

- MAVROEIDIS M. L. 1995. Ancient Greek Musical Instruments. – **Ethnography of European Traditional cultures. Their Role and Perspectives in a Multicultural world**. Ed. by Dr. E. Karpodini-Dimitriadi. Institute of Cultural Studies of Europe and the Mediterranean. Athens, 146–157.
- MEULI K. 1935. Scythica. – **Hermes**, LXX, 121–176.
- MUSI C. C. 2001. Uralic traditions and myths in relation to ancient Greek and Roman beliefs. – **Congressus Nonus Internationalis Fenno-Ugristarum 7.- 13. 8. 2000 Tartu. Pars VII**. Tartu, 11–21.
- NIEMI J. 1998. **The Nenets Songs**. University of Tampere, Department of Folk Tradition. Finland.
- NIEMI J. 2001. A Musical Analysis of Selkup Shamanic Songs. – **Shaman**, Vol. 9, No 2. Budapest, 153–167.
- PENTIKAINEN J. 1987. The Shamanic Drum as Cognitive Map. – **Mythology and Cosmic Order**. Ed. by R. Gothoni and J. Pentikainen, Helsinki, 17–36.
- PENTIKAINEN J. 1998. The shamans and shamanism. – **Shamans**. Tampere Museums, 29–50.
- RAHKONEN C. J. 1989. **The Kantele Traditions of Finland**. Folklore Institute, Indiana University. Bloomington Indiana.
- ROHDE E. 1950. **Psyche: The Cult of Immortality among the Greeks**. London.
- ROUGET G. 1985. **Music and Trance**. The University of Chicago Press.
- TALVE IL. 1997¹. **Finnish Folk Culture. Studia Fennica. Ethnologia 4**. Ed. by T. Korhonen, Finnish Literature Society. Helsinki.

ACADEMIA LITTERARUM BULGARICA
INSTITUTUM STUDIORUM THRACICORUM

IN HONOREM ANNORUM LXX ALEXANDRI FOL

THRACIA XV
Serdicac. MMIII

KING MIDAS AND THE GORDION KNOT

Maya Vassileva

My first attempts at working with the Greek written evidence about non-literate societies were skillfully guided by Prof. Alexander Fol. He had a great share in my choosing the Anatolian set of problems: first the Cimmerians and then ancient Phrygia and the Thracian-Phrygian ethnic and cultural parallels. That is why it is a great honour and pleasure for me to offer him this modest work on the occasion of his 70th anniversary.

The ancient literary tradition about King Midas and the Phrygians provided one more proverbial expression to the modern world, besides the “golden touch” and Midas’ ass’ ears. That’s the story of Alexander III the Great who cut the Gordion knot with his sword, thus setting an example for solving of an impossible task/labour.

The story is related by the historians of Alexander III and thus is a part of the scholarly discussion about their sources. The recent text-critical studies are somewhat controversial about the reliability and the tradition of the texts about Alexander’s march to the East. The value of the royal *Ephemeridae* has seriously been challenged (N.G.L. Hammond is among the very few scholars who still defend their authenticity). Arian is still the most highly valued historian of the Macedonian ruler, and the *vulgata* authors receive more attention.¹

The story about the Gordion knot has been extensively discussed.² The account is preserved in Justin’s epitome of Pompeius Trogus’ work, by Curtius, Arrian and Plutarch.³ The discussion on the dates of the texts will probably continue.⁴ The comments why the story was not given by Ptolemy cannot lead to positive solutions.⁵ There are authors who believe that in a certain form the account was present in Ptolemy’s work.⁶ There is no need for this omission of Alexander’s general to be

¹ Carlsen 1993: 41–42; Montgomery 1993: 95.

² Among the more recent studies cf. Монцева 1982; Röller 1984.

³ Just. 11. 7. 3–16; Curt. 3. 1. 11–18; Arr. *Anab.* 2. 3. 1–8; Plut. *Alex.* 18.

⁴ As well as that on the date of Curtius himself, cf. Carlsen 1993: 41–42.

⁵ Tarn 1979²: 263.

⁶ Bosworth 1980: 185, 187; Baynham 2001: 90.

used as an argument in the evaluation of the story: the nature of the story itself is quite instructive.

Arrian's account is the most detailed one. After arriving at Gordion in the winter of 333 BC, Alexander felt a strong desire to go to the acropolis where the palace of Gordios and his son, Midas, stood, in order to see Gordios' wagon and the knot by which the yoke was tied.⁷ There was a very popular story about the wagon among the neighbouring population⁸: Gordios was a poor Phrygian who had two pairs of oxen, he was ploughing with the one, while the other was harnessed to his wagon. One day, as he was ploughing, an eagle perched upon the yoke and stayed there until the time came for unyoking the oxen. Anxious about this omen, Gordios went to consult the Telmessian soothsayers, as they were famous for their skills. There he met a young girl who advised him to make a sacrifice to Zeus Basileus. The Telmessian girl went back with him to direct him how to perform the sacrifice. Then Gordios married her and they had a son, Midas.

When Midas was already a young man, handsome and valiant, a civil unrest occurred among the Phrygians. The oracular prophesy was that a king would come in a wagon and would put an end to the unrest. Just at that time, Midas with his mother and father happened to appear before the assembly. Thus Midas became king and ended the civil war. He mounted his father's wagon on the acropolis and dedicated it to Zeus Basileus as a thank-offering to the god for sending the eagle. There was yet another story about this wagon: whoever untied the knot by which the yoke was fastened to the wagon would gain the rule of Asia.⁹ The fastening was of cornel-bark and the ends of the thongs were not visible. Alexander wondered how to unfasten the yoke and finally cut it into two with his sword. Thus, he assumed he had fulfilled the prophesy: thunder and lightning filled the sky during the night; on the next day Alexander offered sacrifice to the gods who had helped him deal with the knot.¹⁰ Arrian quotes Aristobulus, according to whom Alexander just took out the pin of the yoke-pole and then he was able to see the ends of the cord and he easily unfastened them.¹¹

According to Justin/Trogus, Alexander "was seized by an urge to take this city [Gordium], not so much for its spoils as because he had heard that the yoke of Gordios was lodged there in the temple of Jupiter, and that ancient oracles had foretold dominion over all of Asia for any man who succeeded in untying its knot."¹² The story about the dedication of the wagon in the temple is a little different than the one by Arrian.

⁷ Arr. *Anab.* 2. 3. 1.

⁸ Arr. *Anab.* 2. 3. 2–4.

⁹ Arr. *Anab.* 2. 3. 4–6.

¹⁰ Arr. *Anab.* 2. 3. 7–8.

¹¹ FGrHist 139 F 7a.

¹² Just. 11. 7. 3–4, transl. by J.C. Yardley and R. Develin 1994: 99.

While Gordios was ploughing, birds of all kinds began to flutter around him. He went to consult the soothsayers in a neighbouring city, where at the city gates he met a young beautiful woman. She foretold him that he was destined to hold royal power, and she offered to marry him. After the wedding, a civil war broke out and the oracle advised the Phrygians to accept as their king the first person they found coming in a wagon to the temple of Jupiter. Gordios was the first person they saw and they hailed him as king. Gordios lodged his wagon in the temple of Jupiter, dedicating it to the majesty of kings.¹³ "He was succeeded by his son Midas, who, after receiving religious initiation from Orpheus, filled Phrygia with religious cults."¹⁴ Alexander took the city, entered the temple, and as he could not see the ends of the thongs, slashed through them with his sword, thus undoing the knots.¹⁵

Curtius and Plutarch do not give a detailed account of the dedication of Gordios' wagon.¹⁶ Both authors named Gordion as the house, the capital city, of the famous Midas. Curtius says that Alexander saw in the temple of Jupiter the wagon in which it was known that Gordios, the father of Midas, rode.¹⁷ The yoke was tightly tied with a series of knots the ends of which were not visible. Both authors state that, according to the local people, whoever loosened the fastening would rule over Asia (οικουμένην in Plutarch¹⁸). Plutarch also quotes Aristobulus' version about Alexander taking out the yoke-pole (έστρον).¹⁹

The motives of Alexander III to go from Lycia and Pisidia north to Gordion remain unclear, despite Arrian's text about joining there the soldiers who had returned from Macedonia and Parmenio's troops.²⁰ His strategic goals of strengthening the northern road to the Hellespont²¹ do not seem very convincing. Justin's/Trogus' explanation that it was just the legendary wagon that had attracted the Macedonian king to the Phrygian capital city strengthens even more the doubts about the authenticity of the whole episode (possibly a secondary rationalizing, because of the fame of the story²²).

Most scholars accept that Cleitarchus was the major source for Justin/Trogus and Curtius on the Gordion knot story.²³ Although Justin's/Trogus' and Arrian's

¹³ Just. 11. 7. 5–13.

¹⁴ Just. 11. 7. 14, transl. by J.C. Yardley and R. Develin 1994: 100.

¹⁵ Just. 11. 7. 15–16.

¹⁶ Curt. 3.1.11–18; Plut. *Alex.* 18.

¹⁷ Curt. 3. 1. 14.

¹⁸ Plut. *Alex.* 18, 1–2.

¹⁹ Plut. *Alex.* 18, 2 = FGrH 139 7b.

²⁰ Commentary in Roller 1984: 258.

²¹ Atkinson 1980: 85.

²² Roller 1984: 258.

²³ FGrHist 2 D: 511; Hammond 1983: 128; Hammond 1993: 217; Atkinson 1980: 90 opposes the view that Cleitarchus was the basic source for the non-Aristobulean tradition.

versions are very close, they probably followed different sources.²⁴ According to Schachermeyr, Cleitarchus picked up the story from Callisthenes.²⁵ Callisthenes was famous for his affinity to curiosities. One of his preserved fragments relates a different story about Midas' "golden touch."²⁶ There the Phrygian king dedicated an altar to Zeus and then touched it to turn it into gold.

All variants unanimously mentioned Midas: either his palace/capital city was at Gordion, or he was Gordios' son. As Midas was considered to be the son of Gordias as early as Herodotus²⁷, some scholars assume that Alexander's actions at the Phrygian capital were influenced by the literary tradition about Midas in Macedonia and about the Brygian migration to Asia Minor.²⁸ Others insist that the sources do not demonstrate any Macedonian origin of the legend.²⁹ However, King Midas was used for ideological purposes by the Macedonian kings and was included in the versions about the emergence of the Macedonian dynasty. The legendary narratives were being elaborated in the 4th century B.C. as well.³⁰ Thus, it was not difficult for Alexander's historians to make the connection, although this is not evident in the preserved texts. This connection was made by a later author, Marsyas of Philippi³¹, who states that the dedicated wagon was the same one which Midas had driven on his way from Europe to Phrygia. Fredricksmeier's view that it was Alexander himself who related the already known tradition about Midas in Macedonia with the Gordion oracle, and that the Gordion knot episode started the tradition on the wagon driven by Midas from Europe to Asia³², is attractive, but can hardly be proven. According to Marsyas, the yoke was fastened with a vine-shoot, which is an eloquent reference to the Dionysiac cult and religion, well attested for the Macedonian royal court. Here, the images on the coins of the Deronians should also be reminded: a man ploughing with a pair of oxen and an eagle over the yoke.³³ The scene has long been interpreted as a royal investiture.³⁴

²⁴ Atkinson 1980: 90.

²⁵ Schachermeyr 1949: 161; similarly Pearson 1960: 38, n. 80 and Frei 1972: 123.

²⁶ FGrHist 124 F 56 = Plut. *Mor.* 5.

²⁷ Hdt. 8. 138.

²⁸ Mederer 1936: 12–13; Fredricksmeier 1961: 161–165; Frei 1972: 114–115, n. 22.

²⁹ Bosworth 1980: 185; Atkinson 1980: 87; Frei also points out the lack of a Macedonian connection in the sources on Alexander.

³⁰ Vassileva (forthcoming).

³¹ FGrHist 135/136 F4 = Schol. *Eur. Hipp.* 670. The connection could have been made by the tradition which Marsyas followed, although most scholars believe that he himself made this contamination: cf. Bosworth 1980: 185.

³² Fredricksmeier 1961: *passim*.

³³ Юркова 1992: 211–213, No. 7–12.

³⁴ Маразов 1978: 9–16; Маразов 1993: 111–114.

Rejecting the Macedonian association, modern scholarship accepts that the Gordion knot story reflects genuine local Phrygian traditions and *realia*.³⁵ Indeed, most ancient authors (Arrian, Curtius and Plutarch) say that Alexander heard the legend about the dedicated wagon and the oracle about the loosening of the knot from the local inhabitants. However, the Phrygian finds proper so far cannot support such a view. Chariots/wagons are almost completely missing in the Phrygian visual vocabulary or finds. The iron bit and the ivory appliques for horse-trappings discovered in Megaron 4 do not testify to a chariot.³⁶ The two horse skeletons excavated in Tum KY at Gordion³⁷ are most probably riding horses and do not imply the use of a chariot. The only example (incomplete) is the miniature quadriga found in a child's (princes'?) burial in TumP at the Phrygian capital.³⁸ The latter can possibly be interpreted in the context of an initiation and therefore as a royal sign as well. The wagon/chariot was a sign of power and a status symbol in many cultures, so it was not obligatory for the Phrygians to have adopted this royal regalia from the Hittites, as Moisseva and Marazov think.³⁹

It has already been noted in the literature that, if the Gordias wagon story preserved a true Phrygian core, it should be in the sphere of cult and religion.⁴⁰ Many researchers consider Justin's/Trogus' account to be closer to Phrygian cult practices.⁴¹ At the end of his text, Justin says that "Midas, who, after receiving religious initiation from Orpheus, filled Phrygia with religious cults, and this, throughout his life, protected him more effectively than an armed guard could."⁴² The wedding of Gordias and the Telmessian maiden has long been considered as a sacred marriage of the king to the Mother Goddess (Cybele).⁴³ The story might as well be the literary expression of a folklore variant of a Phrygian ritual situation. That episode can be regarded in view of the Greek literary tradition, supported by the Phrygian epigraphy as well, according to which King Midas was the son and the chief priest of Cybele.⁴⁴ The association of the wagon with Cybele's chariot⁴⁵ could hardly be defended in a Phrygian context:

³⁵ Gutschmid 1892: 459; Frei 1972: 122–123; Bosworth 1980: 185, joined by the scholars who accept the connection with the variants about Midas in Macedonia: Моисеева 1982; Roller 1984: 256, 259, 268–270.

³⁶ Young 1962: 166, figs. 24, 25.

³⁷ Kohler 1995: 74.

³⁸ Young 1981: 21–26, TumP 40, figs. 13–15, pl. 13, as well as the reference there to pole caps from Tum E and F, considered to have belonged to a wagon; yet unpublished.

³⁹ Моисеева 1982: 127; Маразов 1993: 113.

⁴⁰ Roller 1984: 268.

⁴¹ Körte 1904: 13; Frei 1972: 122; Roller 1984: 262, 269.

⁴² Just. 11. 7. 14.

⁴³ Von Gutschmid 1892: 461.

⁴⁴ Plut. *Caes.* 9.3; Hygin. *Fab.* 274; Hesych. s.v. Μίδα θεός; Diod. 3. 59. 8; Arnob. *Adv. nat.* 2. 73; 5. 7; Моисеева 1982: 125–126; Roller 1984: 266–269; Vassileva 2001: 52–54.

⁴⁵ Roller 1984: 266.

the chariot is found only in Cybele's Greek iconography, not in the Phrygian representations of the goddess. However attractive the suggestion is to consider the eagle/the birds on Gordias' yoke in connection with the bird of prey, which was one of the attributes of the Phrygian Mother-Goddess,⁴⁶ they most probably belonged to the Hellenic literary and visual image of Zeus.

The appearance of Midas with his mother and father in the wagon in front of the assembly could possibly find a literary match in the episode of Peisistratos' return to Athens, in a chariot with a young woman dressed as the goddess Athena.⁴⁷ The other parallel, though rendered more like a caricature, could be the drunk Odrysian king Kotys I waiting in his room for Athena.⁴⁸

There are two cities bearing the name of Telmessos: one in Caria, on the Halicarnassian Peninsula, and the other one – in Lycia; both of them were famous for their soothsayers. The Lycian city seems to be preferred by modern scholarship.⁴⁹ Some believe that the city itself was mentioned in the Gordion episode just because a Telmessian soothsayer, Aristander, was accompanying Alexander the Great.⁵⁰ It was Aristander who interpreted the unusual sweating of the statue of Orpheus in Libetra.⁵¹ Greenwalt's view about "affinities for some kind of "Orphic" doctrine" shared by both Phrygia and Lycia, as well as his noting a common "religious background" for Macedonia, Phrygia and Lycia, is worth taking into consideration.⁵²

Could the association with the Lycian city have reflected a route of ethnic and cultural interactions between Phrygia and Lycia? In the 1980s several tumuli with wooden tombs were discovered in Lycia, at the present-day Baidir (Elmali, not far from Antalya), undoubtedly revealing Phrygian burial customs.⁵³ They have not yet been published, so their occurrence in Lycia has not been interpreted satisfactorily. It is worth reminding here that Lycia and Caria have probably as numerous rock-cut monuments as Phrygia.⁵⁴ It is possible that the Telmessian wife of Gordias was a literary way of marking the typological or ethnic and cultural similarities between the two areas that were noticed by the ancient authors.

The versions about the Gordion knot are among the major argument of scholars to reconstruct a Phrygian dynastic line in which Gordias was the first king. The legendary nature of the narratives, as well as the fact that Midas is present in all of the versions and the capital/the palace were associated with the latter, suggest an artificial

⁴⁶ Roller 1984: 267.

⁴⁷ Hdt. 1. 60.

⁴⁸ Athen. 531e-532a.

⁴⁹ Bosworth 1980: 186; Atkinson 1980: 87.

⁵⁰ Von Gutschmid 1892: 459; Roller 1984: 262 with the cited bibliography.

⁵¹ Arr. *Anab.* 1. 11. 2; Plut. *Alex.* 14. 8-9.

⁵² Greenwalt 1982: 17, n.17.

⁵³ Özgen, Özgen 1988: 32-49; Mellink 1990: 140; Pehlivaner 1996: 34-35.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Roos 1985.

construct for Gordias.⁵⁵ Modern commentators justly supposed that most probably it was Midas who was accepted as the first king.⁵⁶ Gordias was more a part of the Greek literary tradition featured after the Greek eponymous heroes.⁵⁷

Some scholars assume the existence of several rulers bearing the names of Gordias and Midas, because of Herodotus' evidence on Adrastos, son of Gordias, son of Midas.⁵⁸ Others consider Gordias as a mythological forefather of the dynasty, while Midas – as the first king.⁵⁹ However, we have no reliable historical evidence about another Midas, besides the famous king of the Mushkians in the time of Sargon II and Midas from the Old Phrygian inscriptions.⁶⁰ A later Midas was suggested because of the mentioning of Mita, city lord, in a query of Esarhaddon to the god Shamash.⁶¹ This gave grounds for the restoring of the missing name of a king of the Mushki in another of Esarhaddon's queries as Mita (Midas). The evidence is small and relies on the restoration of a *lacuna*, so it could hardly be considered as secure data about a later Phrygian ruler under the same name. Thus, L. Roller is right affirming that Adrastos in Herodotus' story most probably represented himself as a Phrygian aristocrat by a standard formula, stating that he was the son of Gordias, son of Midas.⁶²

The possibility that Gordias was an artificial name created from the city name has already been suggested.⁶³ This seems very plausible, although the toponym Gordion appeared very late in Greek literature.⁶⁴ There is no firm evidence for insisting on the existence of a Phrygian ruler under the name of Gordias.

In the context of the comparative mythology, the scene of the ploughing Gordias can be interpreted as a sacred plough and thus as an investiture.⁶⁵ The universal

⁵⁵ Midas is the one who became king in Arrian's version; Aelian's story has the eagle foretelling kingship for Gordias' son, Midas, while Polyaeus says that Midas was elected tyrant: Ael. *NA* 13. 1; Polyaeus 7. 5.

⁵⁶ Atkinson 1980: 85-86.

⁵⁷ Roller 1984: 261.

⁵⁸ Hdt. 1. 35, as well as Midas, son of Gordias in Hdt. 1. 14; 8. 138; von Gutschmid 1892: 457-465; Eitrem 1931: 1536-1539.

⁵⁹ von Gutschmid 1892: 464.

⁶⁰ A rock-cut inscription at "Midas City" and on a stone slab from Tyana: Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: M-01a; T-02b, despite the controversy on the dating of the inscriptions.

⁶¹ Starr 1990: No. 13, 15; Ivantchik 1993: 68-74; Дьяконов 1981: 51, note 82, 57 suggested the same on the grounds of Forrer's restoration in a text from the time of Sennacherib, as well as on his reading of 'Gordios' and 'Ascania' in a Luwian inscription, a reading that is far from general acceptance: Merrigi 1967: 106, No. 27.

⁶² Roller 1984: 264.

⁶³ Atkinson 1980: 85 with the cited bibliography; Roller 1984: 261.

⁶⁴ Xen. *Hell.* 1. 4. 1; for the etymology of the city name cf. Pokorny 1959: 444; Brixhe, Lejeune 1984: 80.

⁶⁵ Also compared with the Scythian dynastic legend: Schmidt 1959-1960: 309-310; Маразов 1978: 9-16; Маразов 1993: 111-114.

elements in the folklore narrative suggested the parallels with the Irish saga,⁶⁶ or the comparison of the Phrygian ruler, respectively Alexander, with the sky king.⁶⁷ The wagon is interpreted as that of Zeus or of Ahura Mazda.⁶⁸

Zeus Basileus seems to be a Hellenic abstraction; the name and the epithet were widely used for numerous non-Greek supreme deities who were identified with Zeus.⁶⁹ This would match quite well the Phrygian cult practice as well, without the theonym having necessarily been its reflection. The Phrygian male deity, who was barely evidenced in Phrygia in the pre-Hellenistic Age, was later worshipped under the name and the iconography of the Greek Zeus. Numerous dedications to Zeus Bronton, Zeus Bennios and Zeus Sabazios are known from Hellenistic and Roman times.⁷⁰

The story of Gordias and Midas up to the moment of the dedication of the wagon is separated from the account about the prophesy on the untied knot. None of the versions mentions its tying by the Phrygian ruler or its purpose. The foretold rule over Asia seems to match too well Alexander the Great's own ambitions. Thus, the prophesy and the impossible task, should be considered in the context of Greek mythological (i.e. literary) structures where the untying, the loosening, i.e. solving (for example guessing the riddle of the Sphinx) was a royal test. It was acquiring a new knowledge. Not surprisingly, the words *σκολιός* and *έλιγγμός*, used by Plutarch to describe the yoke fastening, were also used in reference to the Cretan Labyrinth.⁷¹ The ends of the cornel bark yoke fastening were hidden, not visible, while the knot had no beginning or end, according to Arrian's variant.⁷² The captured, bound Silenos, was brought up before Midas, then set free in order to share his wisdom with the Phrygian ruler.⁷³ Could the mythographic narratives about the bound and unloosened Silenos have possibly influenced the Gordion knot legend?

Tying and untying can, of course, be considered in the context of ancient fertility magic rites as well.⁷⁴ Such an activity was among the royal obligations. However, we do not know to what extent the Hittite examples were relevant to Phrygia, as Moisseeva claims. Thus, in view with the Greek mythographic tradition about king Midas, the previously suggested interpretation of loosening and untying – as a royal test in acquiring new knowledge – seems more plausible. It would possibly be closer to the status of the Phrygian ruler, as far as we know it.

⁶⁶ Von Gutschmid 1892: 460; Frei 1972: 115–121.

⁶⁷ Deonna 1918: 39–82; Schmidt 1959–1960: 311–312.

⁶⁸ Von Gutschmid 1892: 463.

⁶⁹ Cf. the analysis in: Bosworth 1977.

⁷⁰ Cf. Drew-Bear, Naour, 1990.

⁷¹ Liddle, Scott 1996: 533, 1613.

⁷² Arr. 2. 2. 7.

⁷³ Theopompos: FGrHist 115 F75c; Arist. Fr. 44 Rose.

⁷⁴ As Моисеева 1982: 128, бел. 82, 83, emphasizing the Hittite practice.

Modern scholarship has long noticed the parallel between the Gordion knot and the complexly tied yoke of Priam's mule-cart, which carried the gifts for Achilles as a ransom for Hector's body.⁷⁵ However, the latter's omphalos should not be assumed automatically for Gordias' wagon as well, thus leading to the hypothetical reconstructions of notions setting Gordion at the centre of the world.⁷⁶

Homer really gives a very practical and technically detailed scene of harnessing Priam's mule-cart. Priam's sons brought a nine-cubit-long (about 4 metres) yoke-binding. "And the yoke they fitted properly on to the well-polished pole, at its front end, and put the ring over the peg, and tied it (the binding) three times on each side of the knob, and then bound it fast in a succession of turns and tucked it in under the hook."⁷⁷ Thus, the ends of the binding were not seen, as was the case with Gordias' wagon yoke. Modern commentators have noticed Homer's individual language in this scene: a great number of the words are Homeric hapaxes or rare words.⁷⁸ The best example is probably the word *έσταυρ*, the wooden peg of the yoke pole: besides here, it was used only by Arrian and Plutarch, both quoting Aristobulos' variant of the story about the unloosening of the Gordion knot.⁷⁹ Aristobulos is reported to have said that Alexander did not cut the knot, but just took out this wooden peg, revealing the ends of the thongs and thus easily unfastening the yoke. One of the forms of the word for the yoke binding, *ζυγόδεσμον*, is also used in the description of Priam's cart and by Plutarch in his account of the Gordion episode.

While preparations were being made, Priam made a libation and asked a good omen from Zeus. Zeus sent a great eagle in response.⁸⁰ *The Iliad* scene and its lexical parallels with Aristobulos' suggest that the historians of Alexander copied an epic model. The hypothesis seems likely in view of the close relations between the Trojans and the Phrygians as allies (and possibly kinsmen as well) in *The Iliad*, as well as in the context of the later synonymous use of both ethnonyms in Greek tragedy. Probably Alexander's desire to perform as the second Achilles also influenced his historians' choice.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Hom. *Il.* 24. 265–274; Atkinson 1980: 85; Bosworth 1980: 187.

⁷⁶ Radet 1917: 98–100; Deonna 1918: 39–82. Curtius' brief geographical description at the beginning of his account on Gordion, where he claims that the Phrygian capital city was equidistant from the Euxine and Cilician Seas, is a literary cliché, geographically incorrect: cf. similar statements about the narrowest part of Asia Minor, where usually Sinope and Herakleia Pontica are mentioned: Hdt. 2. 34; Liv. 38. 18. 12; Plin. *NH* 6. 2. 7; Strabo 12. 1. 3. commentary in: Atkinson 1980: 85–86.

⁷⁷ Translation by Richardson 1993: 301.

⁷⁸ Richardson 1993: 301–302.

⁷⁹ Richardson 1993: 302.

⁸⁰ Hom. *Il.* 24. 281–321.

⁸¹ Cf. the commentaries on *πόθος*, *cupido* as Alexander's motivation: Atkinson 1980: 87–88; Baynham 2001: 90–91.

Pearson is right that we shall never know what happened at Gordion (if anything at all!).⁸² The discussion which variant is more authentic: the more dramatic story with the cutting of the knot, or the one with the taking out of the peg, cannot produce successful results. At least not from the view point of the Phrygian cult and religious practice. However, according to Hellenic myth-making, the unloosing/liberating had the meaning of a value trial and of acquiring new knowledge, while the scene of Alexander waving his sword seems to belong rather to the rhetorical approaches of his historians.

The legend variants about the Gordion knot were literary works featured after the Homeric model and did not much echo Phrygian legends or rituals, despite the insistence of the ancient writers that these were told by the local people. The narratives display some universal folklore elements that can be found in many cultural traditions. At present, it is still difficult to estimate the Hittite heritage of the Phrygian culture, so the parallels with the chariot brought to the Hittite king as royal *insignia*, as well as with the role of the Hittite queen in the royal ritual,⁸³ cannot be very compelling. The marriage to a Telmessian woman, a soothsayer, could possibly reflect the sacred marriage of the Phrygian ruler with the Mother-Goddess in the ritual. The mentioning of Telmessos herself could probably be a literary featured notice about the observed ethnic and cultural similarities between Phrygia and Lycia.

The known literary tradition on the Phrygian migration from Macedonia, on the Gardens of Midas at the Bermion mountain and the captured Silenos, could hardly be Alexander the Great's inspiration for his actions at Gordion. A Macedonian association can rather be looked for in the images on the Deronian coins, which could reveal a local royal/aristocratic mythography or folklore, than in the urge to follow the Phrygian migration. The Phrygian-Trojan connection in the epic poems and the desire of the Macedonian kings to copy epic models seem a more plausible basis for the Gordion knot story.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Дьяконов, И. М. 1981:** Малая Азия и Армения около 600 г. до н.э. и северные походы вавилонских царей. – *Вестник древней истории*, No. 2, 34–64.
- Маразов, И. 1978.** Царско знамение върху монети на дероните. – *Проблеми на изкуството*, No. 2, 9–16.
- Маразов, И. 1993.** *Мит, ритуал, изкуство*. София.
- Моисеева, Т. А. 1982:** Царская власть у фригийцев (К интерпретации легенды о Гордиевом узле). – *Вестник древней истории*, No. 1, 119–129.

⁸² Pearson 1960: 157.

⁸³ Моисеева 1982; Маразов 1993: 113.

- Atkinson, J. E. 1980.** *A commentary on Q. Curtius Rufus' Historiae Alexandri Magni. Book 3 and 4.* Amsterdam/Uithoorn.
- Baynham, E. 2001.** *Alexander the Great. The Unique History of Quintus Curtius.* Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press.
- Bosworth, A. B. 1977.** Alexander and Ammon. – In: Kinzl, K.H. (ed.) *Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory. Studies Presented to Fritz Schachermeyr on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday.* Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 51–75.
- Bosworth, A. B. 1980.** *A historical commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander.* Oxford.
- Brixhe, C., M. Lejeune: 1984.** *Corpus des inscriptions paléo-phrygiennes.* T. I–II. Paris.
- Carlsen, J. 1993.** Alexander the Great (1970–1990). – In: J. Carlsen, B. Due, O. S. Due, B. Poulsen (eds.) *Alexander the Great: Reality and Myth.* Rome, 41–52.
- Deonna, W. 1918:** Le noeud Gordien. – *Revue des études grecques*, 31, 39–82.
- Drew-Bear, Th., C. Naour. 1990:** Divinités de Phrygie. – *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II 18.3, 1907–2044.
- Eitrem, S. 1931.** Midas. – In: Pauly und Wissowa (eds.) *Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft.* II 15, 1526–1540.
- Fredricksmeyer, E. A. 1961.** Alexander, Midas, and the Oracle at Gordium. – *Classical Philology* 56, 1961, No. 3, 160–168.
- Fredricksmeyer, E. 2000.** Alexander the Great and the Kingship of Asia. – In: A. B. Bosworth, E. J. Baynham (eds.) *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction.* Oxford, 136–166.
- Frei, P. 1972.** Der Wagen von Gordion. – *Museum Helveticum* 29, 110–123.
- Greenwalt, W. S. 1982.** A Macedonian mantis. – *The Ancient World* 5, Nos. 1–2, 17–25.
- Hammond, N. G. L. 1983.** *Three Historians of Alexander the Great. The So-called Vulgate Authors, Diodorus, Justin and Curtius.* Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne.
- Hammond, N. G. L. 1993.** *Sources for Alexander the Great. An analysis of Plutarch's Life and Arrian's Anabasis Alexandrou.* Cambridge University Press.
- Ivantchik, A. I. 1993.** *Les Cimmeriens au Proch-Orient.* Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Gottingen. (Orbis Biblicus Orientalis 127).
- Kohler, E. 1995:** *The Lesser Phrygian Tumuli. Part 1. The Inhumations. The Gordion Excavations, 1950–1973 Final Reports. Vol. 2.* University of Pennsylvania.
- Körte, G. und A. 1904:** *Gordion. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabung im Jahre 1900.* Berlin.
- Liddle, H.G., Scott, R. 1996:** *A Greek-English Lexicon.* Oxford.
- Mederer, E. 1936.** *Die Alexanderlegenden bei den ältesten Alexanderhistorikern.* Stuttgart.
- Mellink, M. J. 1990:** Archaeology in Anatolia. – *American Journal of Archaeology* 94, 125–151.
- Merrigi, P. 1967:** *Manuale di eteo geroglifico.* Parte II: Testi – 1a serie. Roma.
- Montgomery, H. 1993.** The Greek Historians of Alexander as Literature. – In: J. Carlsen, B. Due, O. S. Due, B. Poulsen (eds.) *Alexander the Great: Reality and Myth.* Rome, 93–99.
- Özgen, E., I. Özgen (eds.) 1988:** *Antalya Museum Catalogue.* Ankara.

- Pearson, L. 1960. *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great*. (= *Philological Monographs*, American Philological Association 20), New York.
- Pehlivaner, M. 1996: *Antalya Museum Guide*. Ankara.
- Pokorny, J. 1959. *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* I. Bern.
- Radet, G. 1917. L'omphalos Gordien. – *Revue des études anciennes* 19, No.1, 98–100.
- Richardson, N. 1993. *A Commentary on the Iliad. VI: Books 21–24*. Cambridge.
- Roller, L. E. 1984: Midas and the Gordian Knot. – *Classical Antiquity* 3, 256–271.
- Roos, P. 1985: Survey of Rock-Cut Chamber-Tombs in Caria. Part I. South-Eastern Caria and the Lyco-Carian Borderland. (= *Studies in Mediterranean Archeology*. Vol. LXXII). Goterbock.
- Schachermeyer, F. 1949. *Alexander der Grosse, Ingenium und Macht*. Graz.
- Schmidt, L. 1959–1960: Der Gordische Knoten und seine Lösung. – *Antaios* 1, 305–318.
- Starr, I. 1990. *Querries to the Sungod. State Archives of Assyria IV*. Helsinki.
- Tarn, W. W. 1979². *Alexander the Great. II. Sources and Studies*. London, New York, Melbourne.
- Vassileva, M. 2001. Further considerations on the cult of Kybele. – *Anatolian Studies* 51, 51–63.
- Vassileva, M. (forthcoming). King Midas and the Early History of Macedonia. – In: *Ancient Macedonia VII*. Thessaloniki.
- Von Gutschmid, A. 1892. *Kleine Schriften*. Leipzig.
- Yardley, J. C., R. Develin. 1994: *Justin Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*. Atlanta, GA.
- Young, R.S. 1962: The 1961 Campaign at Gordion. – *American Journal of Archaeology* 66, No. 2, 153–168.
- Young, R. S. 1981: *Three Great Early Tumuli. The Gordion Excavations Final Reports. Vol. I*. University of Pennsylvania.

ACADEMIA LITTERARUM BULGARICA
INSTITUTUM STUDIORUM THRACICORUM

IN HONOREM ANNORUM LXX ALEXANDRI FOL

THRACIA XV
Serdicæ, MMIII

DARSTELLUNG EINER THRAKISCHEN KATABASIS-SAGE?

Dilyana Boteva

Mit seinen Arbeiten hat Professor Alexander Fol das Bedürfnis nach einer „*Interpretatio Thracica*“ bei der relevanten textkritischen und gegenstandsbezogenen Analyse begründet¹. Seine theoretischen Reflexionen über die mündliche thrakische Kultur und den sog. thrakischen Orphismus beeinflussen schon seit vielen Jahren die Entwicklung der Thrakologie.

Alle griechischen Autoren sind darin einig, Thrakien als die Heimat des Orpheus und ihn selbst in den verschiedensten Formen als einen Thraker zu bezeichnen (Graf 1987: 86; Ziegler 1939: col. 1228)². Bis jetzt ist er aber weder archäologisch noch epigraphisch in Thrakien belegt. Auch Herodot, der kurz nach der Mitte des 5. Jhs. v. Chr. schrieb, sagt kein Wort über Orpheus, obwohl er sonst vieles über Thrakien und die Thraker berichtet³. Das verwundert, gerade weil zu seiner Zeit Orpheus in Athen schon als Thraker definiert war (Ziegler 1939: col. 1215).

Bei einer solchen Quellenlage ist es nicht verwunderlich, wenn Fachleute Orpheus als eine griechische Erfindung betrachten (siehe z. B. Archibald 1998: 208–209 mit Lit.; Рабаджиев 2000). Gegen diese Meinung sprach sich R. Böhme (1991:

¹Über den Begriff „*Interpretatio Thracica*“ vgl. Фол 1980; Фол 1983.

²Der vorliegende Aufsatz stellt die gekürzte und überarbeitete Fassung einer Vorlesung dar, die ich als Humboldt-Stipendiatin unter der Betreuung von Prof. Roland Posner am 4. Dezember 2002 im Rahmen des Berliner Arbeitskreises für Kultursemiotik an der Technischen Universität Berlin gehalten habe. Ich nehme ihn zum Anlass, Herrn Prof. Posner meinen Dank für seine Unterstützung und großzügige Hilfe bei meiner Arbeit über die Motivplatten des Thrakischen Reiters auszudrücken. Auch dem Kollegen Raiko Krauß bin ich sehr verpflichtet: für seine Hilfsbereitschaft bedanke ich mich herzlich.

³Herodot erwähnt zwar die orphischen Mysterien (II. 81, 2), nicht aber Orpheus selbst (vgl. Powell 1960: 268). Gemäß West (1983: 40) „Herodotus probably has Orpheus and Musaeus in mind when he says he thinks that the poets said to have written about the gods earlier than Hesiod and Homer were really later“. Auf jeden Fall finden wir bei Herodot keine Verbindung Thrakiens mit Orpheus.