brother, Julius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappus. What we have is a masterful example of self-advertisement, artfully placed in a context—elaborate praise poetry—where it was all too easy to violate propriety.

Balbilla also may be evoking the spirit of her ancestor’s spectacular tomb back in Commagene. The long autobiographical inscription which adorns the mausoleum of her great-great-great-great grandfather, Antiochus I, starts off with the following declaration:

'Ἐγὼ πάντων ἁγαθῶν ὦ μόνον | κτῆσιν βεβαιοτάτην, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπόλαυσιν ἡδίστην ἀνθρώπος ἐνόμισα τὴν | εὐσεβείαν

Of all good things, I have deemed piety (eusebeia) not only the most durable possession, but also the sweetest pleasure for men.54

Balbilla’s ancestor Antiochus returns to this theme several times in his text. Men were supposed to take the hint, since he was now a god, and pay proper attention to his cult. Whether or not Balbilla had been born in Commagene, it is not too much to suppose that she knew of these words, evoking them for herself—just as this very king’s tomb architecture had been used to glorify her brother Philopappus. But now let us turn to the verse of a woman who tries to evoke Balbilla.

IV

The poetry of Damo on the Memnon statue reads as follows in the Bernand edition:

Ἄδως ὡ παῖ χαῖρε· πρόφρων ἐφθέγξαο γάρ μοι, | ἡ Μέμ[νοι], Πετερίδων εἶνεκα, ταῖς μέλιμα | γιλαο[ίδος] Δαμὼ· ἐμὰ δ’ ἐπὶ ἤρα φέροισα | βάρβιτος [ἀείσειτ’ ἂι] [σὸν], ἄγνε, κρέτος. (Bernand 83)

53 See Breccia (above, n.42) 98, 117–18 for the distribution of this epithet (Seleucid and Attalid).
54 OGIS 383, from a tomb at Nemrud Dagh (ca. 36 B.C.), lines 11–14, the first words of his text proper. See also OGIS 383, lines 14, 26, 52, 106, 139, 191, 212.
Hail, son of Dawn, for favorably you spoke to me, Memnon, for the sake of the Muses, to whom I am dear—Damo, lover of song. Showing favor [or perhaps ‘bringing aid’], my barbitos shall ever sing your power, o holy one.

As Martin West has observed, “we have here a woman who does not merely compose verse, but who considers herself a genuine lyric poetess.” Indeed, Damo purports to carry a barbitos, a long Asiatic lyre of (generally) five to seven strings which was played with a plectrum; it was associated with Sappho, Alcaeus, the great love poet Anacreon, and others in the archaic and classical periods. Carrying a barbitos in itself was obviously somewhat of an affectation. West cites Dionysius of Halicarnassus to the effect that the instrument was quite obsolete in the Greek world by the end of the first century B.C., though its use continued among the Romans in “all their ancient sacrificial rituals.”55 Damo’s placement of her inscription—on the same leg of Memnon but above Balbilla’s poems—is inconclusive vis-à-vis the question whether she visited at the same time or later than Julia Balbilla. But her use of the Aeolic dialect coupled with elegiacs does suggest that Damo sought to emulate Balbilla. In fact, Damo in her four lines seems to echo quite deliberately also the basic structure, vocabulary, and themes of Balbilla’s Poem 2 (Bernand 29).56

In that poem, Balbilla greets Memnon as “son of Dawn and Tithonus” (Αἶων καὶ . . . Μέμνων, πάτι Τιθώνοιο . . . χαίρε) and begs the statue to address Sabina “favorably” (πρόφρων) (29.1–5). Damo telescopes virtually the same opening address into her first line (starting also with Αἶων . . . ), and uses the adjective πρόφρων of her own successful meeting with Memnon.57 Furthermore, in Bernand 29, Balbilla had claimed she is able to perceive Memnon’s soul because of her “piety”—as we have seen, a word with both religious and dynastic connotations. The reason Memnon speaks to Damo is that she is “dear to the Muses” (Πειερίδων εἰνέκα, ταῖς μέλομαι). Damo’s assertive claim to the status of lyric poet places her in a privileged position. Balbilla could proudly point toward her genealogy when beseeching the statue to speak; but Damo on the strength of her poetry alone has won an audience with holy Memnon. And that po-

56 I thank A. Chanioti for bringing to my attention exactly how close a parallel can be drawn between these two poems, beyond what was noticed by Bernand (above, n.1) 180. I also acknowledge a general debt to him for some valuable bibliographical assistance in preparing this article. I have a number of observations to offer regarding Damo’s (good Sapphic) diction, but I will save them for a projected publication.
57 Perhaps thereby even attempting to forge a conceptual link between herself and the Empress. But note Bernand 42.1 (A.D. 134, carved quite near Balbilla’s poem no. 29) πρόφρων ἐφεβεύς τοῦ Μέμνων.
etry has power. Like Balbilla (29.11–12 with 18), Damo obliquely assures Memnon that through her (epigraphic) song his immortality is vouchsafed.58

No one to my knowledge has attempted to make an identification of Damo, despite the relatively rare occurrence of the name.59 A document from Hadrianic (or early Antonine) Athens provides the best material I have found for speculation. Two of the surviving orthostate blocks of a large rectangular monument (its base almost 5 x 4 meters in length and width) which once stood somewhere in the Agora, carry a list of wealthy Athenian landowners, most with Roman citizenship. Among these is inscribed a certain "Κλ(αοδια) Δαμώ ή και Συναματή (who is to pay) 375 denarii for land in An̄kyle and Agryle adjoining Hymettos,"60 i.e., the mountain southeast of Athens famous for its marble and honey.

There are a total of 52 names on the extant portions of the inscription, 21 of which are those of women. It must be dated after A.D. 124/5,61 and almost certainly belongs to the 130s or early 140s, that is, the latter portion of Hadrian's or the first part of Antoninus Pius' reign. Several of the landowners are elsewhere mentioned in epigraphic texts from the Hadrianic period; for instance, among the men we find (line 205) the name of Ti. Claudius Lysiades, archon ca. 138, as well as a hoplite general and a number of prytaneis attested for this emperor's reign.62 The assessment of "Claudia Damo also known as Synamate" is one of the lower values on this inscription, which climb as high as 15,750 denarii (line 192) for an individual

58 For the thought, see the comments regarding the Memnon-verse of Dionysia (Bernand 66) by E Bernand, "Réflexions sur les prosconèmes," in D. Conso, N. Fick, and B. Poulle, eds., Mélanges François Kerlouégan (Paris 1994) 43–60 at 45.
59 Δαμώ (or even Δαμώ) is not all that common, to judge from a search through the onomastic reference books listed in G. H. R. Horsley and J. A. L. Lee, Epigraphica 56 (1994) 164–65. E.g., in M. J. Osborne and S. G. Byrne (eds.), A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names II: Attica (Oxford 1994) 99 and 114, there are precisely four instances of Δαμώ and perhaps two of Δαμώ for the Roman imperial period; in H. Solin, Die Griechischen Personennamen in Rom I–III (Berlin and New York 1982) only a single "Licia Dem." I will register just one of the false leads I followed in this investigation. There happens to be a Homeric scholar called Demo who receives nine citations in editions of the scholia to the Iliad and Odyssey. That would be too good to be true—and as it turns out, it probably is not possible. This Demo's most likely date is the second half of the fifth century A.D. (thus A. Ludwich in Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Doctorjubiläum Ludwig Friedlaender (Leipzig 1895) 296–321)—much too late for us.
60 'IG II/III, 2nd ed., 2776, lines 57–59. The fullest recent study of this document is S. G. Miller, "A Roman Monument in the Athenian Agora," Hesperia 41 (1972) 50–95 (the translation of these lines is his); see also J. Day, An Economic History of Athens under Roman Domination (New York 1942) 221–35.
61 Ti. Flavius Euphanes, archon of that year, is deceased by the time this list is compiled and his heirs have sold his estate (line 212).
62 See the discussion of W. Dittenberger on IG III 61 at 37 and Miller (above, n.60) 86–87. For the prominence of Ti. Claudius Lysiades' family, see Day (above, n.60) 224, 226 with 238; see also M. Woloch, Historia 18 (1969) 503–10 and Roman Citizenship and the Athenian Elite, a.d. 96–161 (Amsterdam 1973) 186–92 with stemma at 181.
In fact, a substantial number of these landowners are assessed for more than one property.

At least half of the inscription is lost—including its heading—which means we can only guess at the purpose of this document. G. Woolf offers a succinct summary of the more likely possibilities:

Set up in the Athenian Agora, the monumental center of the city under the empire, it appears to list a series of loans on land, broadly similar to the tables of Veleia [CIL XI 1147] and Ligures Baebiani [CIL IX 1455]. It is probably an arrangement to fund an imperial beneficium, perhaps the endowment for the chair of rhetoric Hadrian set up, perhaps to pay for the annual gift of grain that Dio [69.16.2] tells us Hadrian secured for the city.64

An identification between the Claudia Damo who found a place on this Athenian monument and our Damo is at least possible, especially considering the connections Balbilla and Hadrian had with Athens—Balbilla in fact is likely to have lived there. Given that only five or six other Damos or Demos are attested at Athens for the entire imperial period—and not that many elsewhere—I think that there may be a certain plausibility to the notion that the poet "Damo" was identical with the "Claudia Damo" who had some degree of prominence in Hadrianic Athens. The omission of "Claudia" in Damo’s Memnon epigram is no obstacle: one notes that Balbilla does not use her Roman nomen in her verse.65

It would be helpful to know the significance of "Συναμάτη." For a start, we may note that Claudia Damo “Synamate” is the only individual on this (admittedly quite lacunose) inscription for whom we find a signum, that is a pure nickname. It is unlikely that this additional element was added merely to prevent confusion with a homonym active at that time, considering the rarity of the name "Damo."

Her signum is even more distinctive. As far as I can tell, “Συναμάτη” occurs nowhere else, nor do we find an adjective συνάματος, -οτη; the relevant authorities provide no direct help on the problem of its interpretation.66 Now, it is just conceivable that “Συναμάτη” is derived from συναμάομαι (“gather together”), in which case to make sense it should have agent value, i.e., “she who gathers together (agricultural produce or ??honey).” But here the morphology is far from ironclad: note μνάομαι and μνηστή (“bride,” i.e. “she who is wooed/receives wooing”). Indeed, against this possibility one

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63 Miller (above, n.60) 90, n.49.
64 PBSR 58 (1990) 227.
65 Nor that of her grandfather, (Ti. Claudius) Balbillus. See Bernard 29.18 and 31.1 (“Balbilla”) with 29.14 and 15 (“Balbillus”). We do, however, get “Balilla Balbilla” in the prose prescript to Bernard 28.
66 H. Wuilleumier, “Etude historique sur l’emploi et la signification des signa,” MAI 13.2 (1933) 559–696, discusses only the link η καί. . . . and not the signum itself (568, see also 689). C. H. Carruthers, Studies in Greek Noun Formation: Greek
must also consider the extreme rarity of the verb συνομάζομαι (once in Apollonius Rhodius and then not again until the Byzantine era) as well as the likelihood that agent force would be denoted in the second century A.D. by the -τη suffix (as opposed to, say, the far more common -τείρα or -τίς). And why should Claudia Damo be singled out for her farming—she is assessed for just a single parcel of land, which is one of the smaller holdings listed—especially on this monumental public inscription? As I noted, none of the other wealthy Athenians (male or female) who participate in this foundation receive a signum.

The alternative, of course, is to suppose that "Συναμάτη" is derived from the not uncommon adverb συνάμα (i.e., σύν άμα, "together") and means "associate, companion." Such a formation is doubtless odd, but there is a reasonable parallel in the substantive περάτη (sc. γη), "an opposite land or quarter," which comes from the adverb πέρα ("beyond, further"). In fact, in a third century B.C. inscription from Cos we find (apparently) the word άματη, which Wilhelm Schmid confidently connected with άμα and interpreted as "association."68

Given these linguistic data, the strong probability that the Agora inscription belongs to the 130s (or early 140s), and the fact that we have the Aeolic poetry of a Damo near that of Balbilla on the Memnon statue (the only examples of original verse extant in that dialect after Theocritus), I find it hard to resist offering the following reconstruction. Claudia Damo calls herself "Συναμάτη" because like—indeed probably through—Balbilla she was a "companion" (Latin comes) on the eastern portion of Hadrian's travels,69 at least that which brought the emperor's party to Egypt. It is not easy to imagine why else this piece of self-advertisement would be acknowledged on this type of inscription. At this time, the use of signa is just starting to develop in Athens.70 The fact that Claudia Damo—and she alone, as far as we can tell—is allowed a sobriquet on this impressive public monument which contains the names of so many grandees allows the possibility that the city itself may have been proud of this "companion." If the inscription was set up in response to an imperial beneficium of Hadrian, as recent scholars think, its inclusion is even more understandable.

Nouns in -TH, -TH; and History of the I. E. Suffix -TA (diss. Chicago 1926) provides a very full list of words in -τη (including ca. 500 proper names, many attested only epigraphically) but omits the signum in question. 67 On this, see the discussion of Carruthers (above, n.66) at 3 and 82–83; on μνάμαι: μνηση see 93–94.

68 On περάτη and related formations see Carruthers (above, n.66) 103–04; on άματη see W. R. Paton and E. L. Hicks (eds.), The Inscriptions of Cos (Oxford 1891) no. 367 III 235 line 44 with W. Schmid in Philologus 65 (1906) 637.

On this connection the prose prescript to Balbilla (29 Bernand): σύν τῇ Σεβαστῇ Σαβείνην ἐγενόμην, and see perhaps Ἄλθον ἄμοι (= ὀμοῖο) . . . Σαβίννα in 31.3 Bernand.

70 Wuilleumier (above, n.66) 576.

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Let us suppose that this interpretation of "Συνυμάτη" is correct and Claudia Damo was a member of Hadrian's touring party in the year 130. One still wonders what inspired the creation of the signum in precisely this abstruse form: there are clearer ways to express "comes" in Greek. To be sure, "Συνυμάτη" would be appropriate for someone who had an academic interest in the Greek language. But it also has a musical ring to it. The two extreme strings on instruments in the lyre family were known respectively as the υπάτη and νεάτη (or νήτη, with Attic contraction). The names of these χορδαί were extended to the pitches they produced: "from νεάτη . . . are formed the compounds παρανεάτη, -νήτη, 'last string but one, of the system of five,' υπερπαρανεάτη, 'note above the παρανεάτη;' from υπάτη similarly παρυπάτη, 'string next to the first' . . . [and] υπερπαρυπάτη, 'note above the παρυπάτη.'" Can musical terminology at least partly have influenced the coinage of this unusual nickname, a compound adverb plus suffix -ή? Again, the signum would be entirely consistent with the barbitos-playing poet of the Memnon statue. If that Damo was a "companion" to Hadrian and Sabina, she had good reason also to imply that she was a "harmonious" or "rhythmical" one. If this basic identification of the poet Damo with Claudia Damo is accepted, the Agora inscription of course should be dated to 131 or later (which as noted is exactly where scholars now place it). Yet even if we leave aside the question of the relevance of Claudia Damo "Synamate" of Athens, the poet Damo can still have been part of the empress Sabina's party in Hadrian's great tour of Egypt. Or Damo may have visited slightly later, when there was a surge in tourism following Hadrian's visit. For instance, the year 134 was a boom year for the Memnon Colossus, to judge from the number of inscrip-

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71 Carruthers (above, n.66) 104. See also West (above, n.55) 64 with 219–23, esp. 220: "hypatos and neatos are archaic words, scarcely found otherwise in Classical Greek except in poetry and in fossilized cult titles." I should mention that the pitch denoted by υπάτη was what we would call a "low" note while the νεάτη was a "high" one.

72 Though there are of course many compounds in συν- in the technical vocabulary of Greek music (see J. Chailley, La musique grecque antique [Paris 1979] 214–15), I have not found an example of συνάμα itself in a musical context other than one not particularly revealing instance in Porphyry's commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics (p. 169 Düring). Yet a number of aspects of vocal performance with a stringed instrument (on which see Maas and Snyder [above, n.55] at 200–1 and West [above, n.55] 64–70) conceivably could be described by this adverb, ranging from a raking plectrum technique to the performer's skillful singing in unison with individual notes as they are sounded. I (cautiously) suggest that the latter type of explanation makes better sense; as West (67) points out, "ancient sources make it clear that when a singer was accompanied by the lyre . . . its basic function was to duplicate the sung melody." For evidence on the pleasures vocal and instrumental unison gave to the ancient Greek ear, see the discussion of A. Barker, "Heterophonia and Poikilia," in B. Gentili and F. Perusino (eds.), Mousike: metrica, ritmica, e musica greca in memoria di G. Comotti (Rome and Pisa 1995) 41–60 (stressing inter alia that very little of ancient writing on the theory of musical accompaniment has come down to us).
tions specifying that date; the memory of Balbilla and her panegyrics would still be fresh enough to inspire emulation. But precision in this matter is obviously impossible.

V

So it appears that a discussion of the epigraphic poetry of Balbilla and Damo, though undistinguished as literature, necessarily introduces a whole range of broader themes in social and political history: Greek pseudo-dialectism in the Roman empire, the competitive culture of Hadrian's court and of educated society in Hadrianic Athens, travel by elites in Roman Egypt, the integration of eastern "kings" and "queens" into the Roman imperial social system—to say nothing of questions concerning these women writers qua women. But there is one further problem in particular that I want to address. Around the courts of emperors interested in the Greek past—Hadrian in particular, but also his two successors—there were probably a number of people who composed verse like Balbilla's (though they probably did not often have them engraved, as she and Damo did). It has been estimated that Hadrian's entourage on his tour of Egypt numbered 5000.73 So how did Julia Balbilla rise above the rest of the crowd, so as to become a close intimate of Hadrian and Sabina? Her literary attainments would take her only so far. Nor was there a shortage of bluebloods active in the empire in this period.

There is the emperor's old friendship with her brother Philopappus, dating back to their time together in Athens. But as A. Birley has suggested,74 one of the most powerful attractions for Hadrian must have been Balbilla's ancestry. On the one side there is her great-grandfather Thrasyllus and her grandfather Ti. Claudius Balbillus, both experts in astrology (a topic dear to Hadrian's heart). But the advancement of Hellenism also was a family concern: indeed, it is entirely likely that this Balbillus had started off his political career in Alexandria as an anti-Jewish envoy to the emperor Claudius.75 On

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73 See Birley (above, n.32) 194, n.70 and (with a valuable caveat) "Senators" (above, n.1) 218, n.68. In this crowd Birley, Hadrian (above, n.1) 246, plausibly places the sister of D. Terentius Gentianus (cos. suff 116) who left six hexameter verses on the Great Pyramid at Giza (E. Courtney, Musa Lapidaria [Atlanta 1995] no. 74) in which she strangely is trying to inflate her late brother's already impressive résumé (for which see ILS 1046). According to HA Hadr. 23.5–6, Hadrian considered this Gentianus a potential rival to the throne, and hated him because he was a favorite of the Senate. Senators were barred from setting foot in Egypt without the emperor's permission (Tac. Ann. 2.59), so it seems unlikely that the sister of the popular Gentianus would be allowed to roam there on her own. And as it turns out, we can identify her husband with a fair degree of certainty: L. Hedius Rufus Lollianus Avitus, a cos. suff 114 who governed Asia under Hadrian in 128-29 (sources in PIR H 40). His status provides another impediment to this poet's free travel in Egypt. (Birley, Hadrian 246, plausibly suggests both Lollianus and Terentia joined the imperial tour when it stopped at Ephesus in 129.)

74 Birley (above, n.32) 196, 200–02, Hadrian (above, n.1) 228.

75 See the letter from the emperor Claudius to the Alexandrines (Corp. Pap. Iud. no. 153) lines 105–07 ("Barbillus") with the discussion of F. Millar, The Em-
the other side there were the Seleucids, and Balbilla's father and uncle, who fought under Titus in Judaea—a campaign commemorated, it seems, on the funeral monument of Balbilla's brother. Hadrian will have appreciated this family history, and that is surely one reason Balbilla trumpets her descent so loudly on the Memnon stone. Indeed, if Balbilla inherited not just her ancestors' eusebeia (as she explicitly claims) but also their perceived attitude toward the Jews, this might go a long way toward explaining how she found so privileged a position in the inner circle of Hadrian's court.

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peror in the Roman World (London 1977) 86–87. Yet not all agree on the identification of this man with our Balbillus: see Fein (above, n.1) 112, n.112.

Kleiner (above, n.47) 68–73, 81–90 (esp. 84) and 98.

On this, see further the stimulating arguments of Birley, "Senators" (above, n.1) 223–24 and Hadrian (above, n.1) 228–30. I should note that I owe a special debt to Professor Birley (who very kindly let me see substantial portions of his recent work on Hadrian prior to publication) and also Professor E. Badian, who each generously commented in detail on preliminary versions of this study. In addition, I have profited much from conversations or correspondence with (particularly) Professors P. Baldi, G. W. Bowersock, A. Chaniotis, D. Feeney, C. Habicht, P. Hardie, P. Harvey, S. Hinds, C. P. Jones, J. Manning, G. Nagy, J. Palmer, H. Pelliccia, D. Roberts, A. Schiessaro, B. Strauss, T. Schmitz, R. Thomas, C. Watkins, R. Webb and S. Wheeler, and from the general discussion which followed the presentation of portions of this paper at the fall 1993 CAAS semi-annual meeting, and also (1994) Penn State, Rutgers, (1995) Bryn Mawr, Cornell, CUNY Graduate Center, (1996) Franklin & Marshall, (1998) Harvard. The two anonymous CW referees and the Editor supplied helpful suggestions regarding style and organization; indeed, to the Editor I owe further thanks, for I first encountered the name Julia Balbilla in one of his articles (CJ 74 [1979] 229). But I must emphasize that responsibility for all shortcomings in this piece remains entirely my own.