



AMESTRIS

AMESTRIS (Gr. *Ámēstris*, Ionic for *Ámāstris*), Greek form of an Old Persian female proper name. It may reflect Old Persian **Amāstrī-*, containing **ama-* “strength, strong” and **strī-* “woman;” cf. the Avestan phrase *kainīnō . . . amayā* (*Haḏōxt nask* 2.9; see Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 512).

1. Achaemenid queen, daughter of Otanes (Ctesias, fragment 13, par. 24 [in Jacoby, *Fragmente*] gives Onophas), who was one of the seven conspirators against Gaumata. She was married to Xerxes I (Herodotus 7.61.2) and was the mother of Artaxerxes I, Amytis, and others. Licentious and notoriously cruel (Ctesias, fragment 14), she exercised a baneful influence at Artaxerxes’ court; e.g., she is said to have caused the wife of her brother-in-law Masistes to be mutilated (Herodotus 9.109-12) and twice she had seven noble Persian boys buried alive as a sacrifice to the god of the netherworld (idem, 7.114.2; Plutarch, *De superstitione*, 13). She died at an old age, towards the end of Artaxerxes’ reign (Ctesias, fragment 14).

2. The first child of King Darius II Nothus and Parysatis, born before his reign. She was married to the satrap of Armenia, Terituchmes, son of Idernes. Terituchmes fell in love with his half-sister Roxane and therefore sought to do away with his wife (Ctesias, fragment 15).

3. Achaemenid queen, daughter of Artaxerxes II. Her father first engaged her to the satrap of Armenia, Tiribazus, but then married her himself (Heraclides Cumaeus *apud* Plutarch *Artoxerxes* 23.6, 27.7-8).



4. Daughter of Oxyathres (“Oxathres”), who was the brother of Darius III Codomannus. Alexander the Great married her to Craterus (Diodorus 20.109.7, Arrian 7.4.5, where she is called Amastrinē). Abandoned by Craterus in 322 B.C., she remarried Dionysius, tyrant of Heraclea Pontica, and bore him three children: Clearchus, Oxathres, and Amestris. After Dionysius’ death in 306 she acted as regent, her sons being minors, and ruled prudently. In 302 she married Lysimachus, by whom she had a son, Alexander (Polyaenus 6.12). Lysimachus parted from her about 300 to marry Arsinoë, the daughter of his rival, Ptolemaeus Soter. Amestris then reigned as queen, as is apparent from her coins, until she was murdered by her sons. The city of Amastris (modern Amasra) on the Paphlagonian coast (Strabo 12.3.10) was named after her, although an etiological story attributes this foundation by *synoikismos* to an Amazon of the same name (Demosthenes of Bithynia *apud* Stephanus Byzantius, ed. A. Meineke, Berlin, 1849, p. 84.7). For her portrait on Amastrian coins, see B. V. Head, *Historia numorum*², Oxford, 1911, pp. 505-06 (Figure 1); *Sylloge nummorum graecorum. Deutschland. Sammlung v. Aulock. Pontus-Paphlagonien-Bithynien*, Berlin, 1957, p. 5, no. 152. See also Memno, fragment 4, par. 4-9, in Jacoby, *Fragmente*; Ps.-Scymnus, *Orbis descriptio* 962-67.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin, 1923-58.

Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 14.