

KING MIDAS BETWEEN THE BALKANS AND ASIA MINOR

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The Phrygian king Midas is one of the famous "Barbarians" in Greek literature. Varied pieces of evidence make him either a very wise man, "the ideal Barbarian", or an embodiment of stupidity and greed. Some texts associate him with Macedonia as well. Recent progress in Phrygian studies¹ gives a better opportunity to compare the indigenous epigraphic data, which also attested the name of Midas, with Greek texts.

Apart from the encyclopaedic articles, a complete study of Greek written sources about king Midas could hardly be found². Single passages usually illustrate a historical reconstruction or archaeological data.

Midas' "golden touch" became proverbial as an imprudent wish, satisfied by the gods. This fabulous image was finally shaped by Ovid³. One of the greatest poets of the time of Augustus turned

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1. Especially Cl. BRIXHE, M. LEJEUNE, *Corpus des inscriptions paléo-phrygiennes*, Paris, T.1-2, 1984.
 2. S. EITREM, *Midas*, in PAULY and WISSOWA (eds.), *Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 15, 1526-1540; E. KUHNERT, *Midas*, in W. ROSCHER, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, 2, 2956-2963; L.E. ROLLER, The legend of Midas, *Classical Antiquity*, 2, 1983, p. 299-313; T.A. MOISSEVA, Midas as a symbol of wealth in ancient tradition, *Journal of Ancient History*, 1984, 4, p.12-30 (in Russian).
 3. Ovid. *Metam.* 11, 85-145.

the Alexandrine scholastic tradition into a literary work. He used earlier evidence familiar to us in fragmentary form to create a narrative. The name of the Phrygian king was already a symbol in the early texts, but a consistent story is simply missing.

Midas is a key name in Phrygian studies. The comparison of Midas with Mita from the cuneiform texts led to the identification of the Phrygians known to the Greeks and the Mushki mentioned in the Akkadian documents⁴. The Phrygian script was distinguished due to the discovery of the name Midas on the most impressive rock-cut facade in the so-called "Midas City" (Yazilikaya)⁵. Since then attempts to correlate the evidence of the Greek authors, the data from the cuneiform and hieroglyphic texts, as well as the archaeological data, have not ceased.

King Midas appeared in the Greek texts later than the Phrygian ethnonym. Homer, who knew the Phrygians and the Trojans as allies even before the Trojan war⁶, did not mention his name. Midas was already a symbol of wealth in a fragment of Tyrtaios⁷. It is not quite clear why Kinyras is, like Midas, fabulously rich in this verse. He has, however, handed a breastplate made of 12 gold plates as a gift to Agamemnon⁸. According to the tradition he was the son of Apollo and founded the temple and the college of Aphrodite's priests at Paphos⁹.

Tyrtaios mentions Adrastos' voice as well. Adrastos was the son of Meropos, who came from Perkote to help the Trojans¹⁰. Hellenistic authors make him the founder of a sanctuary of Nemesis near Kyzikos¹¹ (Adrasteia means "the Inescapable One" as early as in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* 935). Adrastos, the king of Sikion, was worshipped by his subjects instead of Dionysos¹². Modern commentators invariably point out Adrastos, the son of Gordios, who sought refuge at Croesus' palace, but unintentionally killed his son during the royal boar hunt¹³.

4. H. WINCKLER, *Altorientalische Forschungen II*, Leipzig, 1901, p. 136 ; cf. M.J. MELLINK, Mita, Mushki and Phrygians, *Anadolu Arastirmalari*, 2, 1965, p. 317-325.

5. C.H.E. HASPELS, Western cognizance of inner Phrygia in earlier days, in *The Aegean and the Near East. Studies Presented to Hetty Goldman*, New York, 1956, p. 317-318.

6. Hom. *Il.* III, 184-190.

7. Tyrt. frg.9, 1-6.

8. Hom. *Il.* XI, 20.

9. Tacit. *Hist.* 2, 3

10. Hom. *Il.* II, 830

11. Strabo. 13, 1, 13.

12. Hdt. 5, 67.

13. Hdt. 1, 35-43.

The cult of the Great Mother-Goddess and Dionysiac rituality seem to form the common background of all these model-figures mentioned by Tyrtaios. The Anatolian location of some of the mythographic versions could also account for their mentioning in the same passage. Balkan-Anatolian affinities could be followed as well in some of the characters.

The beauty of Tithonus invokes the idea of the imprudent desire : Eos asked the gods for his immortality, but forgot about his eternal youth. An insult of the gods, imprudent wish or boast might have been another feature in common, apart from the Trojan genealogy of Tithonus¹⁴.

The Cyclopes, the Thracian Boreas and, probably Pelops, belong to the Greek mythological figures designating the limits of the known world¹⁵. Pelops embodied the Asiatic wealth according to Thucydides¹⁶, and was frequently called "Phrygian" by the later authors.

THE GOLDEN TOUCH

Initially Midas was just very rich. The negative connotation appeared in Aristophanes' *Ploutos*, but it was provoked by the ass's ears¹⁷. Aristotle is the first to mention the "golden touch" of Midas¹⁸.

Ovid tells the most detailed story about Midas' magic power of turning everything he touched into solid gold¹⁹. The Phrygian king laid his hand first on a green bough, then he seized a stone, a handful of soil, a wheat-ear, an apple, the high gates of his palace and water. Then his servants prepared a rich table for him, full of baked dough and wine, but everything turned into gold. These objects reveal the Nature/culture opposition : some of them have a cosmogonic character, while others belong to the sphere of culture, of the already processed natural product. Thus, the poetic language demonstrates that both the cosmogonic and the social functions of the ruler are impaired. The king could no longer provide fertility and prosperity to the country and to the people.

14. Hom. *Il.* XX, 237 ; Apollod. 3, 12, 3.

15. M. VASSILEVA, Greek ideas about the North and the East (mastering the Black Sea area), in G.R. TSETSKHLADZE (ed.); *The Greek Colonization of the Black Sea : Historical Interpretation of Archaeology*. Historia Suppl. Volume (1997 - forthcoming).

16. Thuc. 1, 9, 2.

17. Aristoph. *Plout.* 287.

18. Arist. *Polit.* 1, 3, 16.

19. Ovid. *Metam.* 11, 106-126.

The gold bread/food of Midas could be compared with the bread baked for Perdikkas, the founder of the Macedonian dynasty, which rose unnaturally high²⁰ (The famous rose gardens of Midas, where he caught Silenos, were just the place in Macedonia, reached by Perdikkas and his brothers, where they founded their kingdom according to Herodotus.) This was an omen of his future kingship, while Midas' bread was a punishment. The unreasonable wish turned the royal symbol, the gold object, into a disaster. The importance of a piece of solid gold on the royal table is otherwise demonstrated by the Paeonian king who kept two nuggets on his table²¹. It cannot be ruled out that a contamination of Herodotus' evidence about the Brygian migration from Macedonia to Asia Minor with the already fabulous wealth of Midas accounted for the 4th-3rd century BC thaumatological stories about the magic gold near Philippi, in Paeonia and in Pieria²².

The parallel between the punishments of Midas and of Tantalos was drawn by P. Kretschmer²³, although some later authors denied its significance²⁴. Some important points, however, could not be avoided. The outstretched hand and the touch are the major elements in the torment of both mythological figures: they could not reach their food²⁵. The eternal life and happiness which Tantalos once touched (taking the nectar and ambrosia from the god's table) turned into an eternal suffering. Similarly, the incredible wealth of Midas doomed him to starvation. Although it was the imprudent wish that condemned the Phrygian king, both punishments could be considered as being provoked by the acquisition of eternal knowledge, of immortality: Tantalos' possession of divine drink and food, and the conversation between Midas and Silenos on human happiness (cf. below).

Like Midas' story, no complete early literary version about Tantalos exists. The myth about Tantalos is formed by various and contradictory pieces of evidence. He and his descendants were often called "phrygians". The name Tantalos was handed down to several other members of the family; it became a dynastic one, like that of

20. Hdt. 8, 137.

21. Ps.-Arist. *De Ausc. Mirab.* 833b, Fr. 45.

22. Ps.-Arist. *De Ausc. Mirab.* 833b, Fr. 42; 45; 47.

23. P. KRETSCHMER, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Griechischen Sprache*, Göttingen, 1896, p. 204-205.

24. S. EITREM, *Midas*, *op. cit.*, 1533-1534.

25. On the stretching of the hand in Tantalos' myth cf. V.N. TOPOROV, *The Myth of Tantalos (On a Later Version - V. Ivanov's Tragedy)*, in *Palaeo-Balkan Studies and Antiquity*, Moscow, 1989, p. 61-110 (in Russian).

Midas, although the kinship of all persons bearing the name Midas is not quite clear. Both mythological characters were probably part of the early Greek notion about Asia.

Two other episodes mentioned Midas' golden touch, but they both referred to water and water-sources near the Phrygian town of Kelainai. Phrygians suffered from a severe thirst and king Midas touched the desert earth near Kelainai. A gold spring appeared. Again Dionysos helped him to turn it into drinking water²⁶.

In Callisthenus' version Zeus Idaios surrounded the city of Kelainai with great waters which engulfed many houses²⁷. The chasm disappeared only when Midas' son jumped there. The grateful father erected an altar to Zeus Idaios, which turned into gold after he had touched it.

MIDAS AND SILENOS

The capturing of Silenos by Midas is, however, much more popular in Antiquity. Actually, this is the beginning of the above story. The comprehensive narratives originated in the 4th century BC, but the story must have been known earlier. Herodotus just mentions the gardens of Midas, son of Gordias, in Macedonia where sixty-petalled roses grew, and where, according to the Macedonians, Silenos was caught²⁸. No details are given about the capture, while the later texts describe a water source which the Phrygian ruler mixed with wine to catch the drunk Silenos. The spring was located between the Maedians and Paeonians (probably Inna) according to Theopompos/Bion²⁹. Otherwise the Anatolian location of the water source prevails: at Thymbrion – according to Xenophon, near Ankyra – according to Pausanias³⁰, at Kelainai – according to Alexander Polyhistor. These sites were important Phrygian (and later Persian) centers.

The placing of the episode in Macedonia probably resulted from Herodotus' narrative about the Brygian migration to Anatolia. The ancient author specifically points out that the story of the Brygian resettlement in Asia and their renaming to Phrygians followed the narrative of the Macedonians³¹. The brief digression is

26. Plut. *De fluv.* 10, 1.

27. Callist. fr. 56 (Jac.).

28. Hdt. 8, 138.

29. Theop. Fr. 75a (Jac.); Bion. Fr. 3 (Jac.); on Inna cf. D. DETSCHEW, *Die Thrakischen Sprachreste*, Wien, 1976, p.216.

30. Xen. *Anab.* 1, 2, 13; Paus. 1, 4, 5.

31. Hdt. 7, 73.

inserted with the description of the Phrygians participating in the army of Xerxes, counted at Doriskos (480 BC), where they are mentioned between the Paphlagonians and the Lydians. The account of Midas' rose gardens is an element of the Macedonian dynastic legend: Perdikkas and his brothers arrived at the place where Silenos was caught. Both accounts betray the Macedonian royal ideological claims³². Most of the later authors who followed this location were close to the Macedonian court.

Ovid places Midas' metamorphosis after the narration about Orpheus' death and the punishment of the Thracian women by Bacchos. The god left for the Tmolos Mountain and the Pactolos river (the whole episode is an etiology for the gold sand in the river) followed by his suite of Satyrs and Bacchae. Only Silenos was missing because he got drunk, the Phrygian peasants caught him, tied him with garlands and led him before king Midas. Midas who was initiated in the Dionysiac mysteries by Orpheus and Eumolpos, arranged a ten-day banquet, and on the eleventh he released Silenos and returned him to the god³³. Liber fulfilled obligingly the foolish wish of the Phrygian king.

Midas was placed in an Orphic context as early as the passages by Aristotle and Theopompos, followed by Konon³⁴.

Midas and Silenos held a conversation on the meaning of life and happiness. One of Silenos' remark corresponds directly to the view on life of the Thracian Trausoi, told by Herodotus³⁵. The account of Theopompos³⁶ is rather long, considered obscure by both ancient and modern authors. It comprises some cosmogonic and geographic *realia*: the Ocean, the land of the Blessed and the Hyperboreans. Theopompos' diegesis of Meropis seems to have been created after the higher patterns of ancient utopia, but was obviously dependent on Ionian cosmological, geographic and historical traditions. A chasm was situated at the remotest Hyperborean place, called *Anostos*, which neither darkness, nor light abandoned (the parallel with the Kimmerians in Homers' *Odyssey* XI, 14-19 at the entrance to the netherworld could be mentioned here). Merops himself is an Anatolian figure who betrayed a common Balkan-Anatolian ethnocultural context as early as in the Homeric verses.

32. L.E. ROLLER, *The Legend of Midas*, loc. cit., p. 303; M. VASSILEVA, Brygoi-Phrygoi and the Background of a Migration, *DIOS*, 1, 1997, p. 43-49.

33. Ovid, *Metam.* 11, 85-99.

34. Arist. Fr. 44 (Rose); Plut. *Moralia* 115b; Konon. Fr. 1 (Jac.).

35. Hdt. 5, 4-5.

36. Theop. Fr. 75c (Jac.).

The whole long narrative is told to Midas by Silenos. This passage brings Silenos close to the Seven Sages and makes king Midas his disciple. It can be assumed that similarities in religious thinking included the Phrygian ruler and other Anatolian *realia* into the Hellenic (Ionian) notion about the North, traditionally designated by the Hyperboreans. Thus, Midas became later a disciple of Orpheus in Konon, of Orpheus and of Cecropian Eumolpos in Ovid and of Odrysos in Clement of Alexandria³⁷.

The Silenos episode places king Midas between the Orphic (i.e. Apollonian) wisdom and the ecstasy of Dionysiac mysteries. A similar scene in Virgil, without any connection with Midas, or Phrygia, made the captured Silenos sing, and his song – like that of Orpheus – held beasts and nature spellbound. Satyrs/Sileni are not only daemons from the suite of Hellenic Dionysos. Servants of the supreme Balkan-Anatolian deity could be recognized behind their Greek literary image. The first king of Nysa was Silenos, according to Diodorus, and its aristocrats were called Silenoi³⁸.

Strabo says that Satyrs are attendants of the gods, performing sacred rites together with the Cabeiri, the Corybantes, Pani and Tityrs³⁹. Sileni and Satyrs are the adversaries of the Titans who tore to pieces Dionysos-Zagreus in later Orphic and Neo-Platonic texts⁴⁰.

The subject of the captured Silenos was evidently known much earlier than its 4th century BC literary version. Different moments of the episode are represented on the Greek vases, the earliest scene being from the mid-6th century BC⁴¹. The ruler before whom Silenos was brought is designated as *MIDES* on a vase from c. 500 BC. After the mid-5th century BC, the seated ruler on the paintings assumed more and more the appearance of the Persian Great King⁴².

37. Clem. *Protr.* 2, 13, 1 ; commentary : S. EITREM, *Midas, op. cit.*, 1526.

38. Diod. 3, 72.

39. Strabo. 10, 3, 15.

40. Jul. Firm. Matern., *De err. profan. relig.* 6 ; Himer. *Or.* 9, 4 ; cf. the commentary of A. Fol : A. FOL, *The Thracian Dionysos. Book One : Zagreus*, Sofia, 1991, p. 134-144 (in Bulgarian).

41. H. BULLE, Midas und Silen, *Mitteilungen des kaiserlich deutschen archäologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung*, 22, 1897, p. 387-404; F. BROMMER, Bilder der Midassage, *Archäologische Anzeiger*, 1941, p. 36-52 ; L.E. ROLLER, *The Legend of Midas*, *loc. cit.*, p. 304-305.

42. M.C. MILLER, Midas as the Great King in Attic fifth-century vase-painting, *Antike Kunst*, 31,2, 1988, p. 79-87.

ASS'S EARS

Almost 50 years before Aristophanes' *Ploutos*, Midas bore ass's ears on three Greek vases. The scenes represent Silenos being brought before the king and have nothing to do with the later story about the musical competition between Apollo and Marsyas⁴³. Midas' connection with the competition seems rather artificial and not very significant even in Ovid' *Metamorphoses*. He was punished with the ass's ears because he opposed Tmolos' judgement⁴⁴. Ancient literary interpretations of the ass's ears of Midas are numerous and varied, but no comprehensive reason for this punishment exists. The prolific symbolism of the donkeys is usually pointed out.

A brief review of the evidence reveals that the donkeys were special sacrificial animals dedicated to Apollo by the Hyperboreans⁴⁵. They also carried the sacred objects in the Eleusinian mysteries⁴⁶. Some authors assign the ass's ears of Midas to the Orphic theogony⁴⁷. The ritual significance of the donkeys in Thrace and their close relation with Satyrs and Silenos have long been ascribed to the Thracian-Phrygian zone⁴⁸. Their later symbolism of fertility seems to be an achievement of the Greek literature. Perhaps the bad musical ear of the ass was an even later connotation. The lack of a consistent early story and explanation of the ass's ears of Midas might point to a "Hyperborean" characteristic of the Phrygian ruler⁴⁹.

KING MIDAS AND THE GREAT MOTHER-GODDESS

King Midas was famous for his musical inventions in the Greek texts⁵⁰. Thracian, Phrygian, Lydian, or generally Asiatic music was often mentioned in the tragedies, mainly in a ritual context. Thracian and Phrygian flutes played in honour of Dionysos, the

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43. The ass's ears are not represented in the earlier vases and are absent in Tyrtaios verse : cf. the commentary in L.E. ROLLER, *The Legend of Midas, loc. cit.*, p. 308.
 44. Ovid. *Metam.* 146-179.
 45. Pind. *Pyth.* 10, 27-46 ; Clem. *Protr.* 2, 29, 4, quoting Callimachus ; Ant. Lib. 20 ; CIG 1, 807, 14 ; commentary in A.B. COOK, *Zeus*, London, 1925, 2, p. 463-465.
 46. Hesych. *s.v. onos agei mysteria*.
 47. E. KUHNERT, *Midas, op. cit.*, p. 2959.
 48. A.B. COOK, *Zeus, op. cit.*, p. 464-465.
 49. About some Palaeo-Balkan *realia* that remained unclear to the Greeks cf. Tz. LAZOVA, *The Hyperboreans. A Study in the Paleo-Balkan Tradition*, Sofia, 1996, p. 74.
 50. Plin. 7, 204 ; Athen. 14, 617b ; Suid. *s.v. elegos*.

melody of cymbals, flutes and tympan accompanied the attendants of the Mother of Gods⁵¹.

Midas' association with music was probably due just to its ritual significance, because the Phrygian king was the son of the Great Mother-Goddess/Kybele and a priest of her cult in another major group of evidence⁵². The stories are relatively late – told by the authors of the 1st century BC – 1st-2nd century AD. The tradition was most probably Hellenistic, but it corresponds very well to the data known so far from the Phrygian inscriptions. The text of Plutarch in *Caesar* is instructive⁵³. The Roman Good Goddess was called the Female by the Greeks, while the Phrygians considered her to be the mother of their king Midas. According to the Greeks, however, she was this mother of Dionysos whose name should not be mentioned. Her *hiera* were very similar to the Orphic ones: they were performed during the night and were accompanied by dances and music. The latter comparison was also made by Strabo in the previously quoted passage.

The most popular passage is the detailed story of Kybele's love for Attis, told by Diodorus⁵⁴. It ends with the founding of Kybele's great temple at Pessinus, where Phrygians worshipped her in older days and with king Midas as an active participant in her rites and sacrifices (or even founder?). The text is a literary contamination of Hellenistic origin, included in the part intended to summarize the evidence about Dionysos and Dionysiac religion.

Hechysios' gloss *Mida theos* should also be considered in this context. The subjects of Mida worshipped the goddess Mida whom they believed to be his mother. This could also be evidence that the ruler was named after the Mother Goddess⁵⁵.

Midas' epithaph quoted by Plato in his *Phaedros*⁵⁶ is generally ignored by modern scholars. A bronze virgin is standing at the monument of Midas, the epithaph reads. Although considered as a

51. Soph. frg. 217 ; 378 ; Eur. *Troj.* 151, 545, *Bacch.* 129, 159, etc., commentary in A. FOL, *The Thracian Dionysos, op. cit.*, p. 228-230 ; Strabo 10, 3, 7 ; 16-17.

52. Besides the passages considered below, Midas is the son of the Mother of Gods or Kybele in Hygin. *Fab.* 191 ; 274 and Arnob. *Adv. Nat.* 2, 73.

53. Plut. *Caes.* 9.

54. Diod. 3, 59, 8.

55. Deriving the royal name from a theonym originating from an oronym (hence, from the name of the Great Goddess) was a practice discussed in a Balkan-Anatolian context : E. LAROCHE, *Recueil d'onomastique hittite*, Paris, 1952, p. 75 ; A. FOL, *Policy and Culture in Ancient Thrace*, Sofia, 1990, p. 100-101 (in Bulgarian) ; M. VASSILEVA, *The Mountain, the God and the Name : On Some Thracian-Phrygian Parallels*, *Journal of Ancient History*, 1990, 3, p. 94-101 (in Russian).

56. Plato. *Phaedr.* 264d.

pure literary invention, the piece could have concealed an echo of Midas' relation to the virgin Mother Goddess. A figure of the Great Goddess is usually placed in the niches of Phrygian rock-cut facades and other monuments⁵⁷. Some of them could be considered as a symbolic grave of the ruler.

The Great Goddess is mentioned only as *matar/mater*, or as *matar kubileya/matar kubeleya* in the Old-Phrygian inscriptions⁵⁸. She was anonymous and designated by epithets: a practice evidenced by Strabo as well⁵⁹. A dedication to Midas by Ates is hewn above the fronton of the most impressive rock-cut facade in "Midas City". Two graffiti are to be found in the lower central niche: *mater* could be distinguished in the first one, while the second is a dedication to the Goddess by Midas (M-01c, d). The epigraphic considerations assign a later date to the graffiti. The scholars argue for two homonymous persons with the name Midas⁶⁰. Probably Midas has already turned into a dynastic royal name. A more consistent historical interpretation is still to be done, but the inscriptions attest the role of Midas in the Phrygian cult of the Goddess. Whatever the discussions on the date of these graffiti might be, they testify to a much earlier tradition than that of the Hellenic writers. The progress in Phrygian studies shows that the literary texts possibly reflect Phrygian cult and ritual setting, observed by the Greeks.

A passage by Strabo is probably the only evidence about king Midas that is related to historical events. He mentions the Kimmerians who invaded Asia Minor and devastated now Paphlagonia, now Phrygia, at the time when Midas died drinking bull's blood (literally: "followed his destiny")⁶¹.

Ancient chronographers give two dates for the death of Midas: 696/5 BC and 676/5 BC. The first date is generally accepted as reliable because of the synchronism with the Assyrian texts about Mita, the contemporary of Sargon II⁶².

57. C.H.E. HASPELS, *The Highlands of Phrygia. Sites and Monuments*, Princeton, 1-2, 1971, p. 73-133; Figs. 182-185.

58. Cl. BRIXHE, M. LEJEUNE, *Corpus des inscriptions paléo-phrygiennes*, W-04, B-01.

59. Strabo. 10, 3, 12-15

60. Cl. BRIXHE, M. LEJEUNE, *Corpus des inscriptions paléo-phrygiennes*, M-01a, c, d, p. 14.

61. Strabo. 1, 3, 21; the evidence is repeated by Plutarch who makes of it a suicide: Plut. *Flam.* 20; *Moralia* 168f.

62. Recently A.I. Ivanchik supported the second date: A.I. IVANCHIK, *Les Cimmériens au Proche-Orient*, Göttingen, *Orbis Biblicus Orientalis* 127, 1993, p. 68-74.

Modern scholars take for granted that the Kimmerian raids in Asia Minor put an end to the political strength of Phrygia and caused the death of the Phrygian king Midas. The only cuneiform text that mentions Kimmerians and Mushki together reveals them as allies against Assyria⁶³. None of the known Akkadian documents mentions the death of Mita, or the defeat of the Mushki by the Kimmerians. The Assyrians knew about the death of *Gugu* (Gyges). Bearing in mind the Phrygian political activity in southeastern Anatolia in the late 8th century BC, it is very improbable that the death of a mighty neighbour and previous ally should be missed in the reports.

Greek chronographic tradition stemmed from the idea of the correlation between the generations to which famous ancient figures belonged. Midas and the Lydian king Gyges were synchronized with the early poets Terpanndros and Archilochus. The absolute chronology in dates, i.e. according to the Olympic games, was, however, achieved by Hellenistic scholars. Thus, both dates originate from the same approach to the early history and none of them could claim higher reliability.

The tradition about Midas' suicide when he drank bull's blood at the sight of the Kimmerian attacks is legendary in character. Themistocles' suicide in the same way is much more famous in the literature⁶⁴. It is interesting that the story was invariably placed in Asia Minor: Themistocles died in Magnesia, Hannibal in Bithynia.

The ancient authors connected the appearance of the Kimmerians in Asia Minor with the death of Midas. This relation, however, could not be proved by Oriental documents. This belief previously influenced to a great extent the interpretation of the archaeological situation at Gordion. At present, a more realistic view dominates. The destruction level, however, does not mean a break in the historical and cultural development of the Phrygian capital. The picture is not apocalyptic⁶⁵.

A number of recent studies has already emphasized the incorrectness of Hellenic writers when referring to the eastern history and chronology. For example, Sardis was captured by the

63. I. STARR, *Queries to the Sungod. Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria*, *State Archives of Assyria*, 4, Helsinki, 1990, N° 1.4.

64. Diod. 11, 58, 2-3; Plut. *Them.* 31, 6; Suid. *s.v. Themistokles*, two texts, however, speak about a sacrifice of a bull to Artemis Leucophryne: Val. Max. 5, 6, 3; Aristodem. Fr. 104 (Jac.); the episode is known for Hannibal as well.

65. R.S. YOUNG, *Three Great Early Tumuli. The Gordion Excavations Final Reports*, Volume 1, Pennsylvania, 1981, p. 272.

Kimmerians during the reign of Gyges, and not of Ardys, as Herodotus claims⁶⁶. No modern approach has so far succeeded in the correlation of Herodotus' chronology of Lydian, Median and Persian dynasties with the actual historical data. A general reflection of the events could be followed in some of the accounts, but they could hardly be used as reliable sources. Evidence of this type is of greater significance for revealing of Greek idea about Asia and the "Barbarians", than for a historical reconstruction of the events.

There is still much to be explained about the transition of a Phrygian real historical figure into the Greek myth and legend. It seems that the literary image of king Midas belongs both to the Balkans and to Asia Minor. He contributed to the Hellenic concept of the unknown world, of the North (and the East), as well as to the Greek (mainly Athenian) idea about the "Barbarians". The story about the "golden touch" and his fabulous wealth could have originated either in Thrace or in Anatolia. The Greek conquering of the Straits produced many gold sacred or magic objects in the mythographic stories about the region. These render the Anatolian provenance of king Midas' gift more probable. At the same time, however, the Phrygian ruler, as seen in the ancient texts, reflects Hellenic knowledge and perception of cultural phenomena in the southwestern Thracian lands. King Midas embodies the similarity in the religious thinking and in the cult practices between ancient Thrace and Phrygia that have been recognized by the Greeks. His figure might be instructive for the interactions among the non-Greek communities in the Balkans and in Asia Minor and the Hellenic world as well.

Résumés

- Entre figure historique et légende se construit l'image du roi Midas. Elle renvoie à l'idée que les Grecs se font des Barbares et des territoires barbares en Thrace et Anatolie en particulier. Cette étude prend en compte les dimensions symboliques, géographiques, religieuses et anthropologiques du processus de constitution de ce personnage symbolique.

- Between historical figure and legend, King Midas' image stands as an embodiment of the Greeks' ideas of the Barbarian, particularly of the Barbarian from Thracia and Asia minor. This study takes into account all the complex geographical, religious and anthropological aspects of the progressive construction of this symbolic figure.

66. Hdt. 1, 15.