

ПРИЧОРНОМОР'Я ДОБИ АНТИЧНОСТІ ТА СЕРЕДНЬОВІЧЧЯ НА ПЕРЕТЕНІ КУЛЬТУР І ЦИВІЛІЗАЦІЙ

UDC 94(37-11-21Віз)''-06/+03''

DOI 10.7546/DS.2020.13.01

THE RISE OF BYZANTION: BETWEEN THE ORIENT AND THE OCCIDENT

Vanya Lozanova-Stantcheva

Prof. D.Sc. PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies & Centre of Thracology,
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Sofia, Bulgaria)
lozanova_vanya@yahoo.com

The focus of this paper is on some aspects of the early pre-emporial (Thracian) stages of Byzantion. The mythological evidence on the city's emergence, combined with the numismatic material, is systematised and analysed with a view to localising the initial Thracian settlements in the region of the Golden Horn: their synoecism gradually gave birth to the phenomenal city that attracted the attention of the ancient authors only after the emergence of the Greek *apoikia*. Its unique geographic and strategic location between the Orient and the Occident was not always desired and appreciated, especially during the first half of the first millennium BC, at the time of a dynamic ethnic and cultural situation in Southeastern Europe, and strong military and political activity of the Thracian tribes. The legendary figures, dramatised in the mythological events of the emergence and founding of the city, are extremely deeply rooted in the toponymy of its region, which betrays their profound pre-emporial antiquity. On the other hand, the combined evidence of the ancient authors outlines the roots and the genesis of the local solar cult that is at the centre of the religious traditions of Byzantion. A new interpretation is proposed for some images on the city's coins in the context of the local mythological traditions.

Keywords: Byzantion, pre-emporial (Thracian) stages, Greek *apoikia*, Thracian tribes, Byzas, local mythological traditions.

Byzantine authors traditionally date the origins of Byzantion to the second half of the 7th century BC, starting with the founding of the *emporion* by the Megarians headed by Byzas (according to Herodot. 4. 144 – 17 years after the founding of Chalcedon; Eusebius – 27 years after the cited event, by 660/59 BC; Hieron – by 659/58 or 657/56 BC; Ioann. Lyd., *De mag.* 3. 70 – Ol. 38 = 628/25 BC; Codinos, p. 13, 3 – 685 or 655 years prior to Septimius Severus, i.e., by the time of the Persian Wars; according to Diod. Sic. 4. 49.1 – by the time of the expedition of the Argonauts, when Byzas had the fortification walls of Byzantion constructed). The Megarian version can be easily traced in the evidence provided by the ancient authors.

(Pseudo-) Scymnus (Ps. Scymn., 715–716, pp. 395–396 Letronne – GGM I, 715-716, p. 224 Müller, followed by Philostr., *V. Soph.* I. 24. 3; Dionys. Byz., 14. 34 Wescher; Ioann. Lyd., *De mag.* 3. 70 Bekker; Steph. Byz., s. v.; Eustath. ad Dion. Per. 803) was the first to suggest around the 1st century BC in his *Periegesis* that the Megarians had founded Byzantion:

Μετὰ τὴν Χερρόνησον ἐν Προποντίδι
Θράκη παρήκει, καὶ Σαμίων ἀποικία
Περινθός ἐστιν· ἐχομένως Σηλυμβρία, 715
ἦν οἱ Μεγαρεῖς κτίζουσι πρὶν Βυζαντίου·
ἐξῆς Μεγαρέων εὐτυχῶν Βυζάντιον.

Strabo (63 BC – 24 AD), identifying the *apoikistai* as Megarians, specifies that they had founded Chalcedon before Byzantion, and when they consulted the oracle in Delphi, Apollo advised them to “make their settlement opposite the blind” (Strabo. 7. 6. 2). He referred to the Chalcedonians as “blind” because although they had sailed around the same region earlier, they

did not conquer the lands on the opposite side with all its wealth, choosing the poorer land instead (Jones 1924).

Tacitus (*Annals.*, 12, 63) does not identify the origin of the *apoikistai*, referring to them most generally as Greeks, but he retold the same story: when they consulted with the Pythian Apollo where to found their city, the oracle replied to them that they needed to seek the place “opposite the blind”. Later authors also took up that anecdotal and paradigmatic framework of the narrative.

In fact, motifs of that prophesy, again without mentioning the Megarians, appeared for the first time in the narrative of Herodotus (4. 144. 1–2) in a periphrase of the Persian military commander Megabazus, which was of an indisputably anecdotal character:

This Megabazus is forever remembered by the people of the Hellespont for replying, when he was told at Byzantium that the people of Calcedon had founded their town seventeen years before the Byzantines had founded theirs, that the Calcedonians must at that time have been blind, for had they not been, they would never have chosen the worse site for their city when they might have had the better (English translation by A. D. Godley 1920).

In the 2nd century AD, Dionysius Byzantinus cited in his *Voyage through the Bosphorus* (Dion. Byzant., §23, p. 11 Wescher.) two of the verses of the oracle, also without identifying the *apoikistai* who consulted the deity in the Delphi temple, although he often indicates in his text both Megarians and Corinthians as founders of the city (Dionys. Byzant., §15, p. 8 Wescher; Gilles 1729: 14; Gilles 1561, 65; cf. Gilles 2007, 42–43, who retells that passage by Dionysius). Such a situation tends to suggest a stable anecdotal paradigm to which a literary form had been attributed, rather than a concrete historical narrative.

Numerous different versions about the founding of Byzantium and about the mythological genealogies connected with them have been retold under the name of Hesychius of Miletus (6th century AD during the reign of Emperor Justinian), the author who was the earliest to come out of the anonymity of the local tradition. He introduced motifs of a stable tradition, citing the oracle given by Pythia of Delphi to the Argivians, who had just settled at the site of the confluence of the rivers Kydaros and Barbyzes, near Semestre’s altar (Hesych., §3, p. 2 Preger). On the other hand, the narrative in Hesychius (Hesych., §§4–5, pp. 2–3 Preger) follows the pseudo-historicised mythological motif about the founding of Byzantium by Byzas, son of Nisus and leader of the *apoikistai* from Megara, according to the Megarians. The text suggests a possible process of syncretism of the *oikist*’s figure of the migrants (from Megara) with the figure and the cult of the local *heros-eponym*, possibly “also worshipped as a deity” (Βύζας ἀνὴρ ἴσα θεῶν τετιμῆνος). Precisely that ideological model will be followed both in the conduct of Emperor Septimius Severus, and in that of Constantine I the Great during the city’s re-foundation. The re-founding associates the patron deity with the original *oikist*, i.e., it guarantees to him that he would inherit the glamour and greatness of the earlier mythological founder.

The oracle – with minor digressions – was repeated by Stephanus Byzantinus as well (St. Byzant. s.v. Βυζάντιον) in the early 6th century, during the reign of Emperor Justinian I. He cites the Megarians as *apoikistai*, probably following the prevalent tradition, but immediately afterwards he continues with the variant of the myth about Byzas, in which he is the son of Ke-roessa, the daughter of the Argivian princess Io and Poseidon.

Pseudo-Codinus, too, repeats that “Argivian” version of the oracle, and follows almost literally Hesychius’ narrative. The mythological genealogy of Byzas integrates additionally the mythological motif about Io, the daughter of the Argivian king Inachos, into its more ancient nucleus (Lozanova 2011, 39–50; Lozanova 2014, 37–54), and also complements the reconstruction of the Argivian “trace” in the emergence of the Greek *emporion* on the Bosphorus Peninsula.

The Byzantine version of the classical Greek myth about Io appealed particularly to the supporters of the Hellenocentric view on antiquity, seeking historical “verisimilitude” in it (Rus-sel 2012, 133–138). Associations of the outlined mythological tradition can be perceived in a fragmented form in an epigram on the sarcophagus of the actor “Euelpistus son of Sosus, the Byzantine” that was found in 1981 and published in 2011 (Avram, Jones 2011, 126–134; cf. Staab 2011, 97–102; cf. Dion. Byzant., p. 36 Wescher; *Anth. Pal.* VII 169; Constant. Porph., *De Them.* II. 12 Reiske; Ps. Simeon Logoth., p. 729 Combefis). The manner of execution of the letters has

given grounds to the authors to date the inscription on the sarcophagus to the second half of the 2nd century AD. The deceased person shares in an elegant epigram that he had abandoned his native land and had given preference to that sacred land near the sea, Tomis, which had given him his beloved wife and where his son was born.

Byzantium is characterised in the epigram as *Εἰναχίας γαίης ἐπώνυμον ἄστυ Εἰόνιον*, i.e., as “the city named for the Inachian land, that of Io” (Avram, Jones 2011, 129 with a translation of the epigram), which maybe betrays a reflexion of the presence of Argivian *apoikistai* in the founding of the Greek *emporion*. That relatively early epigram complements the notion about the functioning of the mythologem both at the level of literature and in a broader public context.

Many contemporary researchers, from J. Svoronos to our days (Svoronos 1889, 74–77, Pl. 1, 1–2; cf. Head 1914, 230–232; Schönert-Geiß 1970, 1–855, 856 cf. 871–913, 951–78; on the start of that type of coin minting: Schönert-Geiß 1970, 3 and n. 1, 35–54) have tried to perceive the images on silver coins of Byzantium from the late 5th century BC – 4th century AD featuring a cow/bull as allusions to the myth about Io, the daughter of Inachos, at the time of the crossing of the Straits. The animal is walking to the left, its right foreleg is raised over a dolphin (interpreted as symbolising the Bosphorus), and above it – the monogram ΠΥ (the archaic spelling for BY, characteristic of Byzantium). The oldest coins of that type, known to me, are dated between 416 and 357 BC (SNG Cop, 476; Sear 1982, 1579; cf. Mushmov, 1912, 3210, 3211, 3215). The weights of the coins correspond to the Persian *sigloi* issued from 520 BC to 330 BC, which were quite widespread in Asia Minor until the age of Alexander the Great (Head 1887¹, 230; cf. Head 1911², 266). In the first edition of his *Historia Numorum*, B. V. Head (Head 1887¹, 230) initially saw a bull (not cow!) with a dolphin on the coin, symbolising the cults of Hera and Poseidon accordingly. However, in the second edition he accepts the interpretation proposed by J. Svoronos, associating the image with the myth about Io (Head 1890², 332). J. Svoronos identifies the image of a maiden with horns on another coin, identified earlier by B. V. Head as the Lycos River (Head 1887¹, 231; Head 1911², 269), as Keroessa, mother of Byzas and daughter of Io. J. Svoronos proposes an interesting interpretation of the cow/calf on the reverse of the same type of coins, recently revisited by Th. Russell as well (Russell 2012, 133–138; Russel 2016). He associates it with the monument built by Chares, Athenian *strategos*, on the Bosphoran coast, at the place where he buried his beloved *hetaira* who accompanied him during his march to help Byzantium during their war with Philip II in 340 BC. She was called *Boidion* (Βοῖδῖον), i.e., the diminutive of Bous. An epigram was written on the monument, starting with the words: “*I am not the image of the cow, the daughter of Inachus, nor is the facing Bosphorian Sea named after me...*” (Engl. transl. by Russell 2016, 49). According to Hesychius (§§28–31) that place was located somewhere between Chrysopolis and Chalcedon, on the Asiatic coast of the Bosphorus, where Chares built in her honour an altar and a column with the image of a heifer hewn from stone. Hesychius (§§29–30) associates with her an interesting epigram cited also in *Anthologia Palatina* (7, 169) and by Constantine Porphyrogenitus (*De Them.*, 2.12).

However, Th. Russell sought the roots of the image on that type of coins of Byzantium in the local toponymic situation on both sides of the Bosphorus where it is most narrow, described by Dionysius Byzantinus and supported by some other ancient authors (Dion. Byz., §§4–5, 6, pp. 3–5 Wescher; Cassius Dio., 75.10, Strab., 7.6.2; Russel 2012, 135–136) – the area Delphin (as allegory of the European coast) and the area Bous/Cow (as allegory of the Asiatic coast). The researcher sees in that situation an allegorical legend reflecting the unity of the two coasts of the straits and being a peculiar legitimising motif in the mythological history of Byzantium. However, a careful reading of the patriographic sources multiplies many times the toponym Bous/Cow in the actual Byzantium... The hypothesis, albeit tense, is interesting, and as most hypotheses – unprovable...

Silver coins on which the forepart of a cow/bull/calf (?) is depicted on a dolphin, with raised right foreleg, with or without monogram, moving to the left and above it a monogram Π (instead of B) are less frequent. On the reverse there is a decorated trident with monogram Σ to the right, or without a monogram (Mushmov 1912, 3218; 3217; Schönert-Geiß 1970, 688; 755–761; 830–832, etc.). Different researchers propose different identifications of the animal: bull/calf or cow/heifer – depending on the hypothetical mythological proto-image of the legend on the coin.

However, ancient evidence reflects numerous mythological precedents with which the image could be identified. According to one of them, a cow that crossed the Straits from Asia into Europe gave an oracle about the founding of a new city in the Thracian lands in the region. Conon (§46: Αἰνεΐας), mythographer from the time of Augustus and author of *Διηγήσεις* (*Narrations*) on a number of mythological and heroic characters, and especially – on the founding of *apoikiai*, narrates an interesting version. When Troy was finally conquered by the Achaeans, Aeneas, the son of Anchises and Aphrodite, set off on a long journey with his old father, young son and a few comrades. On Aphrodite's orders, they were accompanied by a cow and as soon as they crossed into Thracia, the cow indicated to them where to found a city. The Hero accepted the rule over the land, conferred to him by the indigenous population, and offered the sacred cow as a sacrifice (Johnston 2016; see particularly Zatta 2016, 231–232), calling the city after his name *Aene(i)a* (Αἰνεΐα) (Lozanova 2013b, 225–246). Although a city with such a name in historical times was localised at the Thermean Bay (Hdt., 7, 123, 2; Tit. Liv., 4, 10, 7; cf. Dion. Hal., 1, 49; Scymn., 627; Skyl., 66), Conon identifies the city founded by Aeneas with Ainos in Thracia, at the estuary of the Hebros River and near the Aegean coast. The mythological model of the founding of a city at a place indicated by a cow, which also became the first sacrificial offering upon the city's consecration, is well known in Greek mythology (Pausan., 9.12.1; Apoll., 3.4.1; Schol. Eur., *Ph.*, 638; Ovid., *Met.*, 3.19; Johnston 2016; cf. particularly Zatta 2016, 231–232). It would not be surprising if that was a mythologem that was widespread in the Eastern Mediterranean and reflected a stable mythical-ritual complex around the founding of a new city, traceable to more ancient sources.

However, an alternative interpretation of those types of coin images from Byzantion can be sought in the myth about Byzas' value trial and the bull sacrifice, whereby the oracle (of the deity identified with Apollo by the Greeks!) about the place of the founding of the city on the Historical Peninsula was sent to him.

The not too structured narrative of Hesychius interpolates the remarkable mythological motif of Byzas' value trial imposed upon him by the local king of the Thracians Melias, eponym of one of the sea bays (Μελιάς κόλπος) at the Golden Horn:

Hesych., §§10–11, p. 4–5 Preger: §10. Ὡς οὖν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀκμὴν τῆς ἡλικίας ὁ νέος προέβαινε καὶ τοῖς Θρακίοις ἐνδιέτριβεν ὄρεσι φοβερῶς πρὸς τοὺς θήρας καὶ τοὺς βαρβάρους φερόμενος, πρεσβείας ὑπὸ τῶν τοπαρχούντων ἐδέχετο σύμμαχος αὐτοῖς εἶναι καὶ φίλος προτρεπόμενος.

§11: Ὡς οὖν καὶ Μελιάς αὐτὸν ὁ τῶν Θρακῶν βασιλεὺς ἐπὶ τὸν τοῦ θηρῶς ἄθλον μετεπέμψατο καὶ τὰς ἐξ αὐτοῦ δόξας ὁ Βύζας ἀπηνέγκατο τὸν ὑποταγένητα ταῦρον τῆ ἱερουργία προσφέρων καὶ τοὺς πατρώους ἐξυλασκόμενος δαίμονας κατὰ τὴν τῶν εἰρημένων ποταμῶν σύμμειξιν, ἀετὸς ἀθρόως φανείς τὴν καρδίαν ὑφαρπάζει τοῦ θύματος καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἄκραν τῆς Βοσπορίας ἀκτῆς <ἀποπτὰς ἔστη> ἀντικρὺ τῆς καλουμένης Χρυσοπόλεως...

According to Dionysius Byzantinus (Dionys. Byzant. §17, p. 8 Wescher), Melias' Bay started from the Cyclades area (τὰ Κύκλα; possibly – Κύκλια, called thus because the Greeks had allegedly surrounded the barbarians there), at the southern coast of the Golden Horn, and was considered to abound in game like nowhere else, and to have inexhaustible fish reserves. It was named after a local hero (Gilles 1729, 215), in the words of Dionysius, which allows associating the bay's name with the narrative about the mythological Thracian king Melias who sent Byzas, the founder of Byzantion, on a value trial – wild bull hunting:

Dionys. Byzant. §17, p. 8 Wescher: Τὰ Κύκλα δὲ ἐκδέχεται Μελιάς κόλπος, εὐθηρὸς μὲν ὡς οὐχ ἕτερος· ἐν ἁπασὶ γὰρ δὴ πάντων περιεστὶ· ταῖς δὲ ἀνατεινούσαις ἄκραις καὶ τοῖς ὑπ' ἀμφότερον ὑφάλοις ἔρμασι συγκλειόμενος. Ὠνόμασται δὲ ἀπὸ τινος ἥρωος ἐπιχωρίου, καὶ ἔστι περὶ τὴν ἄγραν τῶν ἰχθύων ὡς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀναμάρτητος.

According to these narratives, Byzas was born of the love of Poseidon and Io's daughter Keroesse, but he was raised by the nymph Byzia (Βυζία). And at the time of Hesychius of Miletus (6th century) the spring bearing that name was still used by the local population (Hesych.,

§9, p. 4 Preger; Dion. Byzant., §24 Wescher; *Chron. Pasch.*, 265, 12–40, p. 494 Dindorf; Ioann. Malal., *Chron.*, 13. 320 Dindorf; Procop., *De aedif.*, 1. 5 Haury). The boy grew up among the wild animals and the barbarians in the mountains of Thracia. When he reached manhood, the local chiefs sent envoys to him to offer him alliance and friendship. Melias, king of the Thracians, provoked him to fight against a wild beast: a bull. When Byzas returned victorious and covered with glory after defeating the savage bull, he offered the bull as sacrifice to his father's deities (τοὺς πατέρας ... δαίμονας: Hesych., §11, pp. 4–5 Preger) at the confluence of the rivers Barbyzes (Βαρβύζης, pres. Kağithane) and Kydaros (Κύδαρος, pres. Alibeyköy) (Lozanova 2013, 37–54). However, the sacrificial rite was interrupted by the sudden appearance of an eagle (cf. Gilles 1729, 22; a raven in the version of Dionysius Byzantinus), which snatched the heart of the wild animal from the flames of the sacrificial fire and flew all the way to the tip of the peninsula at the Bosphorus, just opposite Chrysopolis (pres. Üsküdar), named after Chryse, the daughter of Agamemnon and Chryseis, where Iphigenia erected a monument in her memory... The gods thus pointed to Byzas where to found his city.

The story is almost literally retold in the compilation of the *Patria of Constantinople* (Πάτρια Κωνσταντινουπόλεως), erroneously attributed to Georgius Codinus (14th century), but actually compiled around the 10th century (Ps. Codin., *De orig. Const.*, p. 5 Bekker; cf. pp. 3–4; Preger 1895). However, the Byzantine author interpolated motifs of the myth in a much abridged version in his narrative about the founding of the Greek emporion Byzantion by the Argives, although there the bird is a raven, Apollo's sacred bird, as in the version of Dionysius Byzantinus. The narrative seems to be a contamination of at least two aetiological narratives: the one about the founding of Byzantion (by the Argives) at the Historical Peninsula of the Bosphorus, and another one explaining the name of the settlement (τὸ χωρίον) Boucolia:

Ps. Codinus, *De Orig. Const.*, pp. 3–4 Bekker: ἐπεὶ οὖν κατὰ τὴν εἰμαρμένην ἀφίκοντο καὶ θυσίαν τοῖς ἐγχωρίοις ἐξιλιάσκοντο δαίμοσι, κόραξ τῆς ιερουργίας ὑφαρπάσας βραχὺ μέρος εἰς ἕτερον μετέθηκε τόπον, ὃς ἔχει τὴν Βοσπόρου προσηγορίαν, βουκόλου τὴν τοῦ ὄρνιθος ὑποδείξαντος πτῆσιν, ἀφ' οὐπερ καὶ Βουκολία ἐκείνο τὸ χωρίον ἐκλήθη.

Reflexions of the myth about the value trial to which Melias sent Byzas may be sought in the early coinage of Byzantion, featuring silver coin types minted between the end of the 5th and the 4th century BC, with an image of a bull/cow (?) moving to the left and stepping on a dolphin (Mushmov 1912, 3209, 3210, 3211; Schönert-Geiß 1970, 79; 3212–3218; Schönert-Geiß 1972, 386, 688, 801; Sear 1987, 1583, etc.; cf. Stoyas 2012, 163–166). More impressive in this respect are a type of bronze coins dated to the 4th century BC, featuring a bull's head with the monogram ΠΥ between the horns and a richly decorated trident on the reverse (Schönert-Geiß 1970, 915; Weber 1924, 2558). These images can be compared with the silver hemidrachms featuring the forepart of a bull/calf (?) with raised right foreleg over a dolphin, with or without monogram, moving to the left, and above it – monogram Π (instead of Β); with trident on the reverse.

The myth appears to have been updated and reinterpreted in the context of the founding and consecration of Constantinople by Constantine I the Great, invariably interpolated in all biographies devoted to him. It is highly probable that Hesychius' version had been influenced by a common mythological model, known and followed by the emperor as well. Describing the emperor's hesitations in the choice of a location for the city to be named after him, P. Gilles (Gilles 1729, 22) narrates how he reached Chalcedon and started building there. However, he was redirected by the eagles that often carried small pebbles or threads of the builders to Byzantion, where Constantinople was to be built. However, P. Gilles specifies, that seemed to be a story borrowed from Dionysius Byzantinus, who informs that Byzas founded Byzantion at the place called Semystra, at the confluence of the rivers Kydaros and Barbyzes. And it was not an eagle but a raven (Apollo's sacred bird!) that snatched a piece of the sacrificial animal amidst the flames, and taking it to the peninsula of the Bosphorus, it indicated to Byzas to found his city precisely there.

That detail in the text retold by P. Gilles, as is understood from his next sentence, can be traced to Dionysius Byzantinus, suggesting that the solar deity giving oracles had been “translated” by the Greeks and reduced to their notion about Apollo. The cited version betrays a reflection of the process of interaction and syncretism of the traditions of the Greek *apoikistai* (whoever

they were!) with those of the indigenous population in the context of establishing the new status of the settlement as a Greek *emporion*. Here it is also possible to perceive the process of syncretisation of the figure of the *oikist* of the migrants with the figure and the cult of the local *heros-eponym* (Byzas), worshipped both as founder of the Thracian settlement, and as deity (Βύζας ἀνὴρ ἴσα θεῶ τετιμέμενος). Byzas was thus transformed into a (Megarian) king – *oikist*, leader of the *apoikistai* and he even received Megarian mythological genealogy (Hesych., §5, p. 3 Preger; Lozanova 2011, 39–50). Maybe the myth about the Argivian princess Io, the daughter of the king of Argos Inachos, was interwoven in the context of such mythopoiesis and in the genealogy of the local *heros-eponym*.

The images in the bronze coins of Caracalla from Byzantium, dated between 202 and 205 AD, could betray reflexions of that mythological notion. They feature a bearded man with helmet (of varying type) in profile to the right, identified with an inscription BYZΑΣ written to the right. On the reverse there is an eagle with spread wings and head to the left, standing on a base. Around the image there is an inscription: ΕΠΙ Μ ΑΥ ΑΝΤΩΝΙ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΩΝ (Schönert-Geiß 1970, 2073–2074).

Such a narrative is also contained in the so-called “Halkin-Vita” of Constantine (Life of the Emperor Constantine, Great among Saints and the Equal of the Apostles), dated by its publisher to the 9th century (*Vita Constantini e cod. Patm. 179, s. XII–XIII, f. 4–25 = BHG 365n; cf. Halkin 1959, 63–107; see Lieu 1998, 136–176; cf. Lieu 2006, 298–324*). It contains the common narrative of several medieval texts, known as *Gesta Euphratae*, revealing the pious deeds of the Christian Euphratas, the emperor’s trusted eunuch, to whom even his conversion to Christianity was attributed. According to “Halkin-Vita”, Emperor Constantine received instructions directly from God in a dream that he had close to Rome to build a city of the Mother of God, God-bearing Mary, at a place that He was to indicate personally. The emperor initially went to the city of Thessalonica and started active construction, but the outburst of an epidemic forced him to leave the city in haste and he went to Chalcedon in Bithynia, where he started restoring the fortification wall destroyed by the Persians. “Without further ado he set about starting the work, but eagles took the workers’ plumb lines and carried them off to Byzantium. This happened many times and when the emperor learned of it, he did not know what to do. Then one of his intimate servants called Euphratas said this: There is the place, master, that the Lord wants the building of the city for his mother, the holy mother of God”. The Emperor “put Euphratas in charge of the work, with instructions to build a city that would please the mother of God. He gave him plenty of assistance and lots of money, and told him to take what would help him from the surrounding country. This was in the twelfth year of his emperorship” (Halkin Life of the Emperor Constantine).

Consulting the oracle of Apollo in Delphi related to the founding of a new *apoikia* was a traditional Pan-Hellenic practice ever since the time of the early Greek colonisation. A circumstance complicating the religious context consisted in the fact that Apollo was a deity traditionally worshipped in Megara and researchers usually associate the emergence of his cult in Byzantium with the settling of the Megarian *apoikistai* there (Hanell 1934, 142–143; Schönert-Geiß 1970, 75–76; cf. *ultim. Russell 2016, 206–210*). However, that mythological scheme was too formal and rendered in a literary form so as to be preserved as an integral ideologem with sufficient impact on the entire population of Byzantium until as late as the reign of Emperor Constantine I the Great.

The mythological narrative of Hesychius about the value trial of Byzas follows to a great extent the pattern of the version narrated by Dionysius Byzantinus (Dionys. Byzant., §24, 11–13 Wescher; cf. Lozanova 2011, 39–50) about the omen that the *apoikistai* received about the place where they were to build their city from the deity identified with Apollo by the better informed Greeks. In Dionysius Byzantinus, the place of the sacrificial rite, where the *apoikia* was nearly founded, was at the altar of Semystra, at the bottom of the Golden Horn, i.e., it followed the more archaic topography of the myth. Perhaps both closely relativist versions reflected the interpenetration and the syncretism between the local and the Greek mythological traditions regarding the founding of the city and the process of their literary rendering.

The combined narrative about the value trial of Byzas in the topography of the Golden Horn betrays traces of sacral topoi dedicated to the local solar deity, identified with the Greek Apollo by the new settlers. After Boucolos, Dionysius Byzantinus describes Mandri and Drys – “a quiet and calm place washed by the calm sea” – specifying that the latter was a sacred forest

and a temenos of Apollo. *Hesychius of Miletus* (Hesych., §4, pp. 2–3 Preger) also localises the sacrificial rite and the raven's omen near the Boucolia locality, which synchronises his sources for that version with those of Dionysius Byzantinus. However, here he replaced the expression “of the father's gods” (τοὺς πατέρας ... δαίμονας) in his narrative about Byzas' value trial with the expression “of the local gods” (τοὺς ἐγχωρίους ... δαίμονας), because the persons offering the sacrifice were also different: in the first case that was the local hero Byzas after the successful value trial, and in the second case – the leaders of the apoikistai (οἱ τῆς ἀποικίας ἡγεμόνες – in the words of Dionysius), whose evidence was also repeated or perhaps it followed the variant of Dionysius Byzantinus. The two versions are closely related and became interchangeable over time in the myth about the founders of Byzantion. Perhaps that was also the mechanism of transformation/identification of the local *heros-eponym* and king of the Thracians, on the one hand, and the *oikist* of the Greek emporion, on the other.

The hesitations in the identification of the apoikistai of the Greek emporion and their multiplying, preservation and perpetration in later authors, also raise doubts about the attribution of the sources of the solar cult in Byzantion invariably and only to Megara and the Megarian apoikistai, or to the Greek influence as a whole.

Krister Hanell in his *Megarische Studien* (1934) analyses in detail the cult and institutional parallels between Megara and its apoikistai. Adrian Robu recently developed in his studies the ideas proposed by Krister Hanell, highlighting the role of the indigenous population and its interactions with the apoikistai, as well as the collaboration of different groups of settlers (apoikoi, synaikoi and epoiikoi) (Robu 2013, 65–80; Robu 2013a, 143–157; Robu 2014, 19–36; Robu 2014a, 149–166; Robu 2014b, 281–293; Robu 2014c, 149–166).

Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, summarising the traditions in the founding of the city, defines them as Megarians, Lacedaemonians and Boeotians: Ἀὐτὸ δὲ τὸ Βυζάντιον Μεγαρέων καὶ Λακεδαιμονίων καὶ Βοιωτῶν ἐστὶν ἀποικία (Constant. Porphyr., *De them.*, 2, p. 46 Reiske). Dionysius Byzantinus mentions repeatedly – in addition to the Megarians (Dionys. Byzant., §14, p. 7 Wescher; cf. Gilles 1561, 50) – also the Corinthians as participants in the founding of the apoikia (Dionys. Byzant., §15, p. 8 Wescher; Gilles 1561, 56; Miller 1897a, 1158–1159; Miller 1897, 326–333). It is imperative to add to them also the Argives – not only on account of the emergence of the myth about Io, the daughter of Argivian king Inachos, but also due to the variants of the Delphic oracle. It would not be a precedent for the founding of the emporion to result from different groups of apoikoi, synaikoi and epoiikoi (Robu 2014, 19–36; Russell 2016, 206–210, cf. 217), most probably dominated by the Megarians (Hanell 1934). According to Th. Russell (Russell 2016: 206 with lit.), the Doric dialect of the Byzantine inscriptions and coins, as well as the specific alphabet used in them, support the domination of the Megarians in the founding of Byzantion. It is interesting to note the unusual manner of writing the beta letter in the legends – BY – on the early coins of Byzantion, as well as on a statuary base dedicated by the city in Olympia. The shape resembles the gamma letter, similar to the Corinthian beta adopted by the neighbouring Megara as well. The use of the Corinthian beta in Byzantion is explained as Megarian introduction to the founding of the apoikia there (Russell 2016, 207).

A rather overlooked story by Ioannes Lydus (Ioann. Lydus, *De Mag. Rom.*, 3, 70, p. 265 Bekker) suggests at least two stages in the process of the Greek colonisation of Byzantion. According to his brief narrative about the fire that spread from “the agora named after Zeuxippos” to Constantine's Forum, he specifies that Zeuxippos was the king who led the expedition of the Megarian apoikistai to Byzantion in 628 BC, several years after the first founding.

This short narrative about the fire spreading from “the Agora named after Zeuxippos” towards the Forum of Constantine mentions that Zeuxippos was the king who led the expedition of the Megarian apoikistai to Byzantion in 628 BC, i.e., a couple of years after the initial founding of the city (led by Byzas?).

Such a hypothesis cannot be ruled out and it would explain the complicated situation around the identification of the apoikistai in Byzantion and of the heros-oikist with the local heros and solar deity (Zeuxippos) (Lozanova 2011, 39–50; Lozanova 2012, 76–91; cf. Lozanova 2013).

Consequently, the mythologem about the “blind men” – being Greek literary rendering – could tend to unite at least two religious traditions: the local, pre-emporial tradition and that of the Greek apoikistai, reflecting the anatomy of their complex relations in the process of the creation of the new city. The “blindness” was hardly the reason for the earlier apoikistai to avoid

the region of Byzantium with its abundance and strategically favourable location. More likely, it should be assumed that the strong military and political presence of the Thracian tribes along the Hellespont were the reason for the inability of the Greeks to conquer initially those territories painlessly. This is clearly indicated by the mythological figure of the local Thracian king Barbyses (Βαρβύσιος/Βαρβύσης) (Dionys. Byz., An. Bosp., §24, 12–13 Wescher; Hesych., §3, p. 2 Preger: Βαρβύσης; Ioann. Malal., Chron., 13. p. 321 Dindorf: Βαρβύσιος, etc.) and of his remarkable daughter Phidaleia. Dionysius Byzantinus (§8, p. 5 Wescher) specifies that when they came to the shore near the altar of Athena Ekbasia, slightly above the Bosphorus Peninsula, the armed apoikistai immediately started fighting against the local population. Once more (§16, p. 8) he mentions the strong organised resistance of the local population in the description of the Cycla near the bay named after the Thracian king Melias.

The mythology of the emergence of Byzantium is rather fragmented and of a multi-variant nature; it betrays the functioning of numerous different or similar traditions, among which the local folklore occupies a considerable place. The traces of the Greek manner of mythologisation and literary rendering of these verbal traditions are also clearly perceptible. The legendary figures dramatised in the mythological events of the emergence and founding of the city are extremely deeply rooted in the toponymy of its region, which suggests its remote antiquity. Tracing the genealogical relations between the primordial figures in the city's mythological narratives could also suggest certain hypotheses on the localisation of its initial pre-emporial, i.e., Thracian settlements, as well as the stages of mastering the territory around the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus Peninsula by the Greek apoikistai. In turn, this would outline the roots and the genesis of the solar cult, which was at the centre of the religious traditions of Byzantium.

BIBLIOGRAPHY / REFERENCES

- Avram, A., Jones, C. P. 2011. An Actor from Byzantium in a New Epigram from Tomis. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 178, 126–134.
- Bekker, Imm. (Ed.). 1843. *Georgii Codini Excerpta de antiquitatibus Constantinopolitanis. (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, vol. 15)*. Bonnae: E. Weberi.
- Gilles, P. 1561. *De Bosphoro Thracio libri tres*. Lugduni: Apud Gulielmum Rouillium.
- Gilles, P. 1729. *The Antiquities of Constantinople: With a description of its situation, the conveniencies of its port, its public buildings, the statuary, sculpture, architecture, and other curiosities of that city. With cuts explaining the chief of them. In four books*. Trans. and ed. J. Ball London.
- Gilles, P. 2007. *Itinéraires byzantins. Lettre à un ami. Du Bosphore de Thrace. De la topographie de Constantinople et de ses antiquités. Texte latin établi par Jean-Pierre Grémois*. Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance.
- Godley, A. D. (Ed.). 1920. *Herodotus*, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Halkin, F. 1959. Une nouvelle vie de Constantin dans un légendier de Patmos. *Analecta Bollandiana* 77, 63–107.
- The 'Halkin' Life of Constantine in English*. Translated by Mark Vermes. URL: <https://www.roger-pearse.com/weblog/the-halkin-life-of-constantine-in-english/>.
- Hanell, K. 1934. *Megarische Studien*. Lund: Lindstedt.
- Head, B. V. 1887¹. *Historia Numorum. A Manual of Greek Numismatics*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- Head, B. V. 1911². *Historia Numorum. A Manual of Greek Numismatics*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press (1911² ss.)
- Jones, H. L. (Ed.). 1924. *The Geography of Strabo*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd. 1924.
- Johnston, P. A. et al. (Eds.). 2016. Animals in Greek and Roman Religion and Myth. *Proceedings of the Symposium Grumentinum Grumento Nova (Potenza) 5–7 June 2013*. Cambridge: Scholars Publishing.
- Lieu, S. N. C. 1998. From History to Legend and Legend to History: The Medieval and Byzantine Transformation of Constantine's Vita. Lieu, S. N. C., Montserrat, D. (Eds.). *Constantine: History, Historiography and Legend*. London and New York: Routledge, s. 136–176.
- Lieu, S. N. C. 2006. Constantine in Legendary Literature. Lenski, N. (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, s. 298–324.
- Lozanova, V. 2011. Byzas, Zeuxippos Helios and Refoundation of Byzantium. *Orpheus. Journal of Indo-European and Thracian Studies*, Sofia, 18, s. 39–50.

Lozanova, V. 2012. Constantinople: City of the Sun or the (Re-)Birth of Byzantium. *Proceedings of the First International Symposium Ancient Cultures in South-East Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean: Megalitic Monuments and Cult Practices*. Blagoevgrad, s. 76–91.

Lozanova, V. 2013. Zeuxippos Helios/Constantine Helios: Old Religiosity and New Authority. Sayar, M. H. (Ed.). *Eleventh International Congress of Thracology*. Istanbul, 8th–12th November, 2010. Istanbul.

Lozanova, V. 2013a. Barbysios or the Birth of Byzantium. *Orpheus. Journal of Indo-European and Thracian Studies*, Sofia, 20, s. 37–54.

Lozanova, V. 2013b. The Prophecies of The “Many-Gift[ed].” *Proceedings of the 12th International Congress of Thracology “The Thracians and Their Neighbors in the Bronze and Iron Ages.” Târgoviște, 10th–14th September 2013*. Vol. II. *Necropolises, Cult Places, Religion, Mythology*. Braşov, s. 225–246.

Moushmov, N. 1912. Antichnite moneti na Balkanskia poluostrrov i monetite na balgarskite zare [Ancient Coins on the Balkan Peninsula and the Coins of the Bulgarian Kings]. Sofia: Printing house of Gr. Iv. Gavazov (in Bulgarian). URL: <http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/thrace/byzantium/i.html>.

Мушмов, Н. 1912. Античните монети на Балканския полуостров и монетите на българските царе. София: Печатница на Гр. Ив. Гавазов. 510 с.

Preger, Th. 1895. Beiträge zur Textgeschichte der Πάτρια Κωνσταντινουπόλεως [Georgius Codinus]. *Programm des königlichen Maximilians-Gymnasium*. München.

Preger, Th. (Ed.). 1901. *Hesychie Illustrii Origines Constantinopolitanae*. vol. I. [= *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*]. Lipsiae: B. G. Teubner.

Reiske, J. J. (Ed.). 1829. *Constantine Porphyrogenitus*. Vols. 1–2, Bonn, Ed. Weberi [= *Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae*, vols. 16–17].

Robu, A. 2013. Le culte de Poséidon à Mégare et dans ses colonies. *Dacia N. S.*, 57, s. 65–80.

Robu, A. 2013a. Sanctuaries and Relations between Cities in the Hellenistic World: the Example of the Cities of Kalchedon and Byzantium. Panait-Bîrzescu, F., Bîrzescu, I., Matei-Popescu, F., Robu, A. (Eds.). *Poleis în Marea Neagră. Relații interpontice și producții locale*. Bucarest, s. 143–157 (en roumain, avec résumé en anglais).

Robu, A. 2014. Les relations de Byzance avec les cités du Pont Gauche à l'époque hellénistique: la guerre pour l'emporion de Tomis. Cojocaru, V., Schuler, Chr. (Eds.). *Die Außenbeziehungen pontischer und kleinasiatischer Städte in hellenistischer und römischer Zeit. Akten einer deutsch-rumänischen Tagung in Constanta* (20. – 24. September 2010). Stuttgart, s. 19–36.

Robu, A. 2014a. Traditions et innovations institutionnelles: l'organisation civique de Byzance et de Chalcédoine. *Il mar Nero*, 7, 2007–2009, s. 149–166.

Robu, A. 2014b. Traditions et rapprochements onomastiques dans les cités grecques de la mer Noire: quelques exemples tirés du «monde mégarien». *Il Mar Nero*, 8, 2010–2011, s. 281–293.

Russel, Th. 2012. “The Land of Inachus”. Byzantium's Early Coinage and Two Bosphorus Toponyms. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 180, s. 133–138.

Russell, Th. 2016. Byzantium and the Bosphorus: A Historical Study, from the Seventh Century BC until the Foundation of Constantinople. *Oxford Classical Monographs*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Schönert-Geiss, E. 1970. *Die Münzprägung von Byzantion. Teil I: Autonome Zeit*. Berlin, Amsterdam: Akademie Verlag Berlin; Adolf m. Hakkert Amsterdam.

Schönert-Geiß, E. 1972. *Die Münzprägung von Byzantium. Teil II: Kaiserzeit*. Berlin, Amsterdam: Akademie Verlag Berlin; Adolf m. Hakkert, Amsterdam.

Sear, D. R. 1982. *Greek Imperial Coins and Their Values, the Local Coinage of the Roman Empire*. London: Seaby.

SNG Ashmolean: Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. Ashmolean Museum. Oxford: Published for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press (1951–2013).

SNG BM: Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. The British Museum. London: British Museum Press (1933 ss).

SNG Copenhagen 1982. Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. The Danish National Museum. Vol 2: Thrace and Macedonia. Copenhagen: Sunrise Publications, West Milford (NJ).

Stoyas, Y. 2012. Two Peculiar Thracian Coin Issues: ΔΑΝΘΑΗΤΩΝ and ΜΕΛΕΣΑ. *Collection of Essays in Honour of Ilya Prokopov*. V. Tyrnovo: Faber Press, s. 143–174

Svoronos, J. 1889. Νομίσματα ἀνάλεκτα. *Αρχαιολογική ἐφημερίς* (Ἐφ. ἀρχ.), Αθήνα, Τόμος 28, 3, s. 74–77, pl. 1, 1–2.

Weber 1924: Forrer, L. *The Weber Collection of Greek Coins. Vol. 2. Macedon – Thrace – Thessaly. North Western, Central and Southern Greece*. London: Spink.

Wescher, C. (ed.). 1874. *Dionysii Byzantii De Bospori Navigatione*. Parisiis: E Typographeo publico.

Zatta, Cl. 2016. Flying Geese, Wandering Cows: How Animal Movement Orients Human Space in Greek Myth. Johnston, P. A. et al. (Eds.). *Animals in Greek and Roman Religion and Myth*. Cambridge: Scholars Publishing, s. 227–236.

Article received 24.02.2019