

G. Tsetskhladze (Oxford)

Ethnic Names for Slaves?

Г. Р. Цецхладзе (Оксфорд)

Этнические имена рабов?

One of the academic interests of my university teacher, prof. V. I. Kadееv, was the study of slaves and their names in the ancient world. Thus, it is appropriate to express my own opinion on this subject.

Slavery in the Black Sea region has been studied less thoroughly than elsewhere in the ancient world — not for lack of academic interest but for lack of evidence (what exists is sparse and contradictory). This is certainly so for the Archaic period. Here we are dealing mainly with the names of local people in the Black Sea and beyond and the interpretation of the presence of such names in the Greek cities as evidence of slavery. Whenever a slave called by the name of a country (or some derivative) is encountered, we are tempted to identify his/her ethnic origin with that country, citing Strabo (7. 3. 12) to justify the practice: “...for the Attic people were wont either to call their slaves by the same names as those of the nations from which they were brought (as ‘Lydus’ or ‘Syrus’), or addressed them by names that were prevalent in the countries (as ‘Manes’ or else ‘Midas’ for the Phrygian, or ‘Tibius’ for the Paphlagonian)».

But the evidence does not always support this. There was often confusion about where a slave was from. Immediately before the above remark, Strabo (7. 3. 12) himself observes that “...there is also another division of the country which has endured from early times, for some of the people are called Daci, whereas others are called Getae — Getae, those who incline towards the Pontus and the east, and Daci, those who incline in the opposite directions towards Germany and the sources of the Ister. The Daci, I think, were called Dan in early times; whence the slave names ‘Geta’ and ‘Dab̄s’ which prevailed among the Attic people; for this is more probable than that ‘Dab̄s’ is from those Scythians who are called ‘Daae’, for they live far away in the neighbourhood of Hyrcania, and it is not reasonable to suppose that slaves were brought into Attica from there...”.

Or we have the example from Xenophon (*Anabasis* 4. 8. 4–7) of a man who had been a slave at Athens but who did not know his own origin: he recognised the local language when he reached the territory of the Macrones on the southern coast of the Black Sea, and assumed that he must have come from thereabouts.

The athlete Nicostratus can be added to this list — Phrygian by origin but sold on the coast of Cilicia, he could be regarded as Cilician (Pausanias 5. 21. 10).

To rely on personal names to make ethnic or other identification can be (and is) very difficult and often misleading. Names such as “Skythes”, “Kimmeros”, “Kolchos”, etc. and their derivatives are not just those of ‘faceless’ foreigners, especially slaves. Although often ignored, the problem of the ethnic identity of people with such names has already been addressed in the literature (including by Prof. Kadeev himself), where it is demonstrated that the persons with these names might be Greek citizens or freedmen. In volume IV of *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (Oxford, 2005), which covers Macedonia, Thrace and the northern parts of the Black Sea, such names as Kolchos, Skythes, Getas, etc. are considered as Greek, otherwise they would not have been included. We have quite a number of examples of Greeks bearing these names, often those in high positions. Kimmerios, known from an early 5th-century sympotic graffito from Xanthos, cannot be a Cimmerian traveller for one simple reason: in this period there were no Cimmerians. Nor can another Kimmerios, father of a priest on Rhodes (371/70 BC), nor an Ephesian Kimmerios, participant in the battle of Aegospotami in 405 BC (Pausanias 10. 9. 9), nor Kimmerios, archon on Tenos in the 3rd century. The best example of Kolchos comes from a 2nd-century AD inscription from Olbia; it mentions him as the father of Rhaodmeos, an archon of Olbia (*Inscriptiones orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini* 12 132). Another interesting case is Perses, the name of Hesiod’s brother (Hesiod *Erga* 10, 27, 213, 274, etc.).

Even more revealing are the examples of names derived from the ethnic name Scythian: Prof. Kadeev had devoted some time to this. For example, one Skythes was the tyrant of Cos; most probably, he later escaped to Zancle (Herodotus 6. 23–24; 7. 163). Such names used by Greeks are known widely from the 5th century BC among priests, the fathers of archons, etc. in Sparta, Halicarnassus, Thasos, Delos, Chalcedon, Miletos, Ephesos, Samos and elsewhere. They are also known from the Black Sea cities of Gorgippia, Kallatis, Heraklea Pontica and Khersonesos. In the last two, they are found as well on amphora stamps, where they are the personal names of *astynoms*, thus of Greeks.

The presence of Skythes in Khersonesos is of particular interest, since the city enjoyed poor relations with the Scythians. Moreover, the name appeared in Khersonesos before Scythians moved into the region; and it is attested earlier in Khersonesos’s mother city, Heraklea Pontica, than in its colony. Thus, the perfectly logical conclusion that the name came to Khersonesos from its mother city is correct. But in Olbia, which enjoyed a closer, more pacific relationship with the Scythians, no instance of a Scythian-derived name has yet been recorded. Khersonesos was situated in an area populated by local Taurians. One tombstone found in Khersonesos, dating from the 1st century AD, has an inscription written in *koine*: *gune Taurike* (*Inscriptiones orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini* 12 528).

The woman is considered Greek. Furthermore, in the list of the priests of Asclepius from Thyssanous in Rhodes (second half of the 4th century BC), the male personal name Taurikos is mentioned twice; it belonged to Greeks of Rhodian origin, as can be judged by the patronymic in the first case, and by a personal name which is the father's name in the second.

On Athenian painted pottery of the 6th century, we have the names of potters and painters, such as Sikelos, Thrax, Kolchos, Sikanos, Mys, Skythes and Brygos. We could assume that these are names derived from their bearers' ethnic or geographical origin, but we can just as readily regard the names, and those bearing them, as Greeks. There is nothing to confirm this one way or another. Potters and painters could be citizens or non-citizen *metics* or slaves. It is very difficult to generalise; each case requires individual consideration. None of the above-mentioned inscribed pots betrays any artistic indication that its painter came from a foreign country. We have some 125 names of potters and painters on vases. Of these a half at least bear names which are decidedly not appropriate to Athenian families of upper or lower (as far as can be judged) class. Some name another land or race — Lydos, Skythes, Sikanos, Sikelos, Syriskos. Kolchos, Thrax, Kares, Mys: others bear names appropriate elsewhere or derived from foreign names — e.g. Amasis, Brygos, Midas, Phintias, Ismenos, Makron and the Herm — names commonest in East Greece; several seem nicknames or adopted names — Epiktetos (“newly acquired” — a slave name), Pisto Xenos (“trustworthy foreigner” — Syriskos), Euenpotos (“good trader”), Onesimos (“profitable”), Padikos (“boy mad”), Priapos, Smikros (Tiny), Oreibelos (“mountain-goer”). But it is hard to categorise, and these are samples only. Nor is enough yet known about how and when *metics* or slaves might acquire or change their names, except that it was easier for them than for citizens. Look at the list of *kalos* names from the same vases, where you find hardly a single name of this type, to judge the difference in status and origins between the artisans and their *cynosures*. In one case, a late 6th-century Athenian painter (?), Lydos, signed as a slave. In this case we can assume that he was a slave who originated from Lydia, but it is still difficult to be certain. Another painter called Lydos, of the middle of the 6th century, left a signature with a mistake — *ho ludos egrsen* (instead of *egraphsen*). One can speculate that the mistake indicates a certain unfamiliarity with the language, consistent with being a foreigner (from Lydia). But we might also say that Greeks made mistakes, as we all do.

It is reasonable to think that people with these ‘ethnic’ names might just have been migrant potters and painters who called themselves by names linked to their origins. The Amasis Painter is a good illustration. He has a Hellenised Egyptian name, was a potter and painter, and made the earliest known Athenian example copying the Egyptian alabastron shape. But, as has been pointed out, his name does not make him Egyptian: perhaps he was connected with Ionian

Naukratis. Solon, in the early 6th century, encouraged the immigration of non-Athenian craftsmen. To judge from the artistic influences, one of the major areas from which craftsmen came was Ionia, a move possibly encouraged by the pressure on Ionia from the Lydians (around 600 BC) and from the Persians (mid-6th century BC). Indeed, it was an immigrant potter from Ionia who made the Caeretan Hydriae in Etruscan Italy. It is unlikely that painters and potters calling themselves by names such as Thrax, Kolchos, Skythes and Brygos migrated from Black Sea areas in the 6th century BC. There is no evidence of any local tradition of vase painting in Thrace, Colchis or Scythia. On the contrary, it is considered that some potters and painters might have emigrated to Panticapaeum, for instance Xenophantos Athenaios. Kerch-style vases or pelikai were initially produced in Athens for the Black Sea market; later, from the end of the 4th century BC, so-called polychrome pelikai were manufactured locally, probably by immigrant craftsmen. It seems that not only painters and potters migrated to Panticapaeum/the Bosporan kingdom, so too did jewellers and toreutic craftsmen, setting up workshops there. Even if we consider Kolchos, for example, to be a slave, we cannot be certain that he came from Colchis because, according to Herodotus (2. 104–105), Egyptians and Colchians looked alike. Thus, the supposed slave from Colchis might have been Egyptian, and the reverse could apply just as easily.

It is hard to be certain why Greeks were given names with what appears to be an ethnic. We learn from Thucydides (1. 20) and Plutarch (*Cimon* 16) that members of the elite very often gave their offspring names reflecting their own connections with other states. Athenians and other Greeks had business relations with the Greek colonies situated around the Black Sea and thus met local peoples in these cities. From Demosthenes and other sources we know that the Athenians had very close trading links with the Bosporan kingdom (mainly concerned with grain), as had Mytilene (Thucydides 3. 2. 2). Some Bosporan kings, notably Leukon I, were honoured not just by the Athenians but by the Arcadians (*Corpus inscriptionum regni Bosporani* 37). In the 4th century BC, Olbia honoured Athenians for reasons unknown (*Nadpisi Ol'vii* 5). These are just a few of the many examples of the Greek Black Sea cities honouring foreigners. With the name Kolchos, we can suppose that it reflected the relative popularity of the myth of the Argonauts. We should not forget that the Pontic ethnic names encountered are those given by Greeks to the various peoples of the Black Sea, not the names by which those people described themselves. When they allotted these names, the names had some meaning in Greek. As Herodotus (4. 6) observes: “Lipoxais, it is said, was the father of the Scythian clan called Auchatae; Arpoxais, the second brother, of those called Katiari and Trasprians; the youngest, who was king, of those called Paralatae. All these together bear the name of Skoloti, after their king; ‘*Scythians*’ is a name given them by Greeks” [my italics — GT].

Stephanus of Byzantium (*Ethn.*, s. v.) explained the origins of the *Skuthai* as from the verb *skuzesthai* (“to be angry”). According to some modern opinion it can also be connected with such Greek words as *skudmainein* or *skuthros* (“angry”). Thus, at least for the name Skythes, we can say that it is connected with a Greek word, and one should not be surprised that so many Greeks were given it. There is no doubt that there were many angry Greeks, not least in high positions. As to the Scythians, their image can be taken from Strabo’s description (7. 3. 6): “...that they sacrificed strangers, ate their flesh, and used their skulls as drinking-cups”.

Thus, inscriptions with an ethnic on pots can be misleading. The artist executing them may seem to be used to writing in a script from elsewhere. But does this say something about the artist and where he had learned his letters, or might it be deliberate copying of a style from elsewhere on an object bound for that same elsewhere? One of the best examples is a Laconian vase found in Cyrene and inscribed with a name in the local, not the Greek, script. The same can be said about epigraphic evidence mentioning ethnic names. Every such name requires an individual approach and not just simple generalisation.

