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### THE THRACIAN BONE OF CONTENTION

Various reasons have been accused for having motivated Greek colonisation: destitution, economic and/or political crisis, external danger or subjugation of the motherland are among those most often cited in ancient sources. Yet the largest number of colonies was propelled by affluent and prosperous cities seeking new horizons capable of sustaining their further development.

In that sense, it is no coincidence that the Aegean coast of Thrace, was targeted as early as the early 7th c. by some of the most robust naval powers of the Aegean, Samos and Paros. Their respective colonies in Samothrace and Thasos represent secure bridgeheads in their effort to lay hands on the legendary natural resources of the Thracian mainland.<sup>1</sup>

In turn, over the following decades, Samothrace and Thasos served as bases for the establishment, often through ferocious fighting against the indigenous populations,<sup>2</sup> of a series of often fortified outposts (τείχη) along the mainland littoral; the latter progressively evolved into well secured *Peraiai* for the two island cities. Peraian settlements controlled no more than narrow strips of coastal land, yet they served the purposes of an important trade traffic which nurtured the extraordinary development of their island mother cities, as indeed that of their respective metropoleis.

By far more successful proved the colonising endeavour of Paros: Thasos, itself an island with considerable mineral, namely gold, deposits, was furthermore able to gain exclusive though indirect control over the output of important gold mines worked by native populations in the Pangaion area, probably also on the slopes of mount Lekani right across the narrow straits which separate the island from the mainland coast.<sup>3</sup>

Following initial resistance, relations between Thasian colonists and pre-Greek populations developed peacefully; *symbiosis* was apparently based on some kind of partnership deal, which guaranteed mutual financial interests. The Thasians did not claim ownership of the mining areas, which continued to be worked by their indigenous owners; instead, they undertook the exclusive export of the mining output, which thus acquired considerable added value to the benefit of both partners. Indeed, there should be no doubt that, as opposed to the Greeks, the Thracians were not traders, despite the marketing importance of Thracian exportable resources, such as valuable minerals and humans in the first place, but also shipping timber and other perishable goods, such as skins, victuals etc., exclusive of manufactured goods.<sup>4</sup> Greek trade, in the case Thasian trade, offered to remedy this deficiency by undertaking the export of Thracian raw materials both from the coastal areas and the Thracian Hinterland together with the risks involved.

Through the development of Greek trading activity the intrinsic value of Thracian materials swelled at great profit for both producers and for traders. Moreover, trading activity provided the Thracian partners with Greek products much sought after, such as wine, olive oil, and quality

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<sup>1</sup> On early Phoenician mining and trade activity in Thasos and in the Pangaion area see Isaac 1986, 4, with source and bibliographic references.

<sup>2</sup> For literary and epigraphic evidence, see recently *IThrAeg* 126-34.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac 1986, 4, was first to point out "Greek penetration of the lower Strymon Valley". See also Koukouli-Chrysanthaki 1990, 493-532, and, recently, finds near Neos Skopos, which allow the undisputed identification of the site of Berga (Bonias 2000, 227-48).

<sup>4</sup> Through the entire antiquity and over the entire space of the Mediterranean and the Euxine there is no indication, let alone evidence, of Thracian traders, Thracian trading ships or Thracian trading centres.

manufactured goods, in turn invigorating the economy of Greek production centres. Such considerations are presumed to have cemented some kind of arrangement or deal between the two partners, through which Thasos secured not only tolerance in settling her trading posts (*emporía*) on Thracian soil, but also the continuing cooperation of the hosting native populations against eventual contenders. The pattern of relations thus established proved so successful and mutually profitable that it became the dominant factor in Greco-Thracian relations down to the hellenistic period.

Inevitably, the economic importance of Aegean Thrace did not fail to attract rival ambitions. The exclusive trading privileges of Thasos were soon challenged by Klazomenians attempting to target the coveted area through a different route which circumvented Mt. Lekane and the Thasian *Peraia*. The foundation of their colony Abdera ultimately failed.<sup>5</sup> Traditionally, this failure is attributed to Thracian aggressiveness (see Isaac 1986, 79-80); yet, one may wonder, whether this was not spontaneous but rather directed and supported by Abdera's Greek neighbours in Thasos, who had undoubtedly reasons just as good, indeed even better, to drive the newcomers out. It is probably significant that Thasos now ventured to secure a new outpost, Stryme, further east on the Thracian coast, to mark the eastern marches of her zone of exclusive interest and her resolve to prevent the renewal of colonising ventures.<sup>6</sup>

Thasian aspirations for exclusive exploitation of the area proved short-lived. Presently a new colony, Maroneia, was established by Eastern Greeks of uncertain Chian origin east of the Nestos and Lake Bistonis; the newcomers forced Thasos to relinquish her easternmost outpost, Stryme.<sup>7</sup> Yet further East, right across the Delta of the Hebros river, another colony, Ainos, was founded by Aiolians. Soon enough, Thasos was forced to abandon all claims across the Nestos: Teian colonists renewed the Klazomenian venture and, despite fierce opposition "by the Thracians", succeeded in securely refounding Abdera (545 BC).<sup>8</sup> Literary sources do not hint at a possible Thasian role; but neither do they explain the reasons for the mortal hatred which seems to have branded the relations between Thasos and Abdera in the years to come.

To judge by Abdera's impressively rapid development, the city must have gained access to the coveted eldorado from the start. The magnificent silver coinage of this city, exported and valued in Egypt and in the East as early as the late 6th c. BC, can only mean in our opinion that Abderitans shared in the exploitation of Thracian gold: Teos, Abdera's mother city, seems to have benefited from the dazzling success of her colony, as indicated by its minting of similar coinage soon thereafter<sup>9</sup> and by the unwavering maternal relations which bonded the two cities through the ages.<sup>10</sup>

Reports of developments in the North Aegean seem to have travelled fast. In mainland Greece the Athenian Peisistratos was first to identify the wealth of Thracian resources and the importance of two target zones of strategic value for the rising ambitions of Athenian power: the Pangaion area—which he personally exploited—and the Thracian Chersonesos were the Athenians founded lasting settlements controlling maritime traffic through the Hellespont (Isaac 1986, 62-75 and Loukopoulou 1989). In the Greek East, under Persian rule by the end of the 6th c., the advance of Persian occupation over Thracian lands encouraged insightful Milesian tyrants, first Histiaios and then Aristagoras, to devise schemes for settling in the Thracian eldorado.<sup>11</sup> Aristagoras' efforts are said to have been thwarted "by the Thracians" (Hdt. 5.126). Or were they?

<sup>5</sup> For literary references and bibliography, see Isaac 1986, 78-80 and, more recently, *IThAeg* 156-57.

<sup>6</sup> For the foundation of Stryme, and for Thasian ventures east of the Nestos estuary, see *IThAeg* 320, n. 2.

<sup>7</sup> See our analysis of source material *IThAeg* 128 with n.3.

<sup>8</sup> For references and bibliography, see *IThAeg* 159.

<sup>9</sup> For a revised dating of the earliest coinage of Teos, see Chrysanthaki-Nagle 2007.

<sup>10</sup> See our commentary of the well known honorific decrees of Abdera from Teos *IThAeg* E5 and E6.

<sup>11</sup> For a succinct account of these events, see Isaac 1986, 15-17.



Thus, by the end of the 6th c. the coveted Thracian coastline came to be shared between Thasos, Abdera, Maroneia, Samothrace and Ainos.<sup>12</sup> All of them owned territory insuring self-sustenance and a prosperous development. Yet, numismatic and archaeological evidence give proof that two of them, Thasos and Abdera, shared in the exploitation of the Thracian eldorado at enormous profit. In the case of Thasos, there seems to be no reason to doubt that it retained control over the exploitation of the Pangaion gold. For Abdera, fifth century developments indicate that it was also tapping Pangaion gold, accessed from the east, through some mountain pass across the Nestos and behind Mount Lekane (see Isaac 1986, with refs), or had, more probably, discovered other, independent, equally rich or even richer mining sources, and had devised similar means and ways to secure their exploitation. Yet enmity and rivalry between the two cities remained unquenched.

It broke out openly during the Persian advance through Thrace, when Thasos was denounced by "her neighbours", presumably Abdera, of planning rebellion. Darius was forced to take severe preventive measures (491 BC), which bore a heavy blow on Thasian power (Hdt. 6.46; Isaac 1986, 89-90). However, to judge from numismatic evidence, these developments do not seem to have considerably affected Thasian prosperity or that of Abdera for that matter, except for an important reversal: following Athenian military operations in the North under Kimon (476 BC), prosperity had from now on to be shared with a new partner, Athens as head of the Delian Confederacy.<sup>13</sup> The attempt of Thasos to shake off Athenian hegemony was harshly castigated. After a long siege (465-463 BC), Thasos was stripped of its *Peraia* and fortifications, burdened with a heavy war indemnity, and with an onerous tribute assessment which was raised at 30 T. from 446/5 BC on, at 60 T. in 425 BC. Even worse, after a series of ill-fated colonising efforts, which were repulsed "by Thracians" and culminated in the Athenian rout at Drabeskos (465 BC; Isaac 1986, 19-21; 24-30), Athens eventually succeeded in settling Amphipolis on the lower reaches of the river Strymon (437/6 BC), thus gaining direct access over the Pangaion gold and the Pangaion shipping timber. The Edonians helped Brasidas expel the Athenians. Thasian exclusive control over the mining area was definitively lost. Thasos, ever a successful trading expert, saved her financial prosperity by reorienting her development in the wine industry and trade.

Things fared better in the case of Abdera. The enormous sum of 15 T. contributed by the city to the Athenian League testifies to its continuing affluence,<sup>14</sup> despite the fact that Athenian claims over resources from the Aegean Thrace on one hand, and the rise of Odrysian power in central Thrace on the other had brought about a significant reversal in the balance of power on which Abdera's trade was founded. The Abderitans proved worthy of the new challenges, disproving their proverbial disqualification as Gothamites or simpletons (Dem. 17.23; Cic. Att. 7.7.4; Luc. *Hist. Conscr.* 2). Contrary to the Thasians they did not risk rebellion; instead, they sought political support. Abdera struck intimate relations with the ruling Odrysian house through some Nymphodoros. The initiative proved successful on all counts: Nymphodoros may be held responsible not only for asserting his city's privileged relations with the Odrysian king, but also for the financial and administrative organisation of the Thracian kingdom, which secured the military power, successful policy and unprecedented income of his Thracian patron, Sitalkes (431-424 BC)<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, Odrysian patronage, earned through the dealings of Nymphodoros, did not only promote and secure Abdera's trading interests; it allowed Abderitans to claim a new, important role in Greek politics, not least at further financial profit for their city.<sup>16</sup> In 431 BC, the same Nymphodoros

<sup>12</sup> Dikaia maybe a foundation of Thasos according to Isaac (1986, 115) who supports with good reason, in our opinion the early extension of the *Peraia* of Thasos as far east as the westernmost reaches of Mount Ismaros.

<sup>13</sup> On the probability of a first Athenian expedition in Thrace after Marathon, see Isaac 1986, 18-19 with bibliography.

<sup>14</sup> Abdera's regular tribute of 15 T. from 454 to 432 is only surpassed by such major cities as Aigina, Thasos and Byzantion.

<sup>15</sup> Thuc. 2.29, 95-98 on the political, military and financial power of the first Odrysian kings.

<sup>16</sup> The successful dealings of Nymphodoros may account, in our opinion, for the significant reduction of Abdera's tribute by 33%, from 15 T. to 10 T., after 431 BC.

orchestrated the so-called "Atheno-Thracian axis", by negotiating the famous treaty between Athens and the Thracian king. Abdera was undoubtedly part of the now tripartite association, namely a Greco-Thracian "triangle" safeguarding the interests of Athens, Abdera and the Odrysian king.<sup>17</sup>

By the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC, after the second revolt of Thasos and that of Abdera from the Athenian League, it was Maroneia's turn to claim the Thracian bone of contention. It did so by adopting Abdera's own means and ways. The future Seuthes II of the Odrysians was closely courted and influenced by his counsellor Herakleides, a Maronitan. It is quite possible that the renewal of the Atheno-Thracian axis of cooperation in 389 BC<sup>18</sup> was established through the successful mediation of Maroneia, possibly by no other than the same Herakleides. Soon thereafter Abdera, Maroneia's last obstacle in claiming full control over the Thracian trade, was annihilated under the blows of a Triballian invasion (376/5 BC), in which Maroneia's role appears dubious, to say the least. Thracian support was further called for by the Maronitans to thwart a last attempt of Thasos to regain control over Stryme in 361/0 BC.<sup>19</sup>

Information on 5<sup>th</sup> c. developments is supplemented by 4<sup>th</sup> c. literary sources and inscriptions. The now famous "Pistiros inscription" indicates that under the Odrysian kings the traditional pattern of Greco-Thracian relations first established in Aegean Thrace, was formalised and extended: well defined rules regulated the presence and status of Greek settlers on Odrysian soil and their relations with the king's subjects, as well as the functioning of markets and the security of travelling merchants.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, the traditional relations were further expanded and elaborated through the adoption by the Odrysian kings of Greek trading practices: onerous custom dues, collected in the *emporía* and "on the roads", were imposed, probably at the rate of 10%,<sup>21</sup> on both imported and exported goods; their total amounted to almost half the vast yearly royal income.<sup>22</sup> In our view, the "Pistiros inscription", attributed to one of the successors of the powerful Odrysian king Kotys I (383/2-359 BC), is probably no more than a mid-fourth century BC reformulation or reform of some formal partnership deal struck in the 5<sup>th</sup> c., probably under Sitalkes,<sup>23</sup> in keeping with the traditional pattern of Greco-Thracian relations.<sup>24</sup>

We may safely infer that profit accounted for the tolerance and collaboration which the Greek colonists enjoyed in Thrace. The persisting validity of our argument is eloquently formulated by Demosthenes: allowing for specific references to the fierce dispute between Athens and Kersebleptes over the Thracian Chersonese, Demosthenes stresses the importance of peaceful symbiosis for the Thracian kings: war and occupation of colonial territory entailed the shrinking, if not the death of Greek trade resulting in a tenfold reduction of the income which under peaceful conditions accrued unto the royal treasury through custom dues from the *emporía*.<sup>25</sup> Greek trade bought Thracian tolerance and collaboration. A collaboration which the Greek colonists often exploited against their Greek rivals.

The balance of power established in the early 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC was reversed through initiatives triggered by personal frustrations and ambitions: under the pressure of two Athenian condottieri, Iphikrates and Charidemus, king Kotys, later also his successors, attempted to break the traditional pattern of Greco-Thracian relations by claiming direct control over colonial, mainly Athenian

<sup>17</sup> For a realistic analysis of the rationale behind this complex net of interests, see Loukopoulou 2002, 346 and 348-50.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the fragmentary treaty between Athens and the Odrysian kings Seuthes and Amadokos, Bengtson 1975, No. 238.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed analysis of these events and of the role of Maroneia role, see Loukopoulou, forthcoming.

<sup>20</sup> For a recent analysis of this important text, see Loukopoulou 1999, 366-68.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the terms *dekatalogoi*, *tele* and *dekatai* used by Demosthenes (23.117) in his harangue against Kersebleptes.

<sup>22</sup> Thuc. 2.97.3-5; cf. Dem. 23.110 and our analysis Loukopoulou 2002, 347-48.

<sup>23</sup> See Diodorus' appraisal of this king's *synesis* in organising the kingdoms finances (12.50.1: ἔτι δὲ τῶν προσόδων μεγάλην ποιούμενος ἐπιμέλειαν). Cf. Loukopoulou 2002, 345, with n. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Lines 26-27 of the inscription (see *infra*, p. 588) allude to practical regulations or reforms introduced under Kotys I.

<sup>25</sup> Dem. 23.110; cf. our analysis Loukopoulou 2002, 347-48.

trading centres in SE Thrace and in the Chersonese. The ensuing troubled period only prepared the ground for the new claimant of the Thracian bone of contention, Philip of Macedon. With Thrace part of the Macedonian kingdom, both ownership and exploitation of Thracian resources, in particular mines and forests, became uncontested royal prerogatives, eventually making the traditional pattern of Greco-Thracian partnership obsolete.

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