

# KING OF THE THRACIAN OLORUS IN SOUTH-EASTERN THRACE A PREDECESSOR OF THE ODRYSIAN KING TERES I

(between 516/514 BC and the end of the 6<sup>th</sup>/  
the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC)

Herodotus, in his narrative about the Philaides on the Thracian Chersonese says that Miltiades, son of Cypselus (Miltiades the Elder) recruited any Athenian, who wanted to take part in the expedition, sailed off with the Dolonci and took possession of their land (Hdt. VI, 39-40). Those who brought him appointed him tyrant. His first act was to wall off the isthmus of the Chersonese from the city of Cardia across to Pactye, so that the Apsinthians would not be able to harm them by invading their land (Hdt. VI, 36-37).

Miltiades the Elder came to rule the Chersonese and the Thracian Dolonci as a tyrant between 556 and 528/527 BC. The Apsinthians, the other Thracians living there were the enemy. A tyrant is an Anatolian expression, bearing the negativism of the Hellenic political thinking, but here indeed Miltiades ruled as such not only over the ethnic state formation of the Thracian Dolonci but over the other Hellenic poleis as well.

So, the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century BC the Thracian Chersonese was inhabited by the Thracian Dolonci and by Athenians, ruled by Miltiades the Elder. North of the Peninsula were the aggressive Thracian Apsinthians.

Further on Herodotus talks about Miltiades, son of Cimon (Miltiades the Younger), who had the cities' notables killed, became lord of the Chersonese by maintaining a 500 mercenaries; and he married *Hegesipyle, the daughter of Olorus, king of Thrace... or daughter of Olorus the Thracian...* (Hdt. VI, 39-41).

This information is corroborated by Marcellinus, who says that on the Chersonese Stesagoras was succeeded by the other Miltiades, who, although having already offspring by an Athenian woman, had *married the daughter of king Olorus, for he coveted power* (Marcell. *Thuc.* 2-18). Although Marcellinus is a much later author (5<sup>th</sup> century AD), in this case it is considered that he had used some sources of information other than Herodotus which have since been lost (Portal-ski 2007, 129-131). Here particularly important is the reason for this marriage

– *for he coveted power*. Apparently, in order to strengthen his positions on the peninsula, Miltiades, son of Cimon, could not neglect the support his powerful neighbour, the *Thracian king Olorus* would eventually give him and went for this political marriage.

Miltiades the Younger established himself on the Thracian Chersonese in the year 516/515 BC and his wedding Hegesipyle, daughter of the *Thracian king Olorus* took place not much later, probably sometime between 516-514 BC; in any case it preceded Darius I expedition against the Scythians (Цветкова 2004, 21-23).

It is important to point out that if by the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century BC the presence of the Thracian Dolonci and Apsinthians inhabiting the Chersonese is registered, about 40 years later the Dolonci are still mentioned living on the Peninsula (Hdt. VI, 40), and not the Apsinthians anymore. The sources mention *Olorus, king of the Thracians* whose daughter Miltiades the Younger had wed.

On one hand the link between the marriage to Hegesipyle, a Thracian princess with a Greek name, and the Miltiades' domination over the Peninsula is more than obvious.

On the other – there is no doubt that *Olorus' Thracians* are not the Apsinthians, who were warded off by a wall cutting through the isthmus. Even more so, this dynastic marriage was a political act that meant recognition of a partnership from both sides, i.e. a peace treaty between the ruling institutions of the two neighbours.

This treaty from 516-514 BC, concluded between *Olorus, king of the Thracians* and Miltiades the Younger, for the first time gave an Athenian the right to lawfully rule over the strategic Thracian Chersonese. Indeed, this is the first officially registered treaty between Athens and the Thracians from the European South-East outlining their respective spheres of influence. For Athens undoubtedly the primordial aim was to keep the Chersonese for its key political and strategic situation and for the advantages it gave as a bridge between Europe and Asia. This Athenian success was in harmony with the foreign political situation and complemented those of its actions through which it managed to keep dominating Sigeum in the Troad, on the opposite Anatolian Hellespontic shores, from the time of the Lydian kings onwards (Inventory 2004, 1014). Apparently, the Hellespont was to become an "Athenian sea".

What was left to King Olorus' Tracians to own under this treaty?

The answer is: all the remaining coasts of the sea of Marmara and the Thracian sea except those of the Chersonese, inhabited by the Thracians for centuries and from which they criss-crossed the seas prior to the treaty (Diod. VII, fr. 11; Порожанов 1984, 19-22; Portalski 2007, 126-133).

Naturally comes the question who were these Thracians who had a king by the name of Olorus?

The only possible answers are either the Dolonci or the Apsinthians. But this seems quite improbable, for if that was the case, Herodotus would have explicitly said so, having explained little earlier who they were and where did they live.

An other possibility is persistently pointed at by the following important observations.

The first one belongs to Janko Todorov who, knowing his sources to perfection, came to the revelation that when speaking of the Odrysian kings *the ancient authors called them either "Odrysian" or "Thracian" kings ...these two expressions being synonymous* (Тодоров 1933, 3).

The second one is made by Julia Tsvetkova, who observes that by the title of *Thracian king*, except Olorus, only Sitalces, son of Teres (Hdt. VII, 137), Odrysian king and ruler between the years 444 and 424 BC is mentioned. This gave her ground to assume that a dynastic link between Olorus and Sitalces may have existed (Цветкова 2004, 23).

This hypothesis sits well with the reconstruction of the political situation in the European south-east before and by the time of king Darius I (522-486 BC) preparation for the expedition across Thrace (Йорданов 2003, 21).

Hence it is logical to consider that the strongest Thracians to the North of the Peninsula at that time were the Odrysians who had already settled there and seemingly had incorporated the Apsinthians in their realm. Thus it turns out that Olorus most probably was the name of an Odrysian Thracian king, predecessor of Teres, with keen interests in the shores of the sea of Marmara and the Thracian sea. And this would be only too natural, since the nucleus of the Odrysian state to the South of the Balkan range covered the Sredna gora area, the eastern part of the Rhodope Mountains, the Strandzha-Sakar area, the Thracian lowlands down to the catchment area of the rivers Maritsa, Toundzha and Arda. From there the natural seaward exits are very close – some tens kilometers to the South, to the Thracian sea and to the south-east, to the sea of Marmara, i.e. to the Thracian Chersonese.

*Olorus* was not only the name of a *Thracian king*; this was also the name of the father of the great historian and Athenian citizen, Thucydides (Thuc. IV, 104, 4). The Thracian name of his father, Olorus, the name of his mother, Hegesipyle, his rights to exploit golden mines in Thrace, and the influence he enjoyed within the Thracian boundaries reveal Thucydides' Thracian "connection".

Plutarch, who had knowledge of other sources, now lost to us, states that the father of Thucydides the historian – and Thucydides was connected with the family of Cimon – was also an Olorus, who referred his name back to that of the common ancestor, and also how it was that Thucydides had gold mines in Thrace. And it is said that Thucydides died in Skapte Hyle, a place in Thrace, having been murdered there... (Plut. *Cim.* 4, 1-2).

This version has been accepted as an axiom ever since Antiquity. If this is as true as it seems to be, especially after taking into account Plutarch's testimony, then it would be interesting to know where those golden mines and Thucydides' estate were situated.

Thucydides' right of working the gold mines *in that part of Thrace*, and *had thus great influence with the dyasts* (Thuc. IV, 105, 1) is commented on the occasion of the ships sent out from Thasos in order to bring help to Amphipolis against Brasidas the Spartan, but whether Thucydides' mines and estate were in the area of Amphipolis or on the isle of Thasos, i.e. somewhere around the lower course of the river Nestos, is ever so difficult to say. *That part of Thrace* should mean the Southern Thracian littoral, since Brasidas the Spartan was worried that *he* (Thucydides the Athenian – interpretation mine, K.P.) *would gather allies from the sea and from Thrace and would save them* (Thuc. IV, 105, 1).

The Southern Thracian littoral is washed by the Thracian sea and is locked hypothetically between the lower courses of the rivers Strymon to the West and Hebros to the Thracian Chersonese to the East. The isle of Thasos and the lower course of the river Nestos are almost in the middle of this stretch of coastal Thrace. That is why Thucydides' mines and estate could very well have been situated anywhere between the valleys of the rivers Nestos and Hebros/ the Thracian Chersonese.

It is now clear that Olorus, father of Thucydides' inheritance of his great-grandfather, the Thracian king Olorus' estate and mines by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC were already within the realm of the Odrysians. All these arguments corroborate the above mentioned hypothesis about the Odrysian ruler, Olorus' drive southwards, towards the shores of the Thracian sea.

The assumption that Olorus from South-Eastern Thrace is Teres' predecessor does not contradict Thucydides' testimony on him, for he says that Teres *was the first to establish the great kingdom of the Odrysians on a scale quite unknown to the rest of Thrace* (Thuc. II, 29, 2); ... *This Teres was king of the Odrysians, the first by the way who attained to any power* (Thuc. II, 29, 2-3).

As Al. Fol (Фол 1972, 138) as well as M. Tacheva (Тачева 2006, 23) consider, the Odrysian kingdom had already existed prior to Teres, but not as vast and powerful. But for Miltiades to conclude a peace treaty with its king by a dynastic marriage sometime in the years 516-514 BC, it certainly had already become a political reality in the European South-East.

Here it is worthwhile to remind that if Miltiades the Elder had acted as a tyrant to the Athenians, a ruler to the Dolonci and as a vassal to the Lydian king Croesus on the Thracian Chersonese (Portalski 2007, 123-134), the same applies without hesitation to Miltiades the Younger too – although an Athenian, as a vassal to the Persian king Darius I he took part in his Scythian expedition in the year ± 513 BC.

The logic of Miltiades, son of Cimon's actions thus appears, as follows.

With his arrival on the Thracian Chersonese, Miltiades the Younger does not proceed to fortify any further the Peninsula, as his uncle did before him, but in order to insure himself with a peaceful coexistence and the support of the Odrysian kingdom on the rise, he marries the daughter of the Thracian king Olorus. Then, being a vassal to Darius I, he arranged himself, the Dolonci and the Hellenic poleis under his rule not to be disturbed by the events taking place around him by giving a free way to the armies of the *king of kings* across Thrace in their campaign against the Scythians to the North. Thus it seems that the still small but strategically situated and with great perspectives Odrysian kingdom, ruled by Olorus and on the eve of Teres' ascent, is at least neutralised. In this situation it may be considered as a passive Persian "ally".

This may be the reason why Herodotus does not mention the Odrysian kingdom of Teres at the time of Darius' I expedition against the Scythians across Thrace.

As already proved, the Thracian Odrysians were ruled by Olorus, who is present in Herodotus' narrative, but only as an exception and only as the in-law of the Athenian Miltiades, son of Cimon's. Because the Odrysians had turned out to be Persia's "allies", i.e. enemies of the Hellenes, Herodotus, who is Athens' champion, would not talk about them. He would talk with pathos about some other Thracians – the Getae beyond the Balkan mountain range, who heroically resisted Darius' incursion. He would talk at length about the Scythians, the invincible Persian foe and therefore friends of Athens and thus worth of his attention.

It is not possible to say just how long Olorus ruled.

The dating of the peaceful settlement of the boundary dispute with the Scythians along the river Danube, followed by the logical inclusion of the Getae in Teres' I Odrysian kingdom could be put within the time span  $\pm 513-492$  BC. It probably took place in these two decades as a logical continuation of the "alliance" of Teres' predecessor, Olorus with the Persians, since it did not contradict or threaten in any way Darius I policy in Europe, now orientated to the South, towards Hellas. The unavoidable loss of independence of the Getae in Teres' kingdom and the peace treaty with the Scythians guaranteed Darius' rear from the North. Thus, by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup>/ the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC Teres I as a successor to the Thracian king Olorus, a passive ally to Darius I, secured the rears of the Persian army from the North.

Thus, the predecessor of Teres I, Olorus, was probably replaced on the helm of the Odrysian kingdom by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup>/ the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC at the latest.

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