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SCYTHIANS: SCIENTIFIC GENOCIDE (4) OTHER SCYTHIAN RIDDLES

Abstract: In final part of this paper author analyzes and shed new light on remaining scythian onomastic puzzles: ethnonyms, oronyms and hydronyms. The special care is devoted to the names of neighbouring tribes (“one-eyed” Arimaspians, Massagetae, Thyssagetae, Issedones...). After thorough review of existing linguistic interpretations of scythic oronyms, author provides also new interpretation of the names of the most important Scythian rivers (Tanaïs, Tiras, Panticapaeus... etc.).

Key words: Scythian onomastic puzzles; ethnonyms; names of neighboring tribes; hydronyms; Arimaspians; Exampaeus; Issedones; Massagetai; Tanaïs; Panticapes; Euxine...

We shall now validate our hypothesis and results by tackling other onomastic problems that remain tough puzzles for most modern linguists, mainly due to their addiction to the “Iranian theory”. We shall try to offer new solutions, treating Scythian as language close to the Vedic and Classical Sanskrit.

a) Ἀργιππαῖοι, Argippaei (Herodotus, 1920; 1998: IV. 23). This people, far beyond those Scythians that split off from Royal ones (and Budinians and Iyrcae), are supposed to be “bald from birth”, to have “snub noses and large chins” and “to have a distinct language”, but “dress like Scythians”. They are depicted as *druids*: each “lives under a tree” and are “said to be holy”; “no one acts unjustly towards them and they do not have any weapons of war”. Besides, “*any fugitive who takes refuge among them is safe from unjust treatment*”. Hence, it is fairly probable that their name is derived from **argha**, m. (< **arh**, “to be entitled/able to do anything”); m. respectful reception of a guest (by the offering of rice durva-grass, flowers, or often only of water); **arghya**, mfn., “valuable”; “deserving respectful reception (as a guest)” + **pāyu**, m. (< **pā**) “a guard, protector”– RV. (esp. instr. pl. “with protecting powers or actions, helpfully”– AV). In that sense their name means: *those who are entitled to receive/able/help/protect...guests/refugees*. They “extract a tick, dark juice” from a kind of cherry, called *askhu* –Skt. **āscut**, “to sprinkle” < **ścut**, “to shed, pour out; distilling”. Apparently, shamans, living in remote regions.

b) Ἄριμασποί, *Arimaspians* (Herodotus, 1920; 1998: III. 116; IV. 13), “one-eyed” men. Herodotus mentioned them in context of Aristéas’ story, but explains: in Scythian language ἄριμα, “one”, σποῦ, “eye” (Herodotus, 1998:IV.27). In skt. we find **arman**, “disease of the eyes” and **puṣpa**, “particular disease of the eye, albugo”.¹

The difficulty to relate Arimaspi(ans) to a specific people and obvious mythical connotations (“one-eyed”, See Cyclopes) led some interpreters to seek other explanations. Benveniste suggested Iranian *Ariamaspa*, “the friend of horses” (“Amis des chevaux”, in Grousset, 1951: 37). This is, however, not a solution of our problem, for all steppe nomads loved and tamed horses. It would be more logical to take into account: *ari-m̄-āsphāy* (*āsphāyate*): *ari*, mf. “enemy, opponent, rival” + connective nasal *-m̄-* + *āsphāy*, “to grow, increase”, i.e. “increased/powerful/ enemies”... Or, to suppose Vedic *hariman*, m. “illness; yellow color, yellowness (disease), jaundice” + *bhū/ bhī*², “to become, be, arise, exist...”. In the latter case “yellow” people (understood as having disease of yellowness), attacked Issedones (according to Aristéas) who pressed against Scythians to move. This would point to a fact that many ancient and modern historians agreed – the migration from East to the West...

But, all this must be taken *cum grano salis*. For, we shouldn’t forget that the first information about Arimaspi came from Aristéas who was a poet and used his *licentia poetica*, inserting many mythical elements (he asserts being the first witness who reached the land of Issedones beyond which live “one-eyed men”, “griffins” guarding gold, and, finally, Hyperboreans). He said that his long journey was “influenced by *Phoebus*”(Appolo).³ According to Herodotus, different stories mentioned Aristéas as being a phantom, for he could miraculously vanish, and that in previous times he had once accompanied Apollo, “although he had been a crow in those days, whereas now he was Aristéas” (Herodotus, 1998:IV.14–15).

c) Βορυσθένης (Herodotus, 1920:IV.17, 18...), *Dnepr*, is most probably connected with **barhis**, „water“; **bṛh**, „to grow great or strong“ > **bhūri**, mfn. “abundant, great, strong” (See also **bhūrisah**, “bringing much”; **bhūritā**, “f. muchness, multitude...”); i.e. **barhishṭha(m)** (*RV*), mfn. (superl.) “mightiest, strongest”; **varhishṭha**, „the most excellent, the best“.⁴

¹ See **parimlāyin**, “stained, spotted; a kind of disease of the lens or pupil of the eye; fleck (cataract)”. According to Kalyanaraman (Kalyanaraman, 1998): in some indian languages **or**, means “one” (Ka.,Ta.,Te.); **arma**, **arama**, “disease of the eyes” (Ka.); **pūpa**, “pupil” (Te.).

² With nom, or adv. or indecl. words ending in **ī** or **ū**.

³ “φοιβόλαμπτος” (Herodotus, 1920: IV. 13). For this reason it might be (as some suggest) that Aristéas could have in mind priests painting on their forehead the “third eye” (characteristic for Rudra and priests of Śiva).

⁴ For Scythians this was the most important river. Herodotus writes: “It is the largest of these rivers after Ister, and is, as far as I can tell, not just the most productive river in Scythia, both in the whole world – with the exception of the Nile in Egypt... It not only provides wonderful, lush meadows for cattle, but outstanding fine fish as well, in very large quantities; its water is clear where other rivers are muddy, and makes lovely drinking-water; the crops that grow on its banks are excellent,

Of special interest is Herodotus' information that from this river large fish are taken in the sort called **antakaioi** (τα ἀντακαίους καλεουσι) – (Herodotus, 1920:IV.53. Obviously, sturgeons/belugas). This term, again, remained a riddle. Trubachev (1999:225) proposed a solution (he himself is not convinced of): “having sharp body”, maybe from old Indian *anta*, “the end” and *kāya*, “body”. This is hardly acceptable. First, “sharp body” is the trait of almost all river fish, and we should ask for a more expressive, distinctive feature (in appearance, behavior, structure...). Secondly, this does not correspond to Herodotus' information.

We should rely on the historian's dictum that these fish are “invertebrate” (without any prickly bones) – ἀνᾶκωνθα. Ionic ἄκωνθα, “thorn; backbone, spine”, is a complete parallel to skt. **kaṅṭha-ka**, m. “a thorn; anything pointed, the point of a pin or needle, a prickle, sting; a fish-bone”. Hence, **a-kaṅṭha**, “without bones”. Herodotus' ἀντακαίους is, evidently, **akaṅṭha-ya**, “boneless” fish. In spite of linguistic similarities between Ionic and Sanskrit, in this case Herodotus' shortcomings in linguistics, namely morphology, prevented him to reach a plausible conclusion. His problem was aggravated by the adj. suffix **-ya**.

In the context of this big river's name, it is appropriate to explain historian's information about mother of Targitaus. She, as he quotes, was “daughter of river Borysthenes”, which in Scythian mythology suggests divination of this river. She is a nymph, naiad, who *dwells* – **sthāna** in the *water* – **vār** or **barhis** (Skt. *apsarāḥ*, “moving on/in the water”).

d) Βουδῖνοι (Herodotus, 1920: IV. 108, 109), are a “large and powerful nation: they all have deep blue eyes, and bright red hair”. This ethnonym could be derived from **bhū** meaning “earth”, **budhna**, “soil, base, root...” and **bhūdana**, “who possess earth”, related to Herodotus information that these nomads are “native, aborigine”: They are “nomadic and the indigenous inhabitants of the country”. Another possibility is: < **bodha/bodhi**, pl. “the name of a people” (*MBh*), “being known, famous...” (*Bodini* in Ptolemy, 1991: III, 5; **-ini**, **-ani**, **-uni**, being plural formant); **budhāna**, mfn., “who knows, wise; speaking gently...”

e) Ἐξαμπαῖος, spring and place *Exampaeus*.⁵ This is one of the names which tortured many interpreters. And still there is no satisfactory response.

and where the land is uncultivated the grass grows to a great height. Huge deposits of salt build up at its mouth of their own accord” (Herodotus, 1998: IV. 53). Skt. suffix for superlative is **ishṭha**. Trubachev's etymology **boru-stana*, “high place” (Trubachev. 1999:231) is an unattested word and mere guess.

⁵ This calls for more detailed citation: The third river is Hypanis. “The source of this river is a large lake on the margins of which live wild white horses.”. The Hypanis, during the distance of five days' navigation is a shallow stream, and “the water remains shallow and sweet, but for the four days it takes after that to get to the coast, it is terribly brackish. The reason for this is that it is joined by a bitter spring which is so brackish that in spite of its small size it pollutes the Hypanis, which is one of the largest rivers in the world. This spring is situated on the border between where the farming Scythians live and the Alizones. The name of the spring, which is also the name of the region where it rises, is *Exampaeus* in Scythian, or *Sacred Ways* in Greek” (Herodotus, 1998:IV. 52, our emphasis). Hypanis is usually identified with the river *Konka*.

To our mind there is, again, a semantic “crossing” of two, possibly interrelated, elements: “bitter/brackish water” and “sacred ways”. *Bitter/brackish water* could be explained with: **śama** (**śam** 1.), mfn. “appeasing, curing, having curative properties” (with mineral = “bitter/s brackish” qualities) + **payas**, “water”. *Sacred ways* are obviously connected with some kind of *pilgrimage*, or *ascetic resort*. In that sense, we are inclined to see in this expression a correlation with **śám2.**, “auspiciously, fortunately, happily”, **śámāna** (**i**), mfn. “calming, tranquilizing; the act of calming, appeasing...” + **pay**, **payate**, “to go, move...” Sacred ways (pilgrimage), i.e. **kshamāpaya**, “to ask anyone’s pardon” (usually the mission of religious mendicants) does not exclude some kind of spa. That Exampaeus was not ordinary place is shown by Herodotus’ information that there was kept Scythian “monument for posterity”, a great bowl (“the bronze vessel ...easily holds six hundred amphoras of liquid, and six fingers thick” – Herodotus, 1998: IV. 81) made of arrowheads by which Scythian king Ariantas could count the multitude of his people. We recall the symbolism of bowl or drinking cup, linked with rituals and priesthood.

f) Γελωνοί (Herodotus, 1920:IV.108) “were anciently Greeks, who, being driven out of the factories along the coast, fled to the Budinians and took up their abode with them. They still speak a language half Greek, half Scythian”.

Herodotus has not been there, and his information must be taken with extreme caution.

On the one hand, he strongly insists on the Greek aspects: Gelonians are *anciently Greeks*; in this country is *big town Gelonus*, surrounded with a wall; unlike Scythians who do not build temples, here he found sanctuaries “*dedicated to the Greek gods and equipped in the Greek manner with statues, altars and buildings in wood.*” Also, “every third year they celebrate a *festival to Dionysus and become possessed by the god.*” There is similarity between personal names *Gelonus* and *Helen*, and the name of the town (*Gelonus*) resembles Greek *κελονη*, “wooden roof”.

On the other hand, the historian gives us a lot of reasons to interpret this ethnonym and town name from Sanskrit: Gelonians “are *tillers of the soil, eat bread, have gardens*” which directs to **hala**, “plough; earth”; **hali**, “agriculture”; **halin**, “farmer”; presence of temples points to **gālana**, <**gai**, **gayati**, “to speak, sing, praise in songs”, **gāla**, “produced by the throat” i.e. religious rites and ceremonies that could easily be non-Greek, including “possession by Dionysus”.⁶

⁶ Inhabitants of an island of Araxes had a plant whose fruit they “throw on the fire and sniff the smoke...and get intoxicated from the smoke” until “they eventually stand up and dance, and burst into song” (Herodotus, 1998: I. 202). Scythians use “cannabis seeds, crawl in under the felt blankets, and throw the seeds on the glowing stones”. They “bathe” in the seeds “dense smoke and fumes” (Herodotus, 1998: IV.75). Arrian speaks that Dionysus “gave the Indians seeds of domesticated plants”, “first yoked oxen to the plough and made most of the Indians agriculturalists instead of nomads, and equipped them also with the arms of warfare. He also taught them to reverence various gods, but especially of course himself, with clashing of cymbals and beating of drums; he instructed

However, we could not exclude the possibility that some Greek ethnical element was present and a “melting, fusing” (**galana**) of Greek merchants and natives, having in mind the important commercial road going from Pontus to the north, passing through the country of Budinians.⁷

g) Γέρρος, river and region (Herodotus, 1920:IV.56), Γέρροι, people (Herodotus, 1920:IV, 71). Herodotus links the river and region with the same name (*Gerrhus*). The river splits off from Borysthenes and is the frontier between nomad Scythians and the Royal Scythians.

The river could naturally be in connection with **ghr**, “to moisten, to pour”. Whole region might be named after the river. But it is also possible to relate both (river and region) to the mountainous terrain characteristic of this part of the country: **giri**, “a mountain, hill, elevation”. Herodotus emphasizes that the Borysthenes is known until “the place named *Gerrhus*, which is distant forty days’ voyage from the sea” and “*up to which the Borysthenes is navigable*”.

In that region is “*the burial-place of the kings*” of Scythians what makes us cautious to interpret the name of people *Gerrhi* (Γέρροι) not only as “highlanders, mountaineers” but also to keep in mind a semantic crossing of geographical and social (religious) “elevation”. Because **giri** also denotes “respect, honorific name, venerable”. It is linked with **guru**, meaning among many things, “great, high in rank, very respected, adorned, venerable...”, and **gr̥**, “invoke, praise” (See gr. γηρος), **j̥r̥**, “get old, vanish, die...” “People”, or “holy persons” (**gairika**, m. pl. a class of ascetics, Prakrit **geruya**), they were obviously guardians of scythic sacred places (*tombs of Scythian kings*, etc.). This is even more probable if we stick to Herodotus’ confession that he does not know anything, either of *Gerrhi* (“the most remote of all”) or of Borysthenes above this place (Herodotus, 1920, 1998:IV. 53,71).

h) Ἴσσεδόνες, *Issedones* (Herodotus, 1920, 1998: IV.13, 16, 25, 26, 27). It was Aristeas who explained that the Arimaspi *drove the Issedones* from their country, while the *Issedones dispossessed the Scythians*; and the *Scythians, pressed out the Cimmerians* (Herodotus, 1998:IV.13).

We have reserves both toward the main source (Aristea) and the ethnonym itself. Otherwise, *Issedones* could be related to **īshad** < **ishat**, mfn. (pres. p.) “attacking, hurting” + **dhanu**, “a bow”. The closest skt. parallel is **ishu-dhanvin**, “the archer”. So, according to Aristeas, people armed with **ishu-dhanva** (“bow

them to dance in the Satyric fashion, the dance called among Greeks the *cordax* and showed them how to wear long hair in honour of the god with the conical cup, and instructed them in the use of perfumed ointments, so that even against Alexander the Indians came to battle to the sound of cymbals and drums” (Arrian, *In.*, VII, 7,8).

⁷ Speaking about distant Argippaei Herodotus underlies that “there is a great deal of good information available about the land and all the tribes up to and including these bald people, because Scythians sometimes reach these parts, as do Greeks from the trading-center Borysthenes and from other trading centers on Euxine Sea, and it is not hard to get information from them” (Herodotus, 1998: IV. 24).

and arrow”), being pushed by Arimaspi, displaced Scythians from their homeland by constant attacks.

i) **Μοσσαιῆται**, *Massagetai* (Herodotus, 1920, 1998: I. 201, 204–209, 211, 212, 214–216; III. 36; IV. 11, 172; VII. 18).

The Massagetae dwell “east of Caspian sea”, “beyond the River Araxes and opposite the Issedones” (Herodotus, 1998: I. 201) in “a plain of limitless extent to the view” of which they “occupy a large part”. Massagetae “resemble the Scythians in both their clothing and their lifestyle” (“There are some who claim that they are a Scythian tribe”), are dexterous in fighting on horses and on foot, have bows and arrows, and battle double-ax (*sagareis*). “*The only god they worship is the Sun*” and sacrifice to him horses (the ritual explained as “offering of the swiftest mortal creature to the swiftest of the gods” – Herodotus, 1998: I.216).

This ethnonym was interpreted in many ways: from Iranian *masya*, “fish” as “fish-eaters”; *maha-saka*, “great Sacae”, etc. Some might think that *Massagetae* is linked with **māsa**, “moon”. To that could point the fact that their ruler was a queen (*Tomiris*), which supposedly placed them among nations “ruled by women” (*Amazons*, who worshipped the Moon). This is, however, dubious (Herodotus precises that “the Massagetae were ruled by a woman, since her husband had died” – Herodotus, 1998: I. 205; also in the society of Issedonians “women have as much power as men” – Herodotus, 1998: IV. 26). “History of younger Han dynasty” mentioned *Da Yuezhi* (Y ㄱ), a kingdom with the capital in *Lanshi*.⁸ Formerly defeated by Hsiungnu, they migrated to Daxia.⁹ The Chinese name literally means “great Moon (*yue*) tribe”. It is, however, more probable that Chinese sources designated by *Yuezhi* the *Tocharians*¹⁰. Indian texts have **tukhāra** (often **tuṣāra**), in *AV*, *MBh* etc., referring to the people in the north (**tuṣāra**, „snow, frost, cold, mist...”) which could also be connected with **tuṣāra-kara**, m. „cold-rayed“, i.e. “the moon”.

However, the designation of *Massagetae* as a “Moon tribe” contradicts Herodotus’ information that the supreme god of the Massagetae was *the Sun*. That

⁸ This kingdom is on the west bordering with *Anxi* (*Parthia*), 49 days of walking, and on the east is far 6.537 *li* (2.718 km) from the seat of Big Scribe (in *Lukchun*), and 16.370 *li* (6.807 km) from *Luoyang-a*. They have 100.000 houses, 400.000 persons and more than 100.000 those able to fight.. See The Western Regions according to the *Hou Hanshu*, *The Xiyu juan*, “Chapter on the Western Regions” (Hou Hanshu: 2003).

⁹ In the VII century B. C. Chinese economist Guan Zhong mentioned *Yuezhi* or *Niuzhi* as famous traders who supplied Chinese court with jade (Xinru, 2001:265). See also Anthony, 1998. About prehistoric relations and commerce between China and Near East, central Asia and Europe See Needham, 1961.

¹⁰ Bailly says that Kotanese Sacas transfer this name as *gara-* which is equal with γαρρα in Greek Θογαρρα and Tibetan *-gar* in *to-gar*; in Budd. Skt. *tukhāra*, north pers. *tuxāristān*, kotan. sac. *ttavhara*. *Tu* means, “mighty, strong, powerful”. The name referred to *Tocharians* (Bailey, 1985:110-141).

Greek sources have τοχαροι as numerous people on Oxus in II century B.C. – Apollodor, Strabon...(See Narain, 1990:152). Ptolemy also distinguished *Tochari* “great people” in *Bactriana* from *Massagetae* in neighboring *Margiana* (Ptolemy, 1991:VI. 10–12). The suggestion that Ptolemy assumes identity of Massagetae and *Iati* (identified with Αἰται), is untenable for he clearly speaks about *Iati* as located in *Sogdiana*.

is corroborated by the fact that in some neighboring tribes the cult of the Sun was also dominant.

Another solution seems attractive: **maha**, mfn. “great, mighty, strong, abundant” (RV) + **jāti**, “race, genus, family”. Herodotus is impressed with their bravery and greatness, especially with the manner their queen Tomirys defeated the Persians and killed Cyrus the Great. (“They are said to be a large tribe, with a reputation for being warlike”). Having in mind their greatness, multitude, historian makes them able and responsible for big migratory events. For, unlike Aristeas, Herodotus thinks that the cause of the Scythian arrival in the land of the Cimmerians is not a quarrel with the *Issedones*. He asserts that Scythians had wars with the *Massagetae* but with ill success and, therefore, quitted their country (Herodotus, 1998: IV, 11).

Yet, there are other possibilities.

If we stick to historian’s information and other arguments (connections of Sarmatians, particularly Alans and Aorsi, with *Massagetae*; according to Amian their identity; relation of Scythians and Sauromatians with people east of Caspium; archaeological findings...), the *Massagetae worshipped the Sun as the supreme deity*. In that sense, their name could be linked to solar cult: **mah**, **mahati**, **mahayati**, “to worship, praise; offering (sacrifices)” + **ketu** (< **cit**) m. “bright appearance, clearness, brightness” (often pl., „ rays of light „, ‘) – RV, AV, “lamp, flame, torch”, “a chief, leader, eminent person” (RV); or **heti** f. (< **hi**, “to set in motion, impel, stimulate or incite to /RV/, to gladden, delight“) “Agni’s weapon, light, flame (MhB); ray of sun, name of an *Asura*”. *Massagetae* thus could mean “Sun worshippers; followers of the Sun cult”.

Finally, this name could simply denote their “great number” (**mahāgati**) or way of life (**-heti**, “rapid motion” or **-gati** “moving, going”) in “a plain of limitless extent”¹¹.

j) *Νευροί, Neurians*. The people who fled to Budinians. They “use Scythian customs”, “may well be magicians”. According to Scythian and Greek information, “once a year every Neurian becomes a wolf for a few days and then reverts to his original state”. Their name is obviously from **nivṛ**, “to expel, drive, banish” (“A generation before Darius’ campaign snakes made them completely evacuate the region” – Herodotus, 1998:IV.105).

k) *Παντικᾶπις*, the *Panticapes* river (Herodotus, 1920, 1998: IV. 18, 19, 47, 54) is a border between agrarian and nomadic Scythians. The difficulty to understand this term is confirmed by many interpreters. Abaev (and others following him) detects it from Iranian **panti*, “path, road”, and **kappa*, “fish”, at the same time referring to the town *Παντικᾶπιον* which Strabo mentioned as a “metropolis of European Bosphorians” (the same settlement is mentioned by Mela,

¹¹ Onomastically, it is interesting that Arrian speaks about *Massaca* (Μάσσακα – *In.*: I, 8) or *Massaga* (Μάσσαγα – *AA*, IV, 26, 28) in the territory of Indian tribe Assaceniens (Ἀσσακοί/Ἀσσακενοί), occupied by Alexander.

Plinius, Ptolemy). Trubachev is of different opinion. He suggests compound of old Ind. *panthā*, “path, road” + **kapa-*, “hill” < old Ind. *kāpā*, “skull”. Neither of these solutions is convincing.

The name of Παντικῶπιον, the capital of the Bosporian kingdom¹², could well be derived from: **paṇ** (ep. **paṇti**), “to barter, purchase, buy; to negotiate, bargain; praising; risk...” (See also **pāṇa** < *paṇ*, “a stake at play; trade, traffic”) + **kāpā**, “carriage” (in a sense of cargo, load) or **kha**, n. “a city” and **pāya**, “water”. In short, “trading center, emporium”, “emporium on the water”.¹³

This etymology is not appropriate for the river Παντικῆς. It would be more logical to assume a compound: **path** (**panthā**), m. “road, way, path” + **ka**, m. “water” (See **kāpī**, name of a river), or **pathi-ka** (middle base of *path*, with **ka**, a taddhita affix, much used in forming adjectives) + **ap**, **āpas** (f.) “water”. The meaning will be “the water way”, “the river”. Herodotus knows nothing about the Panticapes. He guesses only that (like Borysthenes) it “too rises in a lake and flows from the north”. “Once it has passed through Hylaea, it joins the Borysthenes” (Herodotus, 1998: IV. 54).¹⁴

1) Τάβοις (Herodotus, 1920, 1998: IV. 20, 21, 45...), *Don*. This name could be derived from **tan**, “to extend, spread, be diffused (as light) over, to be protracted”.

It is highly interesting that all Scythian rivers in Slavic (and other European languages) have a close onomastic relation. They are etymologically linked to **dhena**, m. “the ocean or river” and cognate stems. *Danube* (*Dunavitis/Dunav, Dunai, Donau...*) originates from **danv**, “to go, flow”, **dhuni**, mfn. “roaring, sounding... (rivers)”, **dhunī**, f. “river”; *Don*, from **dānu**, “fluid, drop, water...”, **dhan**, “to cause to run or move quickly” or **tan** (as explained above); *Donec*, < **dhuneti**, “having a roaring course”; *Dnepr* and *Dnestr* have the same root with different suffixes: **dānu** or **dhan**, (in the referred meaning) + **pī**, “to refresh; to grant abundantly, to fill; to fill (with the noise); to be full” and **stī/stī**, “to spread, expand, to be large...” All these meanings point to *mighty, big, broad, abundant, roaring...rivers*.

This interpretation is at variance with others, including that favored by Trubachev. Relying on Vasmer, he holds that those names are from Iranian languages. *Don* is from osset. *don*, “river, water”. *Dnepr* and *Dnestr* have Iranian root transformed on the Thraco-Dacian base.¹⁵ To support such an approach he has

¹² In Herodotus’ work some places bear the names of the rivers they are built by (e.g. Borysthenes, the big trading center), but this is not the case here.

¹³ According to Strabo the place was built by Greeks (obviously for trading) like “other cities on Bosporus” (Strabo, 1928: XI. 2.5), but the name itself is not Greek.

¹⁴ We could not exclude in advance yet another possibility: **pañkti/pañktikā**, “any row/set/series/number” of + **apas**, “active or running waters”. Rybakov thinks it is the river *Vorskla*, which empties in the Dnepr, with the older name of *Voroskol* (Rybakov, 1979: 39 – 43).

¹⁵ His ethymological sequence is: iran. (scyth.) **dānu* -> thrac.(dac.) **dūn-istros* (See *Dunav, Istros*), **dūn-ipros* (See *Ibar*)> **dūneastar*, **dūneapar* (with change *i* > *ea* before syllable with initial -*a*), then directly slav. **Dьněstrь*, **Dьněprь* (Trubachev, 1968:216–218).

to assume that *Δανναπρις* and *Danaster* in antique sources are corruptions of some transitory stages of Iranian forms. This, however, aggravates the problems of his etymology. For it is the established fact that Dacian language and culture were under Scythian influence. It is, actually, more probable that Slavs and other Europeans, had already their similar names or relied directly on Scythian language.

m) Τύρηζ, *Tyras* (Herodotus, 1920, 1998: IV. 11, 47, 51–52, 82). It “rises from a great lake separating Scythia from the land of the Neuri”. At the mouth of this river live Greeks “who are called Tyritae”. The name is connected with skt. **tura**, mfn. “quick, prompt; strong, powerful, excelling, rich, abundant”. All interpreters agree in identifying it with *Dnestr* (See **dhan** + **stṛ**, ie. moving, spreading quickly).

Here it is of interest for our theme to call reader’s attention to the earliest relations and communications of peoples north and south of Euxine (See more in Nikić, 2006) which could be demonstrated by similar names of two rivers in Scythia and those in Mesopotamia.

The name of *Tyras* is equivalent for **Tigris**. This name also could be derived from skt. **tura**, mfn. “quick, prompt; strong, powerful, excelling”, **tugrya**, “the waters” (Yaska, 2002) or to be linked to **tuj**, “to flow forth; to move quickly”+ **rī**, “flow, current...” Some interpreters identified the name with Old Persian **tigra**, “arrow” (= Skt. **tīra**). But the previous etymology is more convincing bearing in mind the Assyrian name of Tigris – *Idigna*, “river, flow, stream”.

The second river is Scythian *Porata* (Ποράτα) (Herodotus, 1920, 1998: IV. 48), Slavic *Prut*. Its match is Assyrian **Puratu**, Euphrates. It is interesting that Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, in their seminal work about Indo-Europeans, accepted Iranian provenance: “Scythian *Porata*, river Prut, Avest. *pərətu* – crossing, ford, bridge” (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1995: 838). This is, however, unconvincing both semantically and morphologically (authors conjecture that it is “an East Iranian borrowing of an Ancient European word for a crossing over a body of water”). For the same reason as in previous case, we think that the name of this river is connected with **pṛthu**, “broad, wide, large; great, abundant...” and **pṛ**, “to grant abundantly, to fill” > **pūra**, mfn. “filling, making full; the swelling or rising of a river or of the sea, a large quantity of water, flood, stream”. Interestingly enough, in the records of the famous king Gudea it is called *Buranun*, which might have correlation with Skt. **bhṛ** (> *bhūri*, mfn. “much, abundant, great, strong, mighty...”); “*bhūritā*, “muchness, multitude”), “to bring, grant; to rise, let grow...”. The name of Borysthenes is also derived from the same linguistic base.¹⁶

¹⁶ Though adhering to the “Iranian theory” of Scythian origin, Gamkrelidze and Ivanov (1995: in elaboration of “Ancient European – East Iranian lexical ties” in “the secondary homeland” near the Black Sea and Volga steppe”) accept the existence of “Aryan words, more archaic than the later Iranian forms” (*Sindoi, Kubhā, Dāsa-*, p. 811). It is obvious that they more successfully explained other ties (of IE and people in Caucasus) by Sanskrit than by Avestan and Old-Iranian (p. 813).

n) *Θυσσαγέται*, *Thyssagetae* (Herodotus, 1920, 1998: IV. 22, 123). Mentioning *Thyssagetae*, Herodotus underlies their abode beyond Budinians and after “a seven-day stretch of *empty land*”, “*completely uninhabited by human beings*”. In other words, they are living very far away, in a region beyond the desert, *on the border* of the Scythian world.

This ethnonym could be derived from **tūša**, “the border” + **jāti**.

Previously, the etymology from **tuccha**, mfn. “small, little”, was proposed. However, Herodotus treats *Tyssagetae* as “*populous tribe with its distinctive way of life*” living north-east of the Budinians. They live off “what they can catch by hunting”, like neighboring *Lyrcae* (Herodotus, 1998: IV. 21). In their country rise “four sizeable rivers (called the Lycus, Oarus, Tanais, and Syrgis)” flowing “trough the land of Maeetians until they issue into Lake Maeetis”.

o) *Euxine* and *Caspium*. Herodotus mentioned both those seas. He uses their names as firmly established in Greek onomastic tradition. He doesn’t explain their etymology and even now these names are not semantically decoded. Here we have to consider two correlated aspects.

Euxine (Εὔξεινος) (Herodotus, 1920, 1998: IV. 85–87 and in many other places – I. 6,72, 76, 110; II. 33, 34; III. 93; IV. 8;X, 24...) was at first accepted by popular etymology as **Αξεινος** (“inhospitable, unfriendly”). But lately, when Greeks built their settlements there, it was changed to **Εὔξεινος**, i.e. “hospitable”. The denomination **Αξεινος** is interpreted as the transfer of old-Iranian ***Axšaina**, „black, dark“ (Schmitt, 1996:219–224). Even today in different languages it is called „Black Sea“ (Slavic – Црно/Черно/Чёрное/ Чорне...море; Eng. *Black Sea*, Fr. *Mer Noire*, Ger. *Schwarzes Meer*...; also in Caucasian languages and in Turkish...).

If the original denomination was Scythian, then we could look for some IA root. We find the exact parallel to Greek **Αξεινος** in **asina/ašina**, n. “black, dark”. What is also indicative is the easy transformation of Skt. **sina** = **sita/śita**, n. “bright colored, white, brilliant”, to **a-sina/a-sita**, “black, dark”, or Vedic **asiknī**, “dark-colored, black”– quite similarly to the Greek case.

It is also interesting that in IE we find many pairs of lexical antonyms which could be interpreted as symbolical discriminations.¹⁷ The opposition *white* – *black* was largely present in characterization of mountains (Black and White mountains/hills etc.), waters (Black and White rivers/streams/ seas...), even gods (e.g. Slavic White and Black Gods: *Белобоѡ* and *Чернобоѡ*).

In this context we should expect Scythian (Saha/Saka/Śaka’s; Caspians’...) *White/Bright Sea*. This sea is, actually, the **Caspium**. Herodotus mentioned this Sea (**Κασπία θάλασσα**) and people (“Caspians”) – Herodotus, 1920, 1998: I. 202–203; IV.40; III. 92–93; VII. 67. In the time of Strabo, the region of **Κασπιανή** was

¹⁷ *Good – bad; high, top – low, bottom; wide – narrow; full – empty; large – small; thick – thin; long – short; heavy – light; new – old; black – white; right – left*... According to Gamkrelidze and Ivanov (1995: 682–683) they “symbolize the features of two cosmic creative principles”.

in Caucasian Albania and, according to the geographer, was named (as Sea itself) after “Caspians”, but “the tribe has now disappeared” (Strabo, 1928: 11. 4–5).

The etymology of the Caspian Sea and the tribe could be related to **kās/kās̄**, “to shine, be brilliant” + **pāya**, or *payas* (<ṗī) “water”.

* * *

With the awareness that we drew some basic lines in which direction we should look for the reconstruction of Scythian identity, and that solution we have offered is subject to further discussion, we think it is fairly clear that “Iranian dogma” could not be supported anymore.

Of course, the unveiling of the true Scythian language and mythology has importance beyond our primary task. It is of fundamental significance for the better understanding of relations among Scythians, Sauromatians, Sarmatians, Slavs... and other people around Black and Caspian Seas. But it is also of crucial importance for clarification of some “misty” parts of great migratory waves in prehistoric times. This, at the same time, could shed new light on the movement and even the origin of Indo-Europeans, their separation and ethnic configuration.

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SCYTHIANS: SCIENTIFIC GENOCIDE (4) OTHER SCYTHIAN RIDDLES

Резиме: У завршном делу рада анализирају се и на нов начин тумаче све остале скитске ономастичке “загонетке” – етноними, ороними и хидроними. Посебно се обрађују имена историјски и језички најзанимљивијих Скитима суседних племена (“једнооки” Аримаспи, Масагете, Тисагете, Иседони...). Са нарочитим освртом на досадашња погрешна тумачења дата је нова интерпретација назива најважнијих скитских река (Танаис, Тирас, Пантикапа... и др.). На крају је дата опсежна библиографија.

Кључне речи: скитске ономастичке загонетке, етноними, имена суседних народа, хидроними, Аримаспи, Егзампеус, Иседони, Масагете, Танаис, Пантикапес, Еуксин