

Ex voto inscriptions, related to the name of the Heros and the problem about the funerary *collegia*

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Настоящата работа има за цел изследването на култа към Тракийския конник и връзката му с погребалните колегии от района между долното течение на Вардар и Места. Подробно са разгледани епитетите, с които той е известен тук, както и паметниците, които евентуално са свързани с неговото име. Прави впечатление тяхната концентрация именно в района на тасоската переа. Сред тях най-многобройни са votivните надписи, в които неколкократно са споменати погребални колегии, честваци култа към мъртвите. Направена е връзката между този тип свидетелства и култа към тракийския конник с цел разглеждането на този непознат досега аспект на Хероса.

The region between the lower currents of Mesta and Vardar Rivers is known from an early date to have been rather detached regarding the religious beliefs that were spread in it. This article's aim is to present just a small part of these beliefs, namely the cult of the Thracian horseman and more precisely its relation to the funerary *collegia* in the region.

Aulonites is one of the most interesting epithets, attributed to the Thracian horseman in the area of the lower currents of Mesta and Vardar. According to Th. Mommsen this name should be related to the town of Aulonon, that was situated somewhere in the vicinity of a presumed sanctuary of the Horseman. It was a different town from the one that was mentioned by Thucydides in the description of the campaign, led by Brasidas¹. In a publication Ch. Koukouli Chrysanthaki admits that this name of the Heros may be related to the ancient Greek word for pass – αυλων². Therefore it's possible that the god was worshipped as a protector of the pass between Mount Pangaion and Symbolon. The theory of the connection of the epithet with a toponym, typical only for the area of Strymon, can't be accepted, because monuments dedicated to Aulonites are known from other areas. Having in mind the translations of the word αυλων as pass³ or gorge⁴, we can assume that this epithet was tightly connected to the places of worship, i.e. with the landscape in the vicinity of the sanctuaries. While discussing some of the local epithets of the Heros, such as Αυλαρχηνος, Αυλαρχηνος and Αυλαριοκος in Eastern Thrace and Αυλοσαδα, Αυλουσεδα and Αυλουσαδηνος in the sanctuary at Draganovets Village near the town of Turgovishte, Z. Gocheva points out that the first part of the name – aule – is regularly met in purely Thracian names⁵. The author stresses on the fact that in the Greek literature this word occurs only once and as a part of a word, and is explained in the scholia as "a suitable for living place". Regarding this it's highly probable that the word was of Thracian origin.

The *ex voto* inscriptions prevail among the monuments, related to Aulonites. According to D. Samsaris all of them are indication of the existence of sanctuaries or cult places related to the worship of Heros Aulonites⁶ and situated somewhere in the vicinity. However, there

is only one sanctuary discovered so far, which could be attributed to this god. This is the sanctuary at Kipia. It is remarkable for the long period of its functioning – from the Hellenistic to the Late Roman Period. Fragmented pottery prevails among the finds from the Roman level – there are mainly pots and amphorae, and some open and closed shapes. Many of the vessels have a characteristic green glaze and stamps on the handles or beneath the rims. The letters ΘΕ or the monogram ΗΡ (interpreted as the beginning of the words ΘΕΩΣ or ΗΕΡΩΣ), which are imprinted, are a positive indication that this kind of pottery was manufactured by craftsmen, directly related to the sanctuary and working either in the sanctuary itself, or somewhere in the vicinity. This fact raises the question about the presence of regular clergymen that serviced the cult and needed this kind of ware for a commercial exchange. Workshops in the vicinity of sanctuaries of the Heros are assumed to have existed in Thrace as well⁷. They were specialized in the production of votive relief tablets of the god.

In the Hellenistic level of the sanctuary a part of wall was discovered in a layer of black sand beneath the ruins of a building with an atrium. Fragments of *kantbaroi* are most numerous among the finds from this area. Many of the fragments bear incised dedicatory inscriptions to the Heros (ΚΡΙΤΩΝ ΗΡΩΙ), and in some cases the name of the dedicator is mentioned as well. A substantial amount of sherds of late-hellenistic pottery were unearthed. Most of them have the typical for this period black glaze and floral ornaments, painted in yellow or in white in a rather decorative way.

The votive inscriptions, related to Aulonites, are quite numerous. Such monuments were discovered in Thessaloniki, Abdera, Kipia, Krinis, Kavala and Seres. Some of these monuments are indicative of the propagation of the cult not only among the local popula-

1 Mommsen Eph. Epigr., V:No 1436.

2 Koukouli 1969 a:193.

3 HH. Merc. 95; Hdt. 7, 128.

4 Soph. Tr., 100; Eschil Pr., 731; Luc. Trag., 646; Hdt. 2, 1000; Xen. An., 2, 3, 10.

5 Gocheva 1992:162.

6 Samsaris 1984:284–287.

7 Kauapoß 1914:90; Kazarow 1938:4, Nos 7, 8.