

## The relations of the West Pontic cities with the sanctuaries with oracles of Apollo in antique times

Teodor Rokov

По време на целия античен период западнопонтийските градове поддържат контакти със някои от най-известните оракули на Аполон. Тези градове са се обръщали към оракула за съвет поради различни причини: при самото основаване на града (каквото е случаят на Калатис), при въвеждането на нов култ (в Хистрия), при заплаха от епидемия или вражеско нападение (Анхиало, Одесос, Дионисополис, Томи), при криза в управлението (Калатис) или официално присъединяване към култ (Калатис).

Най-ранно свидетелство за такива контакти се явява информацията, дадена от Псевдо-Скимнос, за основаването на Калатис, станало според пророчеството на Аполон Питийски. Бидейки дорийска колония, този град е имал по традиция близки връзки с Делфи. По време на единичествения период, след като император Александър сломява цяла серия от отделни държави, значението на малките светилища, оказали се на тяхна територия, нараства. Такъв е бил случаят с оракулът от Халкедон, към когото Хистрия се обрънала за съвет през II в. пр. Хр. В резултат на силното културно влияние от Изток, малоазийските оракули процъфтяват по време на Римската империя. Оракулът на Аполон от Кларос израства като най-важен и към неговото светилище адресират въпроси през II в. градовете Анхиало, Одесос, Дионисополис и Томи. Не са регистрирани връзки между разглежданите градове и оракула на Аполон в Дидима, който изиграва важна роля при тяхното основаване. Това се обяснява с факта, че Персия разрушава тези светилища още в началото на V в. пр. Хр.

During the Archaic and Classical age the role of universal and supreme authority belonged to the oracles of the Panhellenic sanctuaries. Their strong influence in the private and public life remained unchanged during Hellenistic and Roman time. Individuals, whole cities and occasionally rulers addressed to them questions with various contents.

Though founded on the outskirts of the Greek world, the West Pontic cities had direct relations with the sanctuaries of some of the most famous oracles of Apollo throughout the Antiquity. This fact indicates that the basic traditions of the Ancient Greek religion were preserved in these cities.

In a dedication from Anchialo there is a description telling about the four *phylae* of the city ωηο dedicated statues to the Gods, following the prophecies of "the Lord Apollo Colophonius"<sup>1</sup>. As the *nomen gentiliae* "Ulpia" is added to the name of the city, this inscription should be dated in the time after the rule of Emperor Trajanus.

The epithet Colophonius is derived from the name of the city New Colophon, situated on the northern coast of the bay of Ephessus in Western Asia Minor. Apollo of Claros, where there was a sanctuary with an oracle, was worshipped as a protector of the city<sup>2</sup>. The dedication from Anchialo is the only inscription known, where the god is referred to as Colophonius – in all other cases the god is mentioned as Κλάριος (Clarius). This peculiarity could be explained with the non-Greek character of the dedication – the title κύριος was added in front of the god's name, which is typical of Thracian dedications.

The practice of placing gods' statues as a precaution against some perils was widespread throughout the

Antiquity. However, in the dedication from Anchialo there isn't any reason mentioned for the erection of the statues of the gods, neither it's specified which particular gods' statues were erected. According to L. Robert the citizens of the city addressed the oracle at Claros for an advice for some kind of epidemic or some other threat<sup>3</sup>. The outbreak of a plague epidemic in AD 165 and the invasion of the Costoboci in AD 170 were the most serious threats for Anchialo during the 2nd c. AD. Having in mind these events we can assume that the gods, mentioned in the dedication, had a *soteria* aspect in their cults.

A fragment from an epitaph in metrical form was discovered in Varna<sup>4</sup>. From the preserved part of the text it stands clear that a *gymnasiarchus* obtained from the oracle of Apollo Clarius a prophecy, concerning the threat of a plague epidemic<sup>5</sup>. The prophecies of this oracle were given in metric form. However, in this case one can't be sure, whether the part, missing from the beginning of the inscription, contained the text of the

1 Mihailov 1970:No 370. Having used the early publications of this dedication, Ch. Picard thought it was made in "Sliven—Anchialo, close to Adrianopolis". According to the author "four Thracian women dedicated statues to the gods". (Picard 1922:694 cited after Parke 1985:160, note 22.).

2 Parke 1985:112 f.

3 Robert 1959:189–190. According to J. Toutain "the great number of prophecies from the dedication creates an impression not of one oracle, but of a group of oracles, expressing one decision or common opinion, concerning a rather serious problem." (Toutain 1915:142–148, cited after Mihailov 1970:326, note 6.).

4 Mihailov 1970:No 224. In the publication of the inscription by A. Salač and K. Škorpil a complete reconstruction of the text is made (Salač-Škorpil 1928:76, No 20, tab. 13, cited after Mihailov 1970:208). However, it's regarded rather critically and with some reservation by L. Robert and G. Mihailov.

5 Robert 1959:190.