

Nikos Chausidis*

'River People' of the Northern Black Sea and Macedonia

The article is based upon the thesis of the existence of intense relations between the Northern Black Sea and Macedonia towards the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, confirmed with various traditions related to rivers. Toponyms and ethnonyms containing the following roots *sind-*, *sinth-*, *sith-*, are given as a first indicator, confirmed in both regions through ancient sources, thus considering its Indo-Aryan interpretation as a *river*. Such interpretation is considered in context of the theories of Indo-Aryans moving south of the Northern Black Sea at the second half of the 2nd millennium BC; the Balkans being one of their directions. This last trajectory is related to the presence of Cimmerians and Hyperboreans at this peninsula, also verified in ancient written sources. A special significance is given to the ancient reports of *Aria* as the oldest name for Thrace. Numerous archaeological finds also refer to these motions, confirmed with a relevant literature. Moreover, different traditions witnessed in ancient sources are noted regarding the role of rivers in the spiritual culture of populations of both regions, especially in genealogical myths. Bull as a zoomorphic epiphany of river gods is especially emphasized, manifested with similar traditions, among which the roots *taur-*, *taor* found in the toponymy, ethnonymy and the theonymy of both regions.

Key words: *Indo-Aryans, Macedonia, river cults, Thraco-Cimmerians, Sindoi, Tauria*

Communication between the Northern Black Sea and Macedonia can be traced during all historical periods, that is, since prehistory up until the middle ages. Processes originating from the periods of the first use of the metal and the Early Middle Age are the most referred ones in the literature. This paper focuses on facts and acknowledgements which refer to relations between these two geographical locations by the end of the 2nd millennium up until the first few centuries of the 1st millennium BC. Moreover, the already known archaeological facts will be supplemented with relevant written sources referring to exact historical events and populations and their ethnonyms, toponyms and other cultural features. This paper was relevant for the conference where it was presented as the majority of the facts refer to the river, which, also, directly or not is contained in the names of these populations and in manifestations of their spiritual culture.

1. Ethnonyms and toponyms with the following roots: *sind-*, *sinth-*, *sith-*¹

a) Northern Black Sea

In his research, O.N. Trubachev pays a great attention to ethnonyms and toponyms containing the root *sind-* / *sinth-*, found in the Northern Black Sea. Moreover, having in mind the old Indian languages, he relates them to *sindu-*, signifying a **river**. During the time of Herodotus and even later, a

people known as **Sindi** (**Σίνδοι**) and by him referred to as **Indi** (**Ἰνδοί**) and by other ancient sources as 'Indian people' used to live in the Kuban region (**T.I**). These seemingly speculative interpretations have a linguistic validity. After several unsuccessful attempts they were interpreted within the global concept of the aforementioned author. Following the theories of P. Kretschmer, he associates the Indo-Aryan *sindu* – river/great river, referring to the **Kuban River**, once probably called ***Σίνδος**, of which **sinda(va)* signifying river people was derived, which in Indo-Aryan would sound like *sindhu* and as *hindu* in Iranian. It is the origin of the name of this river (**Indus**) that Greeks and other ancient people took, and accordingly named this Pontic land as **India** and its people as **Indians** (a product of the same elements is also **Sindhi**, name of both the modern region and the people in South Pakistan). Analogously, as **Sinu** (reduced of *Sindhu*), also sounded the Scythian (i.e. Pre-Scythian) name of **Tanais River** (Don). In the Kuban region, ancient authors located '**Sindian Scythia**', referred to as '*old, i.e. primordial Scythia*' by Herodotus, determined as the land of the primordial inhabitants of this area (Trubachev 1999, 15-41, 69, 163, 275, 276)². **Sindhi** originally inhabited the territory extending from Bosphorus (Crimea) to Tanais. Albeit having a state, they didn't discover literacy (**T.I**) (Trubachev 1999, 13, 28, 30, 106). A tomb stone found near Cape Tuzla close to the Taman Peninsula (Sea of Azov)

¹ Original publication of these comparisons: Chausidis 2017, 889-892, 998, 999.

² L. Kleyn (2010, 182, 183) accepts and further develops these interpretation.

with an inscription 'India' (*Ἰνδία*) contributes significantly towards these analyses, denoting the name of the deceased (Novichikhin 2014, 111).

In his studies O.N. Trubachev cites some ancient sources which mention Sindi along Danube (T.I). He also registered some Macedonian ethnonyms and toponyms with the root *sind-*. However, without the facts and contexts presented herewith, they evidently did not sufficiently attract his attention (Trubachev 1999, 22, 106).

Some researchers accept this concept of O.N. Trubachev, while others criticize it by either giving counter arguments or by interpreting the same material from a different approach. In attempt to solve these dilemmas archaeologists use archaeological finds of the relevant space and time (Novichikhin 2014).

b) Central and Southern Balkans

Several ethnonyms and toponyms on the territory of Macedonia and its surrounding containing *sind-*, *sinth-*, *sith-* are to be found in ancient written sources (T.II). When describing the conquests of Xerxes the Great, Herodotus speaks of the 'Land of Sithonia' (*Σιθωνία*) in the middle of the Halkidiki Peninsula (Herodotus 7.122)³. Sithones, along with Mygdonians, are mentioned as a tribe which was part of Edoni kingdom⁴. The same source also mentions the town of **Sindos** (*Σινδός*) in Mygdonia, also noted in the conquests of Xerxes, only as a town in the Thermaic Gulf (Herodotus 7.123)⁵. Hecataeus mentions a Thracian tribe by the name of **Sindonaioi**, which even though with a clearly undetermined location some researchers associate with Sindos and its inhabitants (Hecataeus, fr. 146, 147)⁶. Furthermore, **Sinti/Sintia/Σιντικὴ** were located in the lower course of Struma River and refers to the Sinthians, their land and central settlement being later renamed as Heraclea Sintica⁷. Sinthians are mentioned in the Iliad as people who populated the Lemnian coast and helped Hephaestus stand up after falling from Olympus (Homeri Ilias 1. 592-594). Despite the analogous name, their relation to the aforementioned Sinthians is considered suspicious (Fol 1975, 26). This ethnicity was related to the local Phrygian, i.e. Brygean substrate, to which his categorization by W. Tomaschek in the Phrygian/Mysian group refers, additionally confirmed by the

Phrygian lexeme he points *sintis* signifying a blacksmith (Petrova 1996, 155, 186). Another toponym (also probably the ethnonym) with the same root could be registered in Macedonia: the town of **Sintia** that Tit Livius mentions while describing the raids of Philip the Fifth against Dardanians in 211 BC (T.II) (Livius, *Ab urbe condita* 26.25.3). Based on the route of this raid, F. Papazoglu concludes that the town was on the territory of modern Republic of Macedonia, somewhere at the border between Dardania and Pelagonia, perhaps 'the western border of Pelagonia, on the road leading from Tetovo Region towards Macedonia' (Papazoglu 1969, 116, 117, 192, 194, 367)⁸. Not only her, other researchers as well somehow relate this toponym to the Sinthians living on the banks of Struma River⁹.

c) Models and interpretation

Hereby, we present three models regarding to the origin of the aforementioned Balkan names containing *sinth-* i.e. *sind-*. According to the first model, they would have been products of the migration of Sindi from the Northern Black Sea to Central Balkans, who kept their original name integrated in the given ethnonyms and toponyms even after migrating to new territories. Coincidentally or not, the Indo-Aryan root *sind-*, signifying a river, also semantically relates it to the Balkan ethnonyms and toponyms. Almost all the given examples are located in the lower course of the big Macedonian and Thracian rivers: **Axios, Strymon, Haliakmon** and **Nestos** (T.II). We could base the second model upon this fact, according to which another anonymous ethnicity (perhaps from the same area), upon arriving in the Central Balkan region, got a new name containing the same root (signifying *river*), based on its migration near a dominant river or globally according to a whole region full of rivers. The third model, however, could be a variation of the first two. According to it, the common origin of both Balkan and North Black Sea names could be somewhere in between (perhaps the area around Danube) from where they would have been taken both to the North Black Sea and Macedonia via migration of some people or via the expansion of their language (T.I). Regardless of these models, all cases would indicate an ethnicity with Indo-Aryan features of their language.

In favor of these hypotheses are the Indo-Aryan parallels of some other Macedonian hydronyms: **Axios** (from *akši* – black), its contemporary name **Vardar** (from *vari* – water; **kali-vardi* – black water) (Trubachev 1999, 9, 223, 245, 269, 287) which coincide the most frequent epithet of this river nowadays 'muddy Vardar' (dark/black Vardar)

³ Source and interpretation: Delev 2014, 447; Fol 1975, 21, 25, 26. Eponymous hero of Sithonia (Chalkidiki) and of Odomantes is Sithon (Srežović and Cermanović 1987, 387; Marazov 1992, 66, 73, 74).

⁴ On the Brygean origin of Sithonians: Petrova 1996, 155, 156; on their belonging to the Edoni: Bouzek 1982, 45.

⁵ Papazoglu 1957, 149; Fol 1975, 25, 26; on Sindos being Mygdonian: Petrova 1996, 150, 186.

⁶ Delev 2014, 438; Fol 1975, 25, 26; Theodossiev 1998, 353; Theodossiev 2000, 191; Mitrev 2012, 18, 247.

⁷ Delev 2014, 439-445; Papazoglu 1957, 68, 69; on sources and town's location: Mitrev 2012, 90-115; Mitrev and Tarakov 2002.

⁸ L. Jovanova (2008, 6, 8) apparently prefers to locate this town in the Skopje Valley.

⁹ Papazoglu 1969, 117, 192; P. Delev (2014, 444) doubts the relation among these toponyms.

and its greatest tributary **Crna Reka** (literally Black River, ancient Erigon) (T.II).

When analyzing the ethnonyms containing *sinth-* i.e. *sind-*, we should not forget the already mentioned Phrygian *sintis*, signifying blacksmiths, especially in the case of Sintica, due to the strong blacksmith character of the region. It is reflected through the presence of immigrants from the island of **Lemnos** (important blacksmith point and a center of the cult of Hephaestus) in this region, but also the later local 'blacksmith' toponyms: Turkish **Demir Hisar**, kept in the modern **Σιδηρόκαστρο** (signifying *iron town* in both cases) (T.II).

From such a perspective, Dardanian town of **Sintia** doesn't necessarily have to be treated as some secondary derivative of Sinti, ethnonym of the lower course of Struma, but as an indication of the motion of the assumed Sindi from the Northern Black Sea via the Balkans to south, or as an indicator of their primary Danube nucleus, parts of which would later migrate south, so was the case with the Bryges (T.II).

2. Indo-Aryans in the Northern Black Sea and the Balkans

These relations coincide with a more global phenomenon referring to the oldest heart of Indo-Aryans and their expansion. Based on archaeological, linguistic and other facts, contemporary science considers the Northern Black Sea region as a primary homeland of Indo-Aryans, the courses of Dnieper, Dniester, Don and the other local rivers to be exact, while the Proto-Iranians are located more to the east, between the rivers of Ural and the lower course of Volga (T.III). It is very likely that exactly there, in the steppes of the Northern Black Sea region, during the first half of the 2nd millennium BC, the once more homogenous complex was disintegrated, thus resulting in portions of the newly formed groups to migrate in their future homelands: in the 16th century BC the Indo-Aryans were registered in Southwestern Asia, while in the 15th century BC they were already in India, when the tribes that spoke Iranian languages moved to Iran at the turn of the 2nd millennium BC. It is believed that in the region north of the Black Sea, by the end of the half of the 2nd millennium BC, the Indo-Aryan mythological system was already established. As a result of this expansion, in the 15th century, Rigveda was created, the mythological system of Indian Aryans, while Avesta, the mythological system of Iranians was created around the 13th century (T.III)¹⁰.

There are indications for expansion of this complex towards the Balkans, in the historical sources among other things witnessed as 'Cimmerian sprees' (T.III). Late Bronze and Early Iron

Age so-called Thraco-Cimmerian finds could be considered as archaeological indicators of this expansion.

a) Cimmerian expansion

Although there are ongoing debates regarding the parent territory of Cimmerians, it is believed that it extended in the steppes north of the Black Sea, i.e. the coast of Sea of Azov and the Crimean Peninsula, from Dniester in the west to Volga and the north Caspian coast on the east. At the beginning of the 8th century BC, under Scythian pressure, some of them crossed Caucasus and entered Western Asia, battling with Urartu and Assyria, clearly noted in the cuneiform from the 8th and the 7th centuries BC (Akkadian **Ga-mir**) (T.IV). Then, crossing Phrygia and Lydia, in 644 BC they attacked the Ionian and Eolian cities on the western Anatolian coast, witnessed in the Greek sources (ancient Greek **Κιμμεροί**). At the end of the 7th century BC Cimmerians were defeated by Scythians and Lydians, upon which their existence by the same name cannot be confirmed in sources¹¹. Archaeologically, the presence of Cimmerians in the north coast of the Black Sea is related to several cultures, namely the Koban, Belozërka, Chernogorovka, Sabatinovka and Novoçherkassk (T.IV). Today, besides the exact ethnicity, by the name of Cimmerians the science refers to all Pre-Scythian population in the region north of Caucasus between Black and Caspian Seas. Several researchers tend to deny the Cimmerian presence in the region north of the Black Sea considering that it was more to the east, at the banks of Volga and in the Caspian steppes¹².

Although not so explicit, there are indirect data about the movement of the Cimmerians throughout the Balkans, and even earlier, during the 11th century BC. Some sources indicate the involvement in these movements of two peoples that will be mentioned in the Balkans in the following centuries: the **Treses** and the **Edoni** (T.IV). This relation is of a special importance for us due to the direct proximity of Edoni and the aforementioned ethnicities containing *sind-*, *sinth-*, *sith-* in lower course of Strymon River and Halkidiki (T.II). Nevertheless, the presence of these people in this triad is not very certain, regardless of J. Bouzek referring to their participation in the Cimmerian-Thracian tandem in numerous works, pointing even to some 'alliance of Treses, Edoni and Cimmerians' allegedly mentioned by Strabo (Bouzek 1982, 45; Bouzek and Christopher 2008; Bouzek 2015). Even though

¹¹ Basic information: Ivantchik 2012; Tokhtas'ev 2002; Bouzek 2001; D'yakonov 1956, 228-254; review and discussion of the contemporary research condition: Ivantchik 1999; Olbrycht 2000; Parker 1998; de Boer 2006.

¹² A debate on this, with bibliography: Ivantchik 1999, 88-97; Ivantchik 2001; Bouzek 2001; Bouzek 2015; Dudarev 2004; Otroshchenko 2004; Olbrycht 2000, 94, 95.

¹⁰ Kleyn 2010, 165-222; Bongard-Levin and Grantovskiy 1983, 166-167; Trubachev 1999; Chausidis 2017, 866-869.

several authors accept and further develop these theses, our consideration of this ancient author did not confirm those stands. However, we found indicators of certain relations among these ethnicities in Aristotle (quoted by Stephanus Byzantinus and Pliny) according to which the town of **Antandros**, located in the base of Mount Ida, on the coast of Propontis **(T.IV)** '...was called **Edonis**, secondary to Thracian Edonis being settled there, or **Cimmeris** according to Cimmerians who inhabited it for hundred years...' (Stephanus Byzantinus, *Ethnika*)¹³.

b) Hyperboreans in the Balkans

A large number of ancient written sources speak of Hyperboreans in context of Arimaspi, Issedones, Scythians and Cimmerians as people who lived at the end of the world, in inaccessible northern regions, that, according to some quotes, reach all the way to the coast of the so called 'Northern Sea' **(T.V)** (Herodotus 4.13). According to Pausanias, Hyperborea was 'behind the home of the Northern Wind' (= Boreas), which should have referred to Dacia, considering that in several sources 'the home' of this wind is located in Thrace. According to other sources, the home of Boreas and Hyperborea are located behind the Riphean Mountains, which, in some of them, are located northwest of the ancient world, on the borders of Scythia (probably modern Mt Ural), while in others they are related to Danube and the Celts or the Alps. In Delphi, travels of Apollo to the north in the land of the Hyperboreans were discussed¹⁴.

These long-standing relations between the Northern Black Sea and the Balkans are indicated throughout the mysterious sending of votive gifts by the Hyperboreans to the sanctuary in Delos. It was in the time of Herodotus who noted it. Even though Hyperborean homeland's location is unidentified, their actions in the Balkans are extremely exact and pedantic therefore we do not consider them doubtful. Here, we have in mind the depiction of Herodotus of sending votive gifts to their distant land in the sanctuary of Apollo at the island of Delos that took place in the following line: Scythians, their neighbours, other (unquoted people), Adriatic Sea, Dodona, Malian Gulf, Eubea, Karystos, Tenos and finally Delos **(T.V)**. Gifts were wrapped in wheat straw and sent accompanied by two girls from Hyperborea and five more compatriots. At Delos, these worshipers were called Perpherees, whereupon graves of the girls who died at the island were treated with respect. Later, gifts were being sent unaccompanied, so Hyperboreans gave them to their neighbours and they gave them to their own until they reached Greece. According

to Diodorus Siculus, the great Hyperborean sage and healer Abaris (**Ἄβαρης Ὑπερβόρειος**) stayed in Greece and renewed the friendship and the relationship between Greeks and Hyperboreans, some Greeks having even travelled to the Apollo temple in Hyperborea **(T.V)**. This clarifies that Hyperboreans had quite a clear vision of Greece and the island of Delos where they sent gifts, which does not imply to Greeks for whom Hyperborea is an undetermined, even a non-existing country. There are no dilemmas that Hyperboreans is a Greek ethnonym and denotes a land or people located north of regions known to them, meaning they had their own ethnonym, maybe even Cimmerians, given the location¹⁵.

c) Balkan Arya

Aria (**Ἀρία**), referred to as the oldest name for Thrace in the sources **(T.III)**, could be considered as an indicator for the expansion of the Indo-Aryan heart from the region north of the Black Sea towards the Balkans. Namely, fragments of 'Bithyniaca' by Lucius Flavius Arrianus (1st-2nd c. AD), preserved through Stephanus Byzantinus (6th century AD) and Eustathius of Thessalonica (**Εὐστάθιος Θεσσαλονίκης**) (12th century AD) witness that the oldest names for Thrace were **Πέρκη** and **Ἀρία** (according to Cherednichenko 2012, 202, 203). In this case, we are interested in the latter due to the remarkable relations with the ethnonym Aryans (Avestan *airya-*, ancient Indian *ārya-*, ancient Persian *ariya-*) referring to the people of ancient Iran and India who spoke Aryan. Cherednichenko analyzes both names, thus giving several possibilities regarding their significance and origin of this oronym. Besides the ethnonym, he considers the following significance: noble, worthy, mister (Sanskrit, Avestan and ancient Persian); excellent, the bravest, the most dignified (ancient Greek); free, noble (Celtic); ask the oracle (Hittite). Based on these, he assumes that the oronym **Ἀρία** could have signified land of the most remarkable, noble, free or land of the oracles. This author relates the origin of this lexeme to the end of the 3rd millennium BC when those speaking the dialects of the Indo-European pre-language resided in the Balkan Peninsula, when the 'satem' community was still not completely separated from the one that spoke the 'centum' dialects (Cherednichenko 2012, 203, 204). Fully respecting these conclusions, in the light of the other material presented herewith, we would like to suggest to future researchers to also verify the possibility for a later origin of this oronym, somewhere in the 2nd millennium BC or at the turn to the 1st millennium BC. Perhaps it could have been related to the presence of Cimmerians, but also other Indo-Aryan and Iranian ethnicities in the Balkan Peninsula or more exactly to the ethnonym

¹³ More on this: Chausidis 2017, 876-889, 997, 998.

¹⁴ Source and interpretation: *Hyperborea 2018*; Latyshev 1947-1949; Kruglova 2003; on the relationship Hyperboreans-Celts: Verger 2006.

¹⁵ More on this: Chausidis 2017, 892-898, 999, 1000.

Aryans (airya-, *ārya-*) which would indicate *Land of Aryans*. In favor of this, one could consider the stands of numerous researchers of the significant presence of phonetic and other linguistic similarities between Thracian and Iranian i.e. Indo-Aryan languages that some researchers grade even as 'dialectic resemblance' (Duridanov 1976, 20, 28, 123-125, 130, 132; Zlatkovskaya 1961, 92). Among other things, this is encouraged by the assumptions that the analogous ethnonym (arya) could have also been used by the so called 'Scythian' tribes for their own denomination, but also for all Indo-Iranian populations¹⁶.

We believe that the given ethnonyms and toponyms containing the root *sind-*, *sinth-*, i.e. *sith-* should also be considered in favor of the above arguments, thus introducing us more directly to the subject of this paper (**T.I**; **T.II**).

3. Archaeological confirmations of relations between the Northern Black Sea and the Balkans

The following phenomena have been encompassed: (a) bronze jewelry with emphasized cult purpose from the Northern Black Sea (as part of the Koban culture) and Macedonia (the so-called Macedonian bronzes) (Čausidis 2017, 876, 877 and elsewhere); (b) sexual differentiation of decedents buried in a contorted position (Čausidis 2017, 869-871); (c) ritual killing of the widow at the tomb of her husband (Čausidis 2017, 758-760, 875); (d) stone Bronze age steles (Čausidis 2017, 871-874).

4. Analogous religious manifestations in the Northern Black Sea and the Balkans

a) Worshipping rivers

The association of these populations and the river is also given in terms of myth and religion.

In the Iliad, Paeonians, predominant inhabitants of Macedonia in the 1st millennium BC, are led by Asteropaios, the grandson of **Axios**, mythical character who is a personification of the biggest river in Macedonia which has the same name (today Vardar) (**T.II**). He battled against Achilles and was defeated and killed (Homeri Ilias 21. 140-145). Based on analysis of the verses, this deified river could be determined as one of the following: (a) an impregnator, i.e. husband of the Paeonian land, probably depicted as a goddess who gives birth and nurtures; (b) a supporter who gives Paeonian rulers and warriors strength and courage; (c) a god who receives the bodies of the killed warriors thus providing them a status of heroes and immortality. There are indications that as part of

this last function certain species living in water had an important role, especially the eels. The name of this specie (*έγγελας*) contained in the ethnonym of the **Encheleians**, Paeonians' western neighbors, refers to this, probably as a sacralized (totem) animal (**T.II**). This fish is also found in female figures of both craters unearthed at the necropolis near Trebenishte, Ohrid region (Republic of Macedonia), depicted with their legs spread and zoomorphized as snakes or eels (**T.VI: 4, 5**). We suggested a hypothesis that the ceremonial vest made of silver-plated fish scales found in the rich Paeonian grave in Koreshnica near Demir Kapija (Republic of Macedonia) served as a funerary garment which enabled the worthy decedent to get into the skin of the local fish i.e. snake totem in order to be reborn or identified with it (**T.VI: 2, 3**). In fact, the goddess of the aforementioned craters is also wearing a shirt made of fish scales (**T.IV: 4, 5**). The battle of Achilles and Asteropaios could also be interpreted as a manifestation of the eternal cosmic fight between their divine parents: the heavenly god represented by Zeus and the chthonic one by Axios and the all-embracing Ocean who unites all earthly rivers (Čausidis 2012a, 263-272). A similar genealogy in Iliad is attributed to **Rhesus**, king of **Edoni**, who is depicted as a son of **Eioneus**, a river later alternated by scholiasts with Strymon (Homeri Ilias 10. 435; Mitrev 2012, 11) (**T.VI: 6** a coin with head of the river god Strymon).

Reports of Polyaeos regarding the coronation of the Paeonian ruler Ariston at the banks of Astibo complement this (Polyaeos 4.12.3) (**T.II**). There are several possible interpretations of this ritual act: (a) contact of the ruler with the water conceived as a cosmic element; (b) the river as a boundary i.e. factor of transfiguration of Ariston from 'human' into a 'ruler'; (c) marital i.e. sexual relation between the future incumbent and the river depicted as a goddess; (d) a contact of the new ruler with the mythologized 'river dynasty' of Paeonian rulers. We suggested a hypothesis regarding the possible earlier practice of this act in Axios or the mouth of Astibo into Axios, whereas in the latter case, this location would signify the sacral center of Paeonia, i.e. the universe (Čausidis 2012a, 272-275).

The third source is a quotation of Diodorus Siculus regarding the vault of the Paeonian king **Audoleon** buried at the bottom of the river **Sargentios** (its location being undetermined), while the secrecy of this was secured by the killing of prisoners who participated (Diodorus Siculus 21.13). Based on other Balkan examples, this could be interpreted mythically i.e. magically as a sacrifice of a portion of the earning or the prey of the ruler promised and aimed to the river conceived as a deity and progenitor of Paeonians and their rulers (Čausidis 2012a, 275, 276).

¹⁶ Here we have in mind the Ossetian ethnic words *iron*, *allon* and *alan* as their later derivatives (Abayev 1949, 245, 246; D'yakonov 1956, 244). Our initial insight into this subject: Čausidis 2017, 889, 899, 1000.

Reading Herodotus and his story of the ostracism of the Ancient Macedonian legendary king Perdiccas and his brothers from the royal court in Lebaea, one could deduce that the Ancient Macedonians (the offspring of the Temenides dynasty of Argos to be exact) made votive offerings to the local river considering it as their savior (Herodotus 8.138)¹⁷.

The iconography of some coins minted on Paeonian territory during Roman Times correlates well with these interpretations. They have personifications of the rivers Axios (Vardar) and Erigon (Crna Reka), depicted as anthropomorphic characters with vessels in their hands pouring water (**T.VII: 1-7**). Coins were minted from the 1st till the 3rd centuries in the city of Stobi, located at the junction of Erigon and Axios rivers (**T.II**) (Josifovski 2011; Čausidis 2012a, 278, 279).

Genealogical myths resembling Paeonian have also been found in the Northern Black Sea. According to one of them, cited by Herodotus, the genesis of the Scythes is associated with the relation between the **daughter of Borysthenes**, the god of the river bearing the same name (modern Dnieper) and **Zeus** (Scythian **Papaj**). **Targitaus**, the Scythian ancestor, was born of this relationship (Herodotus 4.5; Rayevski 1988, 85; Trubachev 1999, 109, 110).

b) River as a bull

Fertilizing power of rivers in ancient and archaic cultures is most frequently depicted as a bull, an anthropomorphized bull or a hybrid character shaped as a man-snake-bull (**T.VIII: 1, 3-5, 7**). In Ancient Greece, such was the presentation of **Ocean**, mythical river that surrounded the world (**T.VIII: 6**). Also, Zeus was depicted as a bull while carrying Europa on his back through water. Achelous, the god of the same Hellenic river and son of Oceanus, was shown as a unicorn bull or a man with a snake body and human bearded face and a single horn on his forehead, with water streams of his mouth (**T.VIII: 1, 5, 7**). Indications exist that Paeonians also used to depict the fertilizing power of rivers with an anthropomorphized 'water bull'. Frequent bull depictions on Paeonian coins from Pre-Roman period (**T.VII: 8-10**) refer to this, but also the Roman coins of Stobi, the biggest Roman city in the once Paeonian territory (**T.VIII: 11, 12**). Perhaps such a water i.e. river signification was also behind the worship of **Paeonian buffalo monapos** (**μόναπος**) its bronze head being dedicated to the Delphi sanctuary by Paeonian king **Dropion** (Pausania. X, 13, 1)¹⁸.

This mythical character in Macedonia could be traced via two ancient toponyms containing

taur- signifying a bull (Ancient Greek **ταυρος**, Latin *taurus*). The first is **Tauresion**, an ancient settlement and a fortress, referred to as the birth place of Emperor Justinian in the sources (Procopius, *De Aed.* IV.1.17). According to some hypotheses, it was located in the vicinity of Skopje in today's village of **Taor**, on the banks of Vardar River at the entrance of the **Taor Gorge** (Ristov 2015) (**T.II**). The second is **Tauriana**, according to the Tabula Peutingeriana a place located at **Lake Dojran** in whose modern name the old can be recognized (**T.II**) (Papazoglu 1957, 133, 236, 248, 249).

In the region around the village of Taor, where Tauresion is located, a head of a bronze statue with supernatural size was found, dating back to the transition from the Hellenistic to the Roman period (**T.VIII: 2**). Given the small horns and other details, it can be concluded that the head represents **Dionysus The Bull** (Dionysus Tauros) (Bitrakova Grozdanova 1999, 100-121). Judging from this find, it can be assumed that Tauresion was named after this god, or more likely, according to its autochthon version (**Taor / *Taur*), as a *place dedicated to the God-Taurus* or cult place of the local River-God conceived as a bull. The survival of the fertilizing power of the water god was also preserved in the region of Dojran Lake (Tauriana) (**T.II**). Here we take into consideration superstitions for the presence of some water demon in the lake that can provide an excellent catch to local fishermen. In order to do so, he requires having intercourse with their wives. This legend relates to the aforementioned myth of Iliad that associates the Paeonian genesis to the sexual intercourse of the water god (Axios River) with the nymph Peribea (Homeri Ilias 21. 159-163)¹⁹.

The power of these traditions and their survival today is witnessed by the legends of the **'water bull'** in the folklore of Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria. Several elements grant us the right to seek for the genesis of this mythical character in the following ancient Balkan traditions: (a) residence in earthly waters (lakes, swamps, rivers); (b) bull-like, man-bull or dragon-like appearance; (c) black body; (d) battling a blacksmith (equivalent of the heavenly god or the thunderer)²⁰.

Numerous finds refer to the fact that, also in the Northern Black Sea, river was depicted and worshiped as a bull or as a deity bearing bull features. Thus, the obverses of the early coins of the town of Tyras (**Τύρας**) located at the mouth of the same river (**Τύρας**, modern Dniester) (**T.I**) depict the horned god of this river, while the reverses depict a standing bull (in coins with lesser nominal values the obverses were alternated with a depiction of Heracles (**T.IX: 5**). A similar combination of Hera-

¹⁷ This and other examples of river worshipping in Ancient Macedonia or by Ancient Macedonians: Proeva 1997, 187-189.

¹⁸ These and other indications of worshipping rivers as a bull among Paeonians: Čausidis 2012a, 276, 277; Čausidis 2017, 325-327.

¹⁹ Čausidis 2012b; Čausidis 2017, 327, 953; ethnographic examples: Filipović 1939, 242, 243; Zečević 1981, 333.

²⁰ Čausidis 2012b; Čausidis 2012a, 276, 277; on the 'water bull': Radenkovich 1998.

cles and a bull is also found in coins of the other towns north of the Black Sea: Chersonesus (T.IX: 4), Theodosia (T.IX: 1, 2) and Phanagoria (T.IX: 6), probably as an imitation of the coins of Heraclea Pontica (T.IX: 3). On a less frequent coin of Tyras, the head of the river god on the obverse has been alternated with cornucopia (Nikolayev 2007, 134). River god is also depicted on the coins of the city of Olbia, through the image of the horned head of a man which various researches associate to the rivers Borysthenes (Dnieper) and Hypanis (Southern Bug), or to both rivers united in a common cult (T.I; T.IX: 7, 8). Regardless to the frequent depiction of the bull on coins in the whole 'Greek world', it is very probable that in these cases this motive was not based only on traditions of the Greek colonists, but also those of the indigenous population. In favor of this are also other cult items from the region: altars, epigraphic monuments, small cult objects (Shaub 2007, 198-200). One of those examples is the lead relief plate of Olbia (4th-3rd centuries BC) depicting **Heracles** holding a rhyton, which, according to certain local features (Phrygian hat, a shovel) could be interpreted as a local adaptation of the myth about the dual of this hero and the river god Achelous (T.VI: 1). Rhyton in the hands of Heracles would be that of Achelous which he took after defeating him (in Olbia, Achelous was identified with the local rivers) (Nikolayev 2007, 134-137). With his emphasized features of a bull or an aurochs or as an anthropomorphic figure holding a horn-rhyton **Dionysus** correlates well with these Northern Black Sea traditions (Nikolayev 2007, 137, 138). In the context of these traditions, one could look the etymology of the river **Tyras** (Τύραξ) in relation with the aforementioned root *taur-* signifying a bull, which would create an additional association between toponyms and ethnonyms of the Northern Black Sea and those from Macedonia.

Speaking of the names containing the root *taur-*, a special attention deserves the ethnonym **Tauri** referring to people who, according to the ancient sources, inhabited southern shores of Crimea. Some of them use the same name **Tauris** (Ταῦρος) **Taurida/Tauria** to refer to the wider region (T.I).

The genesis of these ethnonyms and toponyms from the Northern Black Sea is sought for in various aspects. Stephanus Byzantinus and Eustatius cite an old legend according to which the people of Tauri received the name according to a pair of bulls with whom Osiris had ploughed their land (Dombrovskiy et al. 1975, Ch. 3). In favor of these significances is also the toponym **Bosporus** (Kimérios Bosporos) denoting a 'cow pass' (Shaub 2007, 60, 61). Based on the previous examples, it is probable that Tauri as an ethnonym was based on a myth, similar to the Scythian, regarding the genesis of these people from a local river god resembling a bull. However, other contemporary interpretations should not be neglected, as they find the significance of a *mountain* in the base of these ethnonyms and toponyms (Dombrovskiy et al. 1975, Ch. 3).

When it comes to the parallel presence of toponyms containing *taur-* and *sind-* in both regions, of special interest are certain traditions related to the North Aegean island of Lemnos, which was populated by **Sinti** on one hand, and was called Taurica on the other, where also **Artemis Tauropolos** (T.II) was worshipped. Even more interestingly, numerous mythical elements relate this island to the North Black Sea Tauria (T.I). Firstly, it is **Thoantes** who is stated as the king of Lemnos in the Iliad, while in other sources he is referred to as the king of Pontic Tauria, his father being the river god Borysthenes (T.IX: 7, 8). **Iphigenia**, a mythical goddess with her own cult, additionally refers to these mystical Aegean-Pontic relations. In the Post-Homeric poem 'Cypria' (7th-6th c. BC) her cult apparently referred to the Aegean Tauria (Lemnos), while the later 'Iphigenia in Aulis' by Euripides (407 BC) refers to the Pontic Tauria²¹. We believe that Euripides made this transmission of the action due to some facts which remain unknown to us and referred to certain ancient relations between these two regions.

²¹ Basic information and sources: Srejić and Čermanović 1987, 423; interpretations: Dombrovskiy et al. 1975, Ch. 3; Ivantčik 2008.

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Нікос Чаусідіс

“Народи річок” Північного Причорномор'я та Македонії

Зв'язок між Північним Причорномор'ям та Македонією простежується протягом всіх історичних періодів, від преісторії до середньовіччя. Дана стаття базується на тезі про існування інтенсивних відносин між цими географічними областями наприкінці 2-го та початку 1-го тисячоліття до н.е., що підтверджується різними традиціями пов'язаними з річками. Більше того, відомі археологічні факти будуть доповнені відповідними письмовими джерелами, що стосуються конкретних історичних подій і народів та їхніх етнонімів, топонімів та інших культурних рис. Топоніми та етноніми, що містять такі корені, як *sind-*, *sinth-*, *sith-*, наводяться як перший індикатор, що був зафіксований в давніх джерелах для обох регіонів, і який має індоарійську інтерпретацію в якості “річки”. Така інтерпретація розглядається в контексті теорії міграції індо-арійців, що відбувались через південь Північного Причорномор'я в другій половині 2-го тисячоліття до н.е., і одним з напрямків якої були Балкани. Цілком ймовірно, що саме у степах Північного Причорномор'я, протягом першої половини 2-го тисячоліття до нашої ери, відбувався процес розпаду однорідного культурного комплексу, що призвело до активних міграцій новоутворених груп. Одна з траєкторій цього руху пов'язана з наявністю киммерійців і гіперборейців на Балканах, що засвідчено давніми письмовими джерелами. Особливого значення надається стародавнім повідомленням про “*Aria*” як найдавнішу назву Фракії. Численні археологічні знахідки також відносяться до цих міграцій, що підтверджено відповідною літературою. Крім того, відзначаються різні традиції, що зафіксовані в давніх джерелах, щодо ролі річок у духовній культурі населення обох регіонів, особливо в генеалогічних міфах. Особливо підкреслюється значення образу бика як зооморфного втілення річкових богів, що проявляється в подібних традиціях, серед яких поширення в топоніміці, етноніміці та теоніміці обох регіонів коренів *taur-*, *taor-*.

Ключові слова: індо-арійці, Македонія, річкові культури, трако-кіммерійці, синди, Таврія



Fig. 1. Distribution map of toponyms and ethnonyms in Black Sea region.



Fig. 2. Distribution map of toponyms and ethnonyms in Macedonia.



Fig. 3. Distribution map of migrations of Indo-Aryans and Proto-Iranians.



Fig. 4. Distribution map of movement of the Cimmerians.



Fig. 5. Distribution map of movement of the Cimmerians.



Fig. 6. 1. Nikolayev 2007, 135 - Ris. 1; 2, 3. Archaeological collection at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje; 4. Kuzman 1997, XXVI; 5. <https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/knezevsko-bлаго-staro-2500-godina/sps5kxf>; 6. https://www.vcoins.com/en/stores/romae_aeternae_numismatics/136/product/king_of_macedonia_philip_v_and_perseus_ae20_river_deity_strymon_trident_vf/602065/Default.aspx



Fig. 7. 1-5, 7. Josifovski 2011, 4, 18 - Sl. 38; 6. Mikulčić 2003, 58; 8-12. Pavlovska 2012, 14, 16, 18, 94, 97.

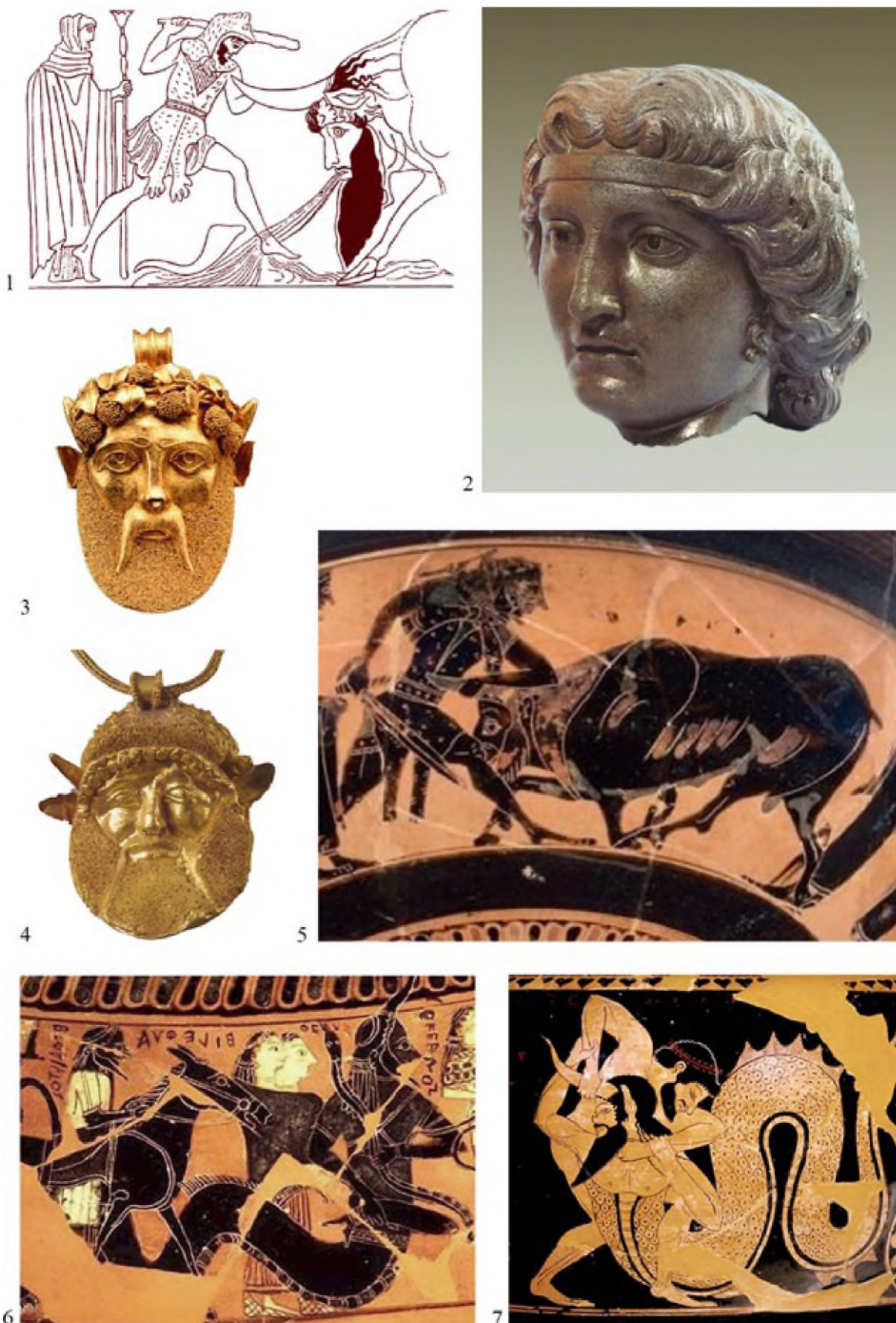


Fig. 8. 1. <http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Mythology/HeraclesAchelousLouvreG365.html>; 2. Mikulčić I., 1984, 60; 3. <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/design/jewelry/classical/5.html>; 4. <http://www.thekulturefiles.com/?p=143>; 5. http://www.ephodia.eu/ceramiquegrecoitaliq/mythologie/mythologie_heracles_achelous.htm; 6. <http://www.theoi.com/Gallery/O1.1.html>; 7. <http://www.theoi.com/Gallery/O20.4.html>



Fig. 9. 1, 2. http://www.hourmo.eu/22_Crimea_&_Cimmerian_Bosporus/Theodosia/Index_Theodosia.html; 3. http://www.coinproject.com/search_city_result.php?city=Heracleia-Pontica®ion=BITHYNIA&type=1; 4. <http://darveter84.livejournal.com/12502.html>; 5. <https://www.numisbids.com/n.php?p=lot&sid=395&lot=69>; 6. <https://www.cointalk.com/threads/ancient-monies-of-the-northern-black-sea-region.281841/>; 7. http://www.forumancientcoins.com/moonmoth/coins/olbia_003.html; 8. <http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/sarmatia/olbia/i.html>