ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

Συγγραφή : *Theodossiev Nikolai* *(26/5/2008)*
Για παραπομπή : *Theodossiev Nikolai , "Greeks and Thracians", 2008, Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Μείζονος Ελληνισμού, Κωνσταντινούπολη*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=10775>

Greeks and Thracians

Περίληψη :

During the Late Bronze Age, the Mycenaean Greeks and the early Thracians were already neighbours and coexisted in certain areas of the North Balkan Peninsula. A plethora of historical sources and archaeological data testify that from the 8th c. BC onwards, during the Greek colonisation of the North Aegean and the West Pontic shores of ancient Thrace, Greeks and Thracians lived together in various coastal settlements and regions and even mingled through intermarriage. In that period, many Thracians who came into closer contact with the Greeks were Hellenized and adopted the Greek alphabet and language.

Χρονολόγηση

Late Bronze Age onwards

Γεωγραφικός εντοπισμός

North Balkan Peninsula

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1. Prehistory

During the Late Bronze Age, Mycenaean Greeks and the early Thracians were already neighbours and co-existed in certain areas of the North Balkan Peninsula. Numerous historical sources and archaeological data testify that from the 8th c. BC onwards, during the Greek colonisation of the North Aegean and the West Pontic shores of ancient Thrace, Greeks and Thracians lived together in various coastal settlements and regions and even mingled through intermarriage. In that period, many Thracians who were in closer contact with the Greeks became hellenized and adopted the Greek alphabet and language.

In fact, some Thracian personal and tribal names do appear in Mycenaean Linear B documents.[1] This evidence testifies that in the second half of the 2nd millennium BC, Mycenaean Greeks had a good idea of the early Thracians, while some imported Mycenaean pottery discovered in the North Balkans is indicative of trade relations and presumable visits of Mycenaean Greeks in the region. However, the earliest literary evidence on Thrace is provided by the Homeric epics. Although this information does not seem to be reliable enough from a historical point of view, it reflects the early notions of the Greeks regarding the regions beyond the northern periphery of their own world. Later on, a number of ancient Greek authors, such as Herodotus, Hesiod, Hecataeus, Hellanicus, Pindarus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Aeschines, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Polybius, Strabo, and many others, often provided reliable and relatively objective, although not complete records, usually receiving first hand information from Greeks living in ancient Thrace.[2] Some Greek historians like Thucydides and Xenophon, even had personal experiences and adventures in Thrace and got a very good knowledge of the region, which was well described in their works.

2. Literary sources

While most ancient literary sources are often biased, ambiguous and incomplete, a number of Greek epigraphic records provide reliable information on Thrace during the Classical and Hellenistic periods.[3] Some of the inscriptions, like those found at Seuthopolis,[4] Pistiros,[5] Sboryanovo[6] and Mesambria,[7] contain valuable data on Thracian history, religion and topography, and clearly demonstrate that Greek was the official language of the Thracian aristocracy and was used in diplomacy, while certain number of Greeks inhabited inland Thrace, living in emporia or among the local tribes. Actually, two inscriptions from the Thracian inland directly refer to Greeks living in the region during the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic periods and provide a good opportunity to examine the relations between the Greeks and the local Thracians. The funerary stela from Parvenets[8] belonged to Antiphaneos son of Herandros and the already mentioned votive inscription from Sboryanovo refers to Menecharmos son of Poseidonios. In addition, these epigraphic records provide excellent support to the numerous historical sources referring to Greek people in the Thracian inland. However, most important in this context is the inscription from Pistiros mentioned above, which clearly testifies that during the Classical period Greeks had already settled the inland Thracian territory and established emporia, such as Pistiros. According to the inscription, the Greek settlers were politically and economically engaged with the Thracian kings, while the emporion of Pistiros was inhabited by a mixed

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population of Greeks and Thracians, as attested by the archaeological material and epigraphic data from the site. In addition, some ancient literary sources also testify that during the Classical and Early Hellenistic periods the Greeks established inland market-places and trade settlements in Thrace.[9]

Undoubtedly, the most important historical event that preceded the Greek settlement in the Thracian inland and produced significant impacts upon the Thracian tribes was the Greek colonisation of the North Aegean and the West Pontic shores of ancient Thrace.[10] While a number of archaeological materials indicates active pre-colonial contacts between Greeks and Thracians, the earliest Greek colonies in Thrace, such as Mende, Akanthos, Potidaea, Thasos, Abdera, Maroneia, Samothrace, Sestos, Kardia, Selymbria, Byzantion, Apollonia and Histros, were established from the middle of the 8th to the end of the 7th c. BC, and even more intensive colonisation lasted throughout the 6th and 5th c. BC. The main Greek poleis, which established colonies in Thrace, were Miletos, Megara, Chalkis, Eretria, Teos, Corinth, Andros, Paros, Chios, Clazomenai, Lesbos, Samos, and others.

3. Consequences of the Greek colonization

The Greek colonisation stimulated multifarious and intensive political, economic, ethnic and cultural relations and interactions between the Greeks and the Thracians, and led to the gradual Hellenization of the Thracian aristocracy and certain tribes who inhabited the West Pontic and the North Aegean coastal areas. Although the Thracians have never created literature of their own, in the course of various contacts and interaction with their Greek neighbours, some of them adopted the Greek alphabet very well and in certain cases, the script was used in diplomatic relations, cult activities, rituals and in some funerals for recording the names of the dead aristocrats. In addition, several inscriptions with Greek letters but in the Thracian language are known and they provide even more opportunities to examine the variety of interaction and interrelation. Simultaneously, the Thracian culture also influenced Greek literature, iconography and cult.[11] As a result, some Thracian deities were worshipped by the Greeks and the image of the Thracians, usually presented as warriors, appeared on the painted Greek vases. Simultaneously, some Thracian mythical personages, such as Orpheus, Rhesos, Lykourgos, Tereus and others, became very popular in the ancient Greek literature. In fact, the whole historical process followed the model of interrelation and interaction between centre and periphery, which is well attested in many parts of the ancient world. On the other hand, a significant number of Thracian people, who usually were mercenaries or slaves, spread throughout Classical Greece and the entire Hellenistic world, as evidenced by numerous ancient literary sources and epigraphic records.[12]

The Greek settlement in Thrace and the political interests of the Greek poleis and colonies stimulated active bilateral relations with the Thracian aristocracy and especially with the kings who ruled the Odrysian Kingdom of Thrace during the Classical period.[13] Thus, in 431 BC Sitalkes (c. 440 – 424 BC) became an important ally of Athens during the Peloponnesian War and in 429 BC he organized a military expedition against Chalkidike and ancient Macedonia, while his son Sadokos was recognized as an Athenian citizen. Later on, the Odrysian king Cotys I (383 – 359 BC) also maintained active and complex political relations with Athens and got the Athenian citizenship.

The economic relations between the Thracian tribes and the Greek colonies on the North Aegean and the West Pontic shores were also very important. The Greek colonies maintained large-scale trade both with the Thracian coastal areas and with the inland regions. The usual export goods from Thrace included slaves, livestock, honey, beeswax, grain, wine, timber, charcoals, tar, ores, metals and others, while the import into the Thracian inland consisted of Attic black- and red-figure pottery, silver and gold vessels, luxurious bronze tableware, gold and silver jewellery, weapons, wine, olive oil and other goods.[14] It is usually supposed that the initial commodity exchange was gradually replaced by introducing money circulation, although both ways of exchange were always used in the trade relations between Greeks and Thracians.

4. Artefactual evidence

Very important for studying trade relations are the numerous Greek amphorae from the Classical and Hellenistic periods imported in Thrace, which provide objective and complete information about the regular economic contacts with significant Greek trade and production centers.[15] The amphorae imported in Thrace come from Thasos, Rhodes, Sinope, Cnidus, Herakleia Pontica, Kos,

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Corinth, Chios, Colophon, Acanthos, Amphipolis, Ainos and others. Supposedly, the long-distance trade contacts were usually indirect and were maintained via the Greek colonies on the Thracian shores. In addition, a great number of various coins minted in ancient Greek poleis penetrated into Thrace from the 6th c. BC onwards, clearly testifying the intensive trade relations.[16] The Greek colonies in Thrace also issued their own coins for the needs of the local market and trade exchange, such as Maroneia and Mesambria, among many others.[17]

5. Reflections in cult

The Greek colonisation in Thrace and the active relations between Greeks and Thracians are also reflected in religion and cult. Some ancient authors, like Herodotus,[18] gave Greek theonyms for the gods worshipped by the Thracians, which is usually interpreted as a literary device of "translating" the Thracian religious reality to the ancient Greek readers. However, several 4th – early 3rd c. BC epigraphic records from the Thracian inland, like the already mentioned inscriptions from Pistiros, Seuthopolis and Sboryanovo, testify to the cults of Dionysos, Apollo, Artemis Phosphoros and the Great Gods of Samothrace, which clearly reveals the Hellenization of the Thracian religion, at least in the circles of the Thracian aristocracy and the people living in the Thracian towns. In addition, Herodotus described the kings of the Thracian Dolonkoi who visited Delphi in order to get advice from the oracle and as a result they invited Miltiades the Elder to rule their territory in the Thracian Chersonessus.[19] This particular story is an excellent piece of evidence for bilateral relationship between Thracians and Greeks in the field of policy, religion and cult. Simultaneously, the cult of some Thracian deities also spread in ancient Greece and throughout the Hellenistic koine. Among the best examples is the Thracian goddess Bendis who was worshipped and celebrated in Athens and other parts of the ancient world.[20]

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Γλωσσάριο :

- emporion, the

Places where trade was conducted, usually small settlements of urban character on the borders or along the coasts and the commercial routes. With the same term are characterized the trade districts, the markets outside the walls of a city and/or settlements being themselves trade centers.

Πηγές

Arrian, *Anabasis* 1.1.6

Herodotus, *Histories* 4.33.5; 5.7.1; 6.34–36

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