

## **THE OLDEST PEOPLES OF BITHYNIA: TRIBES OF THRACIAN ORIGIN**

### **НАЙ-ДРЕВНИТЕ НАРОДИ НА ВИТИНИЯ: ПЛЕМЕНА ОТ ТРАКИЙСКИ ПРОИЗХОД**

Страбон, известен географ от древността, дефинира границите на Тракия така: Тракия е регион, простиращ се в границите между Евксински понт (Черно море), Боспорос Тракиос (Босфора) и Пропонтис (Мраморно море) на изток, Истрос (р. Дунав) и Аксиос (р. Вардар) на север и запад и Егейско море и Хелеспонтос (Дарданелите) на юг. Известно е, че тракийските земи били населени с коренно местно население преди заселването на тракийските племена.

Местностите, в които траките се установили, били различни. Съществували пещерни поселища, добре укрепени крепости, рибарски селища и градове. На практика първите градове в тракийските земи били основани от гръцките колонисти и римляните. Най-значимите градове в тракийския регион били Византион (Иstanbul), Адрианопол (Одрин), Филипополис (Пловдив), Сердика (София).

Названията на тракийските племена са достигнали до нас благодарение на гръцките и римските историографи. В статията е представена обобщена информация единствено за племената, мигрирали към регион на Витиния, като тините – първото тракийско племе, имигрирало в региона на Витиния, в районът на днешна Игнелиада (Солмидесос), мигдоните, които преди да се преселят във Витиния, живеели в района между Аксиас и Вардар, одрисите, едно от най-могъщите племена в тракийския регион, населявали земите между Дунав и Черноморието.

От II хил. пр.Хр. започнало засилено миграционно движение от тракийския регион към Витиния. Смята се, че нападенията, извършени през VIII и VII в. пр.Хр от кимерийците, обитавали Южна Русия, предизвикали преселенията на траките през VIII в.

Както потвърждава Страбон, северозападните части на Витиния и южните брегове на Мраморно море били силно елинизирани. В надписите от елинския и римския период има много малко местни имена. Тези имена обаче без съмнение са с тракийски произход: Дилипорис, Мокапорис, Олукентос, Камолес. Това подкрепя мнението на Страбон и на други древни автори, че първото население на Витиния е било с тракийски произход. Този факт е подкрепен от надписи, открити в региона и датиращи от елинския и римския период.

В заключение авторът отбелязва, че почти всички имена от тракийски произход, открити в надписи, са на хора от средните и нисшите класи. Тези траки, наречени „хора, живеещи в покрайнините”, нямали граждански права в града, с който били свързани. Няма доказателства, че са притежавали обширни земи. Най-важната причина за това е фактът, че местното население било много обременено с дългове и земите му били отнети през периода на Римската империя.

**Ключови думи:** Тракия, Витиния, Анадола, витини, траки, тракийски племена, тини, мигдони, одриси, мизи, фриги, надписи, лични имена от тракийски произход.

Strabo, the famous geographer of the ancient age, defines the borders of Thrace like this: Thrace is the region bound by Pontus Euxinus (the Black Sea), Bosphoros Thrakios (the Bosphorus Strait) and Propontis (the Sea of Marmara) in the east, Istros (the Danube) and Aksios (Vardar) rivers in the north and west, and the Aegean Sea and the Hellespontos (the Dardanelles Strait) in the south (Hdt., IV, 93; Strab., VII, 323; Erzen 1994: 11; Sevin 2001: 31). Bithynia, on the other hand, bordered on Paphlagonia to the east, on Phrygia and Galatia to the south and on Mysia to the west<sup>1</sup>. To the west Bosphoros Thrakios (Istanbul Strait), Rhyndakos (Orhaneli Brook) and Olympos (Mount Uludag), and to the east Billaios (Filyos) Brook determined the natural borders of Bithynia<sup>2</sup>. The most important cities were Chalcedon (modern Kadiköy), Nicomedia (modern İzmit), Claudiopolis (modern Bolu), and Prusa (modern Bursa) (Xen., *anab.*, VI, 4.1; Strab. XII, 3.2; IGR III 79; Bosch 1935: 67). The lands neighbouring upon Byzantion belonged to Thracians (Strab., XII, III, 2). However, those neighbouring upon Chalcedon belonged to the Bithynians (Strab., XII, III, 2).

It is understood that a native population had lived in the Thrace region whose borders we have specified above before the Thracians settled there. However, we have little information about these first inhabitants of the Thrace region. The Thracians described by the Hellenes as barbarians took office in the Athenian and Roman Armies as mercenaries (Erzen 1994: 27). Their settlement places show variety. It is likely to come across different settlement places such as cave settlements, well-fortified castles, fishing villages, and cities (Hdt., II, 16; Erzen 1994: 27). In real terms, the first cities in the Thrace region were founded by the Greek colonists and the Romans. The most important cities in the Thrace region were these: Byzantion (Istanbul), Hadrianopolis (Edirne), Philippopolis (Plovdiv), Serdica (Sofia) (Erzen 1994: 27).

The names of the Thracian tribes have reached today through Greek and Roman historiographers. Here we are going to give brief information only about the tribes that migrated to the Bithynian region. The homeland of the Thynians, the first Thracian tribe that immigrated to the Bithynian region, was around the modern Igne-liada (Solmydessos). The Mygdons, on the other hand, had lived in the region between Axios and Vardar before they migrated to the Bithynian region. The Odrysians were one of the most important tribes in the Thrace region. They inhabited the region ranging from the Danube Valley to the Black Sea coast (Erzen 1994: 29–30).

The language that the Thracians used was similar to the Illyrian. It was also very similar to the Phrygian language. However, the language material extant from the Thracian language is very insufficient. Nothing other than person names, proper names, place names, names of gods and river names has reached today.

From the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. on, an intensive migration movement started from the Thrace region toward the Bithynian region, whose borders we have specified above. Especially, the migration of the East Balkan tribes to the southeast changed the ethnic composition of the Thrace region and north-western Anatolia to a considerable extent. Most important of these tribes were the Thracians, the Mysians and the Phrygians whose names are mentioned in Homer's epics as the allies of the Achaeans (Hom., *Il.*, II, 545; Akurgal 1998: 192; Erzen 1994: 6). Moreover, such ancient authors as Thucydides, Strabo, Xenophon and Plinius point out that these tribes came to the Bithynian region from the Thrace region. Mysians, Phrygians and Bithynians took their names from the Moesians, the Bryges and the Thynians, which were tribes of Thracian origin (Plin., *nat.*, V, XLI, 145; Xen. *anab.*, VII, 2.22). Let's take a glance at these tribes of Thracian origin migrating to Anatolia and causing important changes in the demographic structure of the region.

The migration of Mysians of Thracian origin started in the middle of the second millennium B.C. from the north-western region of Bulgaria and the north-eastern part of Serbia and ended in the south of Marmara region via Hellespontos (the Dardanelles Strait) (Erzen 1994: 74). These migrations took place within a long period of time. Mysians lived for a long period of time in North-western Anatolia (Akurgal 1998: 192). Moreover, Mysians and Thracians, known as Moesians, were descended from the same origin (Strab., XII, 3.3). These tribes of Thracian origin preserved their tribal organization for a long period of time in their new homelands, too (Sevin 2001: 30). Contrary to many ancient authors, Herodotus did not accept the idea that Mysians and Thracians were the same (Hdt., VII, 20; Erzen 1994: 74).

About two hundred years after the Mysians, Phrygians coming from Macedonia region passed to Anatolia and displaced the Mysians. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Phrygians came from the Thrace region and settled in the southern and south-eastern coasts of the Sea of Marmara via Hellespontos (the Dardanelles Strait). Moreover, we know that Phrygians were in intensive trade relations with the Trojans (Hom., *Il.*, V, 289 vd.; Erzen 1994: 74). Trojans' use of Thracian weapons accounts for this relationship. The Phrygian society like other Thracians was composed of various clans gathered around Beys. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C., they reached Central Anatolia and settled here and changed the demographic structure of these places to a great extent. However, it is thought that some Phrygian clans remained in Bithynia, the region they first settled in Anatolia. In the next centuries, these clans participated in the Thracian tribes coming to Bithynia. Protecting their beliefs they had brought from the Thrace region, Phrygians adopted the Anatolian religions as well. The belief in the mother goddess Cybele in Anatolia was adopted by the Phrygians. Likewise, the Sun god Sabazios and the Moon god Men brought by the Phrygians from the Thrace region continued to be worshipped in Central Anatolia until the end of the Roman period.

However, at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., this time Bithynians (Strab., XII, III, 3), another Thracian tribe, left their homeland in the Middle Strymon (Vardar)

and came to Anatolia across the Bosphorus (the Istanbul Strait). Herodotus stated that the Bithynians had been once called Styrrmonians because they had lived by the Styrrmon River (Hdt., VII, 75; Erzen 1994: 76). This tribe of Thracian origin banished the Phrygians to Central Anatolia and settled in the region which they called Bithynia. The Bebyrkians settling in Mysia before the Thynians were of Thracian origin (Strab., XII, III, 3; Xen., *anab.*, VI, 4.1; Plin., *nat.*, V, 145). Even the Bithynian peninsula was previously called Bebyrkia (App., *hist.*, II, 12,1; Sevin 2001: 30; Bosch 1946: 42). According to Herodotus, the Thracians had helmets made of fox skin on their heads, fastened large, mottled cloaks on their habergeons, and wore shoes and knee-guards made of deer hide. As weapons in wars, they used pikes, small, light shields and short daggers (Hdt., VII, 75). It is thought that that had been made by the Cimmerians, living in South Russia, in the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. to this region triggered these Thracian migrations in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Moreover, the Thyni tribe kindred to the Bithynians settled in and around Izmit. Through Bithynian migrations, Thracians left their mark on north-western Anatolia. Again, as a result of the Greek colonization which started in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the old Thracian settlements like Byzantium were colonized by the Greeks. Also in the Bithynian Kingdom period, we come across Thracian traces in the region. In the Bithynian Kingdom period, too, we come across Thracian traces in the region. The name of Zipoites, one of the Bithynian Kings, is of Thracian origin. Moreover, the Odryses River in Bithynia must be related to the Odrysians, another Thracian tribe (Erzen 1994: 79).

At the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Thracians, Thynians and Bithynians fell under the hegemony of Kroisos, the king of Lydia (Hdt., I, 28; Rohde 1943: 195). Moreover, from 545 B.C. on, Bithynia was included in the Persian satrapy system. However, due to the mountainous structure of the region, they were able to preserve their independence to a certain extent (Sevin 2001: 30). After the Battle of Granikos that Alexander the Great won in 334 B.C. against the Persians, the Macedonian sovereignty started in the Bithynian region. The independence struggle of Bithynia against the Macedonian sovereignty started in the times of Prince Bas (377–327 B.C.) and his son Zipoites (327–279 B.C.) (Özsait 1982: 295; Jones 1971: 149; Sevin 2001: 30; Bosch 1945: 37). Prince Bas defeated Kalas, the satrap of Alexander the Great, and opened the way to independence. In the times of Nikomedes I (279–250 B.C.), the borders of the Bithynian kingdom expanded to the Sangarios (Sakarya) River to the east and to Nikaia to the south (Strab., XII, 4.2; Jones 1971: 151). Moreover, Ziaillas (250–229 B.C.) expanded the borders of the kingdom eastwards and maintained good relationships with the Greek cities on the coast (Jones 1971: 151; Sevin 2001: 30). During the reign of Prousius I (229–182 B.C.), Myrleia (=Mudanya), Kios (=Gemlik) Kieros (=Uskubu), and Tieion (=Hisaronu) were captured (Polyb., V, 90.1; V, 77.2; Demirciođlu 1993: 345). Prousius I was followed by kings respectively named Prousius II (182–1149 B.C.) (Polyb., XXXII, XV.1-4; Magie 1950: 317), Nikomedes II (149–1127 B.C.), and Nikomedes III (127–194 B.C.). The

Bithynian kings adopted the Hellenic culture in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C. and founded cities of Hellenic style. In 74 B.C., the region fell under the hegemony of the Romans when the last Bithynian king, Nikomedes IV (94–74 B.C.), bequeathed his kingdom to Rome (App., *Mithr.*, 71; Boak 1930: 167; Sevin 2001:31; Jones 1971: 152).

The north-western parts of Bithynia and the southern coasts of the Sea of Marmara, as Strabon stated, were intensively Hellenized. On the inscriptions from Hellenistic and Roman Empire periods, the rate of local names is very low. However, the names of this group are clearly of Thracian origin: Diliporis, Mokaporis, Auloukentos, Kamoles (Mitchell 2001: 175). This supports the views of Strabon and other ancient authors with regard to the fact that the first peoples of the Bithynian region were of Thracian origin.

The fact that the Bithynian people were of Thracian origin is supported by the inscriptions found in the region regarding the Hellenistic and Roman periods as well. In the Empire period, in Nikaia a total of 10 inscriptions bearing names of Thracian origin and dated to the Roman period were found (Corsten 2006: 86). Of these, the inscription found in the city of Nikaia also bore 4 Thracian names besides many Roman and Greek names (IK 9/10.81; Corsten 2006: 86). Diliporis on the 8<sup>th</sup> line, Rhaikosos on the 14<sup>th</sup> line, Sallous on the 18<sup>th</sup> line and Ziailas on the 19<sup>th</sup> line of the inscription are of Thracian origin. All the other 9 inscriptions are gravestones and were found around the city of Nikaia. From the appearances of these gravestones, it is understood that they belong to people from the middle and lower classes. The names of Thracian origin found on these inscriptions are these: Perobres (IK 9/10.1289), Zialias (IK 9/10. 1308; 1389; 1592), Biobres (IK 9/10.1341), Lala (IK 9/10.1375), Skopes (IK 9/10. 1434). Of these, only the one belonging to Diliporis has an enormous grave monument and indicates that his family was rich (IK 9/10. 1232; Corsten 2006: 86).

Moreover, it was found that a total of 14 inscriptions in Nikomedeia bore personal names with Thracian origin. Three of these were found in the city but the others were found in the rural environs. The names found on the inscriptions such as Moukaporis (TAM IV.1, 8; 256; Corsten 2006: 86), Diliporis (TAM IV.1, 16), Dilliporis (TAM IV.1, 17), Mokazis (TAM IV.1,60; 69), Moukazes (TAM IV.1, 62), Moukazis (TAM IV.1, 144; 218), Zielas (TAM IV.1, 84), Dada (TAM IV.1, 140), and Doidalses (TAM IV.1, 182; Corsten 2006: 86) indicate that the people of the region were of Thracian origin.

Moreover, on the three inscriptions found in Prusa, another important city of Bithynia, personal names of Thracian origin were determined (IK 39.56; 73; 150). These inscriptions were dated to the period of the Roman Empire and are important in terms of their showing that people of Thracian origin lived in Prusa in that period. Moreover, in and around Kios, a total of four inscriptions bearing personal names of Thracian origin were found. Of these, the one belonging to the Hellenistic period

bears the name of Bioeris (IK 29.98). However, the inscriptions bearing the names of Diliporis and Mokazeis could not be dated (IK 29.72; 111).

In conclusion, all the persons with names of Thracian origin found in the inscriptions belonged to the middle and lower classes. The only exception was Diliporis in Nikaia (IK 9/10.1232). These people of Thracian origin called “people living in the rural environs” did not have the citizenship rights of the citizens of the city they were connected to (IK 27.17; Dion Chr., XLV, 13; Mitchell 2001: 177–178; Corsten 2006: 86). No evidence is present about their having large lands. The most important reason for this was that the local people were indebted deliberately and their lands were confiscated in the Roman Empire period.



**Map:** Thrace and Bithynia

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Xen., anab., VI, 4.1-2: “The place which goes by the name of Calpe Haven is in Asiatic Thrace, the name given to a region extending from the mouth of the Euxine all the way to Heraclea, which lies on the right hand as you sail into the Euxine. It is a long day’s voyage for a war-ship, using her three banks of oars, from Byzantium to Heraclea, and between these two there is not a single Hellenic or friendly city, but only these Bithynian Thracians, who have a bad reputation for the savagery with which they treat any Greeks cast ashore by shipwreck or otherwise thrown into their power.”

<sup>2</sup> Strab., XII, 3.2; Plin. nat. V, 142: “...Horisius et Rhyndacus, ante Lycus vocatus, oritur in stagno Artynia iuxta Miletopolim, recipit Maceston et plerosque alios, Asiam Bithyniamque disterminans”.

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