

**THE ISTROS DELTA, SACRED LAND OF HYPERBOREANS, THE MYTHICAL HAVEN OF PRE-HELLENIC**

**RELIGION, IN VIEW OF THE ANCIENTS**

*Historical notes and analyses on ancient texts*

Paul M Cristea, Oct. 2023. Reviewed Dec. 27, 2023/ May20, 2024/ July 2024/ Feb. 2025

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*Motto:” Old stories have more poetry charm than real history, ... It is the privilege of antiquity to mingle divine things with humans, they give dignity to the past, and if any nation deserves the right to a divine origin, this is Ours. -Titus Livius*

## **Abstract**

It seems that most of the Deities, myths and legends of **the Hellenic Civilization did** not originate from the **Egyptian** or **Mesopotamian Civilizations**, among the first advanced civilizations which they bordered geographically and with which they had connections. Instead, the vast majority of them are related to the Thracian **North** and **Thracian Asia Minor**. When **Xenophon** and his army of **Hellenic and Thracian** hoplites were returning with difficulty in 399 BC from the” the Persian anabasis”, he marveled at the ruins of an ancient city, and had no way of knowing that he was the first in history to describe the ruins of the Assyrian city later identified as **Nineveh**.

Deities such as **Uranus/Gaia, Pontus, the Titans**, as well as - **the Oracles of Dodona and Delphi founded by the Pelasgians** (Pliny, IV. 4.1) and **respectively by Hyperboreans/Thracians** (Pausanias); **the myths of Eumolpus of Elesius**, of the **Gods like Cybele, Ares, Aphrodite, Harmonia, Demeter, Leto, Apollo the Hyperborean, Artemis, Muses, Bacchus (Bassara), Orpheus, Hercules**; and the legends of **Midas, of the Kabieros, of Philomela, of the Thracian king Lycurgus, the legends of Troy, to name just a few, all have roots or connections with Thrace, and are widely mentioned in ancient writings.**

Observing the origin of Hellenic deities in ancient legends and myths, the **Thracian or Hellenic** duality often appears at different authors, and in some cases the Egyptian origin is also invoked. This seems to have been observed in the 5th century AD by **Nonnus of Panopolis** who was looking for explanations in the "Dionysiaca" epic, so He is not recommended today by historians as a reference for the deities' origin. The **Minoan** civilization appears to have **Egyptian** influences, as it can be seen in the massive Doric columns and in the frescos of Minos' ruined Palace in Crete, and in the frescos unearthed from the volcanic lava in Tera (Santorini). But the Minoan art, which had no mythical, but only cultural representations, was taken over wholly and without change by the Mycenaean [Nilsson<sup>1</sup> 1972].

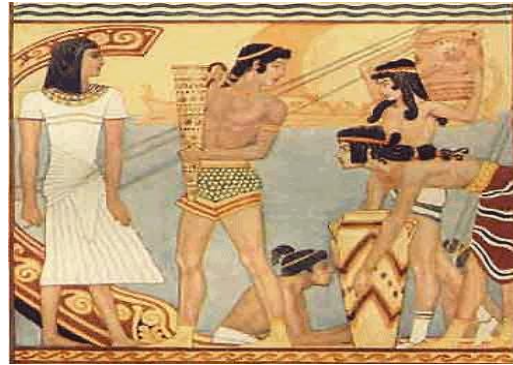
It is understandable for the **Hellenes**; how could they have been comfortable with the "barbarian" origin of their deities? The **Thracians and Persians** were considered by them to be "barbarians" and always had in their collective minds the long-standing invasion of the Mediterranean Sea by the **Tyrasians** (*the sea people*), and the destruction of the flourishing **Ionian** civilization, culminating in the **Trojan's** conflict, and later the Persian's threatening. In the same period take place the collapse of the

Hittite empire and the migration to Asia Minor of waves of Thracian tribes, later known as the Mysians, Bithins, Phrygians, Lydians, and others.

(1) Nilsson, M. P. 1972 [1932]. *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology*. Edited by E. Vermeule. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.



Minos Palace from Knossos, Crete



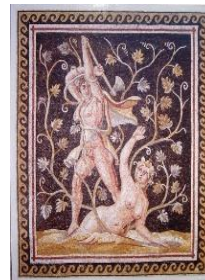
Minoan fresco (Wikipedia)

Apollo and Hercules would have participated in the construction of the walls of Troy, where the Achaeans, at the beginning of historical time, "struggled with a barbaric race" [*Horace, Book I, ep. 2. 1-31*].

**The conclusion could be: the affinity of Hellenic myths with this Thracian world can be explained by the fact that this was the world from where they originated and from where they evolved.**

**The Ister Delta, a holy land "in the antiquity" of the Greek and Roman classics, appears to be a "Mythical space" of the pre-Hellenic religion**

**The myth of King Lycurgus and Ambrosia.** [*Pseudo-Hyginus, Fable 132, Roman mythographer, 2nd century B.C.*] "**Lycurgus, son of Dryas, drove Liber [Dionysus] out of his kingdom**, when he no longer **recognized Liber as a god**, being drunk, and in his drunkenness began to cut down vines, saying that it was a bad elixir, because it affected the mind. In his rage, he killed his son and wife. **LIBER made him throw himself to his Panthers in the Rhodope, a mountain in Thrace, where he was king.**"



Vessel Lycurgus 350-340 BC. British Museum. [Wikipedia]1

**The myth of Philomela and Procne**



The Rape of Philomela by Tereus, King of Thrace, engraving by Virgil Solis for the 1562 edition of Ovid's Metamorphoses [Book VI, 519-562] (Wikipedia)

Thucydides says that mythical Tereus was not king of Thrace, but king of **Dahlia, in Phocis**, a city inhabited by the Thracians. As evidence, he says that the nightingale refers to the 'Daulian bird'.

Thucydides may have referred to this myth in his book 'The Pelopozian War' because, in his play **Sophocles** confused the mythical Tereus with the contemporary Teres <sup>1</sup>, king of Thrace (460 BC), the founder of the Odysse dynasty.



Image from an Attic wine cup, circa 490 BC, depicting Philomela and Procne preparing to kill Itys. [Musée du Louvre, Paris]

(2) *The king of the Odysse dynasty, SEUTES ii (405- 383 BC) believed that his ancestor Teres was descended from Tereus, who had married Procne, daughter of Pandion, the king of Attica. The Teres -Tereus confusion was encouraged by the Athenians in the fifth century BC to facilitate alliance with the Odrise kings. Thucydides [II, 29] refutes this idea! Instead, the Hellenized Thracians continued to believe so. [Xenophon, Anabasis – Translated by Maria Marinescu Simu, Book VII, Chapter 2, Notes 39].*



**THRACE. Bisanthe (?)**. Ae (Circa 3rd century BC). Obv: Female head right. Rev: Kotyle (two-handled vessel). Schooners-Geiss - (cf. 58 with Dionysos head). Condition: Good fine. Weight: 1.01 g. Diameter: 10 mm.

**Bisanthe** (Ancient Greek: Βισάνθη) was a great city in ancient Thrace, on the coast of the Propontis, which had been founded by the Samians. About 400 BCE, **Bisanthe belonged to the Odrisian kingdom of the Thracian prince SEUTES II**. [Stephanus of Byzantium. *Ethnica. s.v.*], [Herodotus. *Histories. 7.137*], [Pomponius Mela. *De situ Orbis. 2.2, 6*].

At a later period, its name was changed into Raedestum, or Rhaideston (Ραίδεστον), or Raedestus, Rhaedestus or Rhaidestos (Ραίδεστος); but when this change took place is unknown. In the AD 6th century, the emperor Justinian did much to restore the city, which seems to have fallen into decay; but after that it was twice destroyed by the Bulgarians, first in 813, and a second time in 1206. [Wikipedia]



SEUTE I or ii -Thracian Odrisian<sup>3</sup> Kingdom, ca 425-405 or 405-386 BC. AR Obol. Good VF minor deposit.

[Wikipedia]




(3) Some modern historians, today, believe that the Thracian Odrissi from the fifth century to the third century BC had many similarities and had the same ideology as that of the Mycenaeans and Minoans of the Late Bronze Age: proof are tholos-type tombs, chariots and similar altars, various other objects as religious symbols with uses and meanings similar to those of the Mycenaeans, a thousand years before. [*"Mycenean Thrace from the fifth till the third century BC"*, by Janette Stakenborg-Hoogveen. *Proceedings of the International Congress of Thracology, Rotterdam, 24-26 Sept. 1984*].

The region of northern Greece, to which we refer here, is the western coast of Pontus Euxin (Black Sea) of ancient Dacia and Thrace and, the ancient settlements of Hysteria (or Istros), Orgame, in the Istros river's Delta (Danube) and south of it, Tomis (Constanta), Callatis (Mangalia), Dionypollisus (Balchik) and in Thrace, Pontic Apollonia, Salmidessus and north of the Istros Delta, further the ancient settlements of Tyras and the river Tyras (Dniester), the ancient settlement of Olbia. The area extends far west over the river Istros (Danube) in Geta/Dacia, but ancient writings refer mainly to the coast of Pontus Auxin (The Hospitable Sea), a region that has been accessible by sea since ancient times to seafarers from Miletus of the Aegean Sea, who formed those settlements for commercial reasons.

The adventure of the Milesians, colonizers at Pontus Euxine, who founded those ancient settlements, takes place in the 8th century BC, approximately at the same time when the migration of the Thracians into the Western Mediterranean Sea, which begun long time before the Trojan War (ca.1250BC), have been concluded in the Italian peninsula with the peak of the Etruscan civilization and the beginning of the Rome's foundation. [*Albert Grenier, "Les Religions Enriquer et Romaine", Paris 1948*]. Interestingly, those historical events took place in the same period with appearance of the first Hellenic works, written by Homer and Hesiod.

**Abraham Ortelius' Ancient Map of Dacia, Moesia Superior and inferior, ca 1650 edition**



 <p><b>MOESIA INFERIOS, HISTRIA,</b> Secolul 2, BC AE11, Attributie: AMNG I, 463. Avers: <b>Apollo</b>, Revers: ΙΣΤΡΗ, Vulture on the back of a Delfin Size: 11.65 mm Weight: 1.66 grams Description: EF. Ex Wayne Phillips with tag</p>	 <p><b>KINGS GETAE, AELIS,</b> (ca. 188-180 BC). Ae. Obv: Heads of the <b>Dioscuri</b>, <b>wearing a Dacian hat.</b> Rev: <b>ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ/ΑΙΛΙΟΣ.</b> Horse heads, monogram: <b>To</b>, below. Ref: Lanz 138, lot 202. Another similar coin is with the monogram <b>TOM(IS)</b> [Wikipedia]</p>	 <p><b>THRACE, KINGDOM OF ODYSSE, Odessos,</b> 4th century BC, Bronze, 7.7 grams. Obverse: Apollo's head? Reverse: <b>ODHSITWN</b>, Man on horseback. EN monogram under the horse. Sear1679v // SNGCop670v. [Wikipedia]</p>
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**Referring to the Titan Coios (Κοιος), in the Hellenic legends, he was the son of Gaea, Gea (Earth) and Uranus (Heaven). Is it just a coincidence as this word <coios> is found today only in the language of the Romanians, with the same meaning from the myth of the Hellenes, ..is it a coincidence that Leto (Latona to the Romans) would have been the daughter of the Titan Coios,... and that Leto, the ancients said, would have been born in an island at the mouth of the "holy Istros river" (Danube),.. that Leto, she was the mother of divine brothers - the Hyperboreans Apollo and Diana (Ziana) who, legends say, annually returned to Hyperboreans at the mouth of the 'Istros'?**

**.. and is it a coincidence how at the mouth of the 'Istre's' appear, in the afterlife, many heroes and divinities of Homeric Troy? Further, is it a coincidence that today the Letea Grind of the Danube Delta, in antiquity an island, seems to bear Leto's name.... and also, if today there is an affluent of Lotru river and a mountain peak in the Paring mountains of Romania, in the county of Lovistea (Joviste),<sup>4</sup> named 'Latorița'? It seems that this land, from the Estrus Delta, considered - holy "in the antiquity" of the Greco-Roman classics, it was a kind of 'Mythical Haven' of pre-Hellenic religion!**

(4) It is possible that the name Lovistea comes from "Joviste", the name of the young god Jupiter, which appears in some Roman epigraphs. In another case, there was a dispute among archaeologists over the confusion of the letter J with L on a Roman inscription. This would mean "God's Land." There is other opinion how the name Loviste could be of Cuman origin!?

### **Herodotus, about the oldest people, the Phrygians**

Nicolae Densusianu, a Romanian's historian, in his work "Prehistoric Dacia", ca 1905, said:

*"Dacia does not fully present an extreme antiquity. But studying the prehistoric times of the countries of the Carpathians and the Lower Danube River, a vanished old world, the cradle of ante-Hellenic civilizations, is looming before our eyes."*

In reference to the oldest people, Herodotus speaks of the experiences of the **Egyptian Pharaoh Psammitic**, ca.700 BC:

*"Now the Egyptians, before Pharaoh Psammethichus, believed that they were the oldest people. Since the Psammethichus tried to discover which is the most primitive race, they have come to the conclusion that, while they are older than other nations, the Phrygians surpassed them in antiquities."* [Herodotus, Book 2.2.]

This information, which has come down to us today, it is interesting only because it showed the concern they may have at that time, and may have "a little truth on it" - given the **Thracian/Pelasgian origin of the Phrygians**. **Ammianus Marcellinus** (ca. 374 AD), apparently, taking the information from Herodotus, says referring to the antiquity of **the Thracian and Scythian nations**: [*"History of Rome" Ch. 15.2, translated by Yonge M.A.*]

*"The Egyptians are the most ancient of all nations, except, true, their superior antiquity is disputed by the Scythians<sup>5</sup>".* **Another later translation of Ammianus Marcellinus book in 1986, almost entirely excludes this section and the chapter on description of Geria, Thrace, and the Littoral of Pontus Euxine!**

(5) In those times 'Scythians' was a generic name for the people of the North, which of course included the Thracians/Getae, Dii-(Dacians).

### **Hesiod, Theogony (ca. 800 BC) on the creation of the world and Pontus (Euxinus)**

The ancient city of Istria and the Istros (Danube) Delta, is a divine land, full of history, with myths and legends that go far beyond the limit of historical time, to the myths of world's creation. Pontos or Pontus was the deity of the sea, one of the Protogenoi (the first of the gods born), the first sea created, according to Hellens' mythology, from the Divine pair, Uranus /Gaia. **It is interesting to mention how the first sea in the legend of world's creation, was not the Mediterranean Sea, or one of its constituent seas, the cradle of the ancient Achaean civilization, but" Pontos Euxinos- the Hospitable Sea", also called Getic Sea. Only one other ancient sea was called - Pontos, namely the Hellespont, meaning the Helle's Pont, sister of the hero Phryxos, today the Sea of Marmara, where Hella fell from 'the golden fleece Ram', in their flight to Colchis**

**Notably, in the Hellenes' theogony there have been two pairs of Divine Deities since the creation of the world. The first, Uranus/Gaia with their descendants, the Titans - apparently of Pelasg /Thracian origin, and the second one- Zeus/Hera with their descendants, the Olympians. The Olympians won their battle with the Titans.**

Here are **Hesiod's beautiful verses from Hesiod's "Theogony"**, an English translation by Richmond Lattimore, 1986:

[105] "Now it is the holy group of immortals who came into being from Gaia and from the starry Uranus and the gloomy Night, whom Pontos, his salted sea, brought to maturity; and tells how in the beginning the Gods and the Earth were made, and the rivers, and the immense sea, with rough waves."

[130] ". . . Without any sweet act of love, she (Gaia) made the Sea wide, Pontos, with the raging waves, and after this with Uranus, She made to Him the deep, swirling Okeanos, the Ocean stream (river); and Koios, Krios, Hyperion, Iapetos, and Theia also, and Rhea and Themis and Mnemosyne (n.b. Memory, Muses' mother) and Phoibe with the golden crown and the loving Thetis."



Depiction of pre-olimpian God, Pontos at the Constanta Museum of National History

In Greek mythology, Pontus (ˈpɒntəs; Greek: Πόντος Pontos, "Sea"), Ultimately from Proto-Indo-European pont-eh" was an ancient, pre-Olympian Sea- God. [The Homeric Hymns and Homerica with an English Translation. London: William Heinemann Ltd.]. For Hesiod, Pontus seems little more than a personification of the sea, ho pontos - "the Road" - by which Hellenes signified the Mediterranean Sea. For the Greeks, the Black Sea was the "ho Pontos Euxeinos", the "sea that welcomes strangers."

It is worth mentioning, how at that time the Earth was considered as a disk floating in the Ocean water. On several occasions Hesiod refers to the Ocean Current (Okeanos Potomakos), which appears to be a river coming from the Okean and empties into Pontus Euxinus, identified with Istros river. Over the fabulous ocean current, Hesperides has apples<sup>6</sup> and fruit orchards and where the cruel More (Fates) were born!

[215] "She, the Black Night, she alone, and not being loved by any God, also gave birth to Hesperides, who over the fabulous current of the Ocean holds golden apples and orchards full of fruit, and gave birth to destinies, the Moirés, the cruel, unforgiving Fates - Klotho, Lachesis and Atropos, who at the birth of mortals allocate their share of good and evil..."



(6) In regard to the antiquity of apple-symbolism in the Aegeo-Balkan world, the Swedish mythographer Nilsson (1972) comments that the idea of Herakles's eleventh labor— “the fetching of the apples of the Hesperides —is pre-Greek.”

Diodorus Siculus, in his "Library of History" [Book 5. 55.1] tells how **Pontos and the sea goddess Thalassa** made the **Téchiné**, (four mysterious sea deities of the island of Keos), fish, and other sea creatures. The name **Thalassa**, which itself means **sea/waves**, is derived from a **pre-Greek, Thracian word**. [Evelyn-White, Hugh G, *The Homeric Hymns*, 1914, London].

### Hercules and Geryon's Herds



**Herodotus** relates, in his Histories [Book 4, Ch. 8, 9, 10], how the people, who lived near the **Great Pontus**, told him a story about **Hercules**, when he led **Geryon's herds** through the land that would later be called **Scythia**.<sup>7</sup> One morning he discovered that his horses had disappeared, and while searching for them he found a curious creature, half woman, half snake, named Echidna living in a grotto. Heracles had three children with this woman, according to legend, named Agathyrus, Gelonus and Scythe, the latter giving birth to the Scythe race, Agathursus and Gelonus giving birth to the Gete / later Dacian tribes with the same name in Transilvania and northern Dacia, respectively. This creature appears to be the same Echidna, from the land of the Arima in Hesiod's Theogony [295-300], which *Heracles had found “when he led those herds to Holly Tiryns, crossing over the ocean river.””*

(7) In those mythical times, Schitya was a generic name for Northern Territories, less known by Mediterraneanians. As we can see here Tracia, Dacia and Getia are included. Later the Romans named Gaetia, Scitia Minor.

Hesiod and Herodotus seem to refer to the same legend of Hercules who, on his way going north across the Ocean River to Tiryns, passes through Getia to the land that would later be called Scythia Minor

From all this information it appears that the Ocean River (Ocheanos Potomachos) in Homer [Odyssey, XII. 1] and Hesiod [Theogonia, v.242. 959], which flows into Pontos, is none other than the river Istros (Danube), and Holly Tiryns seems to be the same Tyras of 'Genesis', river name, Dniester (Nistrus) and one of the first nations, of whom Flavius Josephus said that, by Tyras the Hebru people meant Thracians or Thraciens.

Hecateus of Abdera writes that the Hyperborean Ocean is not the Arctic Ocean, nor the Western Ocean, but the sea located in the northern Hellenic World. This means that the orchards of Hesperides and the Moirele (Fate) and the "*Gorgons living behind the famous Ocean River [Theogony 270] and the horses so-called <pegasus>, the children of the Ocean [280]*", all of which, as mentioned in ancient texts, apparently make sense, to be located at Pontus Euxine, in Getia/Dacia.

 <p><b>GETIA, TYRAS</b>, 330-310 BC, Silver Drachma 5.11g the covered head of DEMETER, having the crown of ears of gray. On the reverse <b>Bison</b> kneeling, "<b>TYPA</b>" on top. HGC 2, 1954 v</p>	 <p><b>ABYDOS mint, TROAS</b> 480-450 BC. Argent Obol, VULTUR, "ABY" /Cupa. Rev: <b>GORGONEION with protruding tongue</b>, SNG Cop 4; Weber 5258; BMC Troas p. 1.7 var. (monogram vice kylix); Munich CIS 4 var (no kylix); SNGvA -; SNG Kayhan -; Klein.</p>	<p>This coin alludes to the myth of <b>Ganymede</b> that Zeus, transvestite as an eagle, carried him to <b>Mount Olympus</b> to be cup bearer of the Gods. On the reverse <b>GORGONS (MEDUZA)</b>, from Greek mythology, which appears in the earliest writings, such as Homer, in reference to the Trojan War ca. 1194–1184 BC.</p>
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**Leto (Letona) was born at Istrus' Delta (Danube), in an island of the Hyperboreans**

The following passage, from the < > by Diodorus Siculus (91-30 BC), reading Hecateus of Miletus (ca. 550 BC – ca. 476 BC), confirms once again the idea that the **river (Potomakos) Ocean, mentioned in the book of Homer [Odyssea, XII. 1] and Hesiod [Theogony, v. 242.], is none other than the river Istros River, where in an island, Leto, the gentle Goddess with a sweet and gentle disposition, mother of the divine brothers Artemis and Apollo, was born there; fertile soil, forests, two harvests a year, temperate climate suggest that today it can only be -the 'Letea Grind' of the Danube Delta.**

**Today, this Grind "*Letea*" of Danube Delta, then an island, seems to have been the land described in those myths and, bears the ancient name of *Leto*, as similarly, in ancient times in Macedonia, at the mouth of the river Axios in the Aegean Sea, apparently the western limit of Thrace, were the settlements called, *Lete and Apollonia*.**

Diodorus Siculus writes:

*"Now, that we have described the northern parts of Asia, we think it is of interest to mention here also the legends about Hyperborea. Among those who have written about ancient myths, Hecateus and others say that in the region over the land of the Celts there is an island in Ocean(!), no smaller than Sicily. The island - he continues - it is located in the North and is inhabited by Hyperborei, who are called by that name because their homes are after the wind Boreas comes from, and the island is fertile and productive for any plants and, because it has a special, temperate climate, it produces two annual harvests. Moreover, there is the following legend about this: **Leto was born on this island, and for this reason Apollo is honored there more than other Deities; and the inhabitants appear as preachers of Apollo, in such a manner, that daily they pray continuously in songs and honors.**" [Library of History, Book 2, 47]*



*Istros' Delta, Danube of our days, this mirific land of Hyperboreans, in conception of antique writers· UNESCO World Heritage Site· (Wikipedia)*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danube\\_Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danube_Delta)

The reference to the size of the island compared to Sicily, it appears to be a confusion! It is also possible that the climate of this region was warmer then, therefore there would have been two harvests per year. **An indication in this regard can be the fact that today in southern Romania magnolias and other flowers bloom twice a year, in warmer years, and.... another, it would be the existence of sandy, desert-like soil in southern Lovenia.**

How the Istros (Danube) would be the Ocean River and that the Rhyean Mountains stretched over Dacia, it is confirmed, once again, by Apollonius Rodius (270-245 BC), in his book ["Argonautica" 4, 282], which refers to the Lower Istros river as– "Keras Okeanoio" (Ocean Bay):

*"It is a river, a farthest branch of the ocean (!), which is wide and very deep and navigable for a merchant ship; the people who passed by called it - the Istros· Over a great distance it cuts its course as a single river over a vast territory, springing far from the Rhyean Mountains, whence the Boreas wind blows, but when it reaches the limit of Thrace and the Scythians, it divides into two branches" <sup>8</sup>· [Argonautica, Jason and the Golden Fleece", translated by Richard Hunter, 1993].*

(8) Here, he is talking about Danube's Borcea branch of Ialomita Marsh and the Big Island of Braila.

## Pindar (518-438 BC), the greatest ancient Greek poet on Perseus and the Hyperboreans

In Pindar's Ode [Pythian 4, 324, p 234], it is understood how the Hellenes considered the Thracians to be Broeans and therefore it is very probable, that those 'who sat in villages' of northern Thrace, in Geria and Dacia are called Hyperboreans! Constantine Porphyrogenites, the Emperor of the Byzantine Empire from AD 913 to 959 (Anno Domine), appears to confirm this, when he says:

*"There are many important nations as far away as the Danube, in the land of the Hyperboreans."*

Not much was known in antiquity about these northern lands of the Hyperboreans, as Pindar says in beautiful words in his Ode [Pythian 10] - *"Never, walking or sailing, will you be able to find the wonderful road to the villages of the Hyperboreans. -Perseus, a hero of the Danaeans (n.b. Greeks), once came to them and entered their houses, ... they found them bowing to Apollo with joy, smiles and kind words, and where the Muses were everywhere:*

*The lyres sang and the whistle cried, and everywhere were choruses of girls, they tied their hair with yellow garlands of Laurel, they are relaxed, the blood of this holy race is not mixed with disease and does not grow old, they stay away from work and fighting, they live and escape the prejudicious Nemssis... The son of the Danai is brought on that day by Athena to mingle with these holy men. He killed the Gorgon (Medusa), taking her head with the snake hair"*



## Hercules and the Ceryneian Hind with golden horns

Neculae Densusianu, a classic Romanian historian, in his book 'Prehistoric Dacia' tells us how the following paragraph, from Pindar's Olympian Ode 3 (518-438 BC), is of great importance to us: **Based on the religious traditions of antiquity, Diana's residence (Artemis) was in the land of the Hyperboreans, on a place called Istria.** By this, is meaning the region at the mouth of the Istros, where the Greeks of Miletus founded the cities of Istria, Tomis, Kallatis [Herodotus, Book 2:33]; [Arrianus, 35]. Hercules,

being sent by the royal Eurystheus to catch the deer with its golden horns, which the nymph Taygete would have dedicated to the Goddess Artemis, **followed this animal from Arcadia to Histria, in the land of Hyperboreans.** Here, he arrives where Lato's daughter Artemis (n.b. Selena, Luna) lived, who rode on '**the horses of Letea**', 😊\_ received him with hospitality and where, Hercules, delighted by the beauty of the place, **has a revelation, to replant olive trees from this holy place, in Olympus.**

.....some of today's pictures of this sacred land of Istros River Delta, called in antiquity, ... of Hyperboreans.



**Wild Horses of Letea, Istros (Danube) Delta, Romania,** tourist attraction in our days. (Wikipedia)



**Movie of Wild horses in Grind Letea of Danube Delta, Romania.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9Tp8mB9vQE>



**PISIDIA, SELGE.** About. 2nd-1st century BC. AE 12mm (2.46 gm). Obverse: Head of **HERCULES**. Rev.: **The golden-horned head of the Ceryneian Hind.** SNG von Aulock 5287. Very fine.



**Hercules tearing off the golden antlers of the Ceryneian Hind,** while **Athena** and **Artemis**, on the left, look at him. (drawing in black on an amphora, ca. 540-30 BC) Wikipedia



**MOESIA, KALLATIS.** 3rd-2nd century B.C. AR Drachm (5.08 gm, 19mm). Obverse: Head of **HERCULES**, covered with lion's fur. Rev.: Ear of gray, mace, and bow in sheath. AMNG I 196; SNG BM Black Sea 202. A similar coin is issued and marked **OLBIA**, cataloged to be Geto-Dacian coins similar to the tetradramas of Philip II and Alexander the Great.

**Pindar, Olympians Ode 3. Hercules thought of planting trees brought from this "Holly" place-Istros to Olympia, where horse races were held**

Below, this interesting passage from *Pindar [Olympians 3:26-28]:*

"I pretend to sing the brilliant Akragas (Agrigento) and give thanks  
to Tyndaridai (n.b. Castor and Polux), lovers of strangers, <sup>(1)</sup>  
And their sister Helena with splendid hair, singing the Olympic triumphal anthem  
for Theron, in the speed of his horses having hooves, which do not dull.

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From her, led by Zeus, songs reach people, which Hellenes delight,  
An Aetolian, fulfilling the founded ancient customs of Hercules,  
Throws the *glory of the Olive tree, which long ago,*  
*from the swirling waters of the Istros,*  
*The son of Amphitryon (n.b. Hercules) brought him back,*  
to be the most beloved memorial of the games in Olympia.  
The reason he convinced *the Hyperboreans, Apollo's men,*  
In sincerity of heart, he asked about the *Grotto of the Deity open to all,*  
*who become men in the shadows and always crown <sup>(2)</sup> their worth.*  
But the sacred land of Pelops <sup>(3)</sup> did not bloom with beautiful trees in the valleys,  
under the hill of Cronos. He saw these trees burned by the sun's rays.  
Then in haste he took the road to the land of the *Istros.*  
There the daughter of *Leto, riding on horses,* received Him  
when he came from the hilly land and riches of Arcadia,  
When, at Eurysthenes' command, his father's evil,  
*He sent him to fetch the deer with the golden antlers that once,*  
*Taygeta gave them to be holy to Artemis Orthosia <sup>(4)</sup>: (Selena/Month)*  
*On that mission he sees the ground behind the cold north wind*  
*(Boristene), and marvel at the beauty of the trees.*  
*A sweet thought came to him to plant them at the place of horse racing,*  
*twelve rounds. Now he gracefully visits that festival with those twins*  
*(n.b. Dioscurii), as deities, children of the fiery Leda*  
He comes to Olympus and lets these heroes lead the magnificent games,  
to guide the power and speed of chariots."

[Pindar, Olympians 3:26-28, Odes, Norfolk, Conn.1942.]



(1) Referring to Getae/Thracians

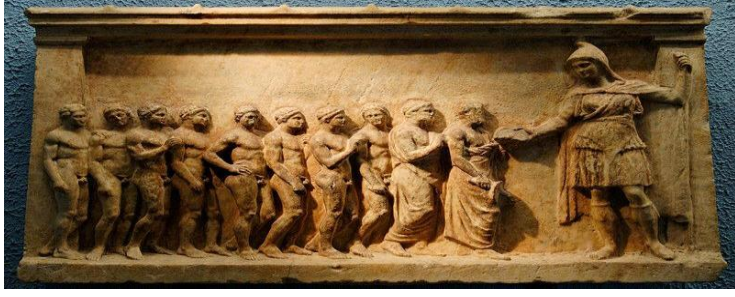

(2) From this ode of Pindar, we also understand why some Roman emperors, who came to Dacia or Moesia Inferior, sought the grotto of Apollo, where they would be crowned by the Deity. One of this grotto could be in Dobruja and also the [Polovragi Grote!](#)

(3) The legend says Pelops, son of Tantalus, have been offered at the table to the gods by his father and resurrected by the gods becomes king in **Peloponnese**. It can be seen here how the ancients appreciated the advantage of a temperate climate, compared to the scorching sun of the Mediterranean lands

(4) Herodotus mentions a temple <Artemis Orthosia> near Byzantium, <Orthosia>, possibly meaning <Artemis Original>, comparing, for example, with <Artemis Ephesian>. It appears, the toponomy of Sulina's name, a port town in Danube Delta, has a connection with Artemis (Selena, Luna)!

Thus, we also understand where the holy geographical place of the Hyperboreans is located, referred to, in the legends of the Hellenes. Hercules thought of planting trees brought from this "holy" place- to the Olympia, where horse races were held and where olive branches were given to the winners, the most beloved memorial trophy of the Olympic Games.

 <p><b>MOESIA. HISTRIA.</b> Drachma de Ag (4th century BC). Obi: <b>APOLLO and ARTEMIS (Woman's face?/ man's head, right turned)</b>. Rev: ΙΣΤΡΗ. Left sea eagle, grabbing the dolphin with its claws; pellet under the eagle, monogram under the dolphin. SNG BM Black Sea 246. Condition: Very fine. Weight: 5.71 g. Diameter: 17 mm</p>	 <p><b>MOESIA. HISTRIA.</b> Drachma of Ag. Men's Head (4th century BC). Obv: <b>CASTOR and POLUX (Dioscuri, Men's head, left inverted.)</b> Rev: SNG BM 249. Cond.: Almost very fine. Weight: 4.8 g. Diameter: 17 mm Rev: ΙΣΤΡΗ. Sea eagle, grabbing the dolphin with its claws; pellet under eagle, monogram under dolphin</p>	 <p><b>SKYTHIA (TYRA-GETIA). OLBIA.</b> bronze (circa 330-320 BC). Obverse: Borysthene's horned head, (north wind) Rev: <b>ΟΛΒΙΟ.</b> Axe and bow in the sheath; monogram down. SNG BM Black Sea 963-968</p>
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 <p>Artemis Bendis (on the right, wearing a Phyiene/Dacian hat, short shirt and animal skin boots), and her followers. Bas-relief of marble, Athena ca. 400-375 BC, said done in Piraeus (Wikipedia)</p>	 <p>A Thracian goddess, <b>Bendis</b> has often been identified with Artemis and the moon goddess, Hecate. <b>It appears in Athens during the Peloponnesian War, when it was Hellenized. Strabo said that her rites were similar to those of the Thracians and the Phrygians - Bacchus (Dionysus) and Rhea (Cybele) [Wikipedia]</b></p>
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### Achilles and White (Peuce) Island, Istros Delta

In Hellenes' mythology, **Achilles** was one of the greatest **Achaean heroes of the Trojan War** in Homer's Iliad. He was the son of **Thetis**, a **Nereid**, and **Peleus**, king of the **Myrmidons**. **Thetis** attempted to make him immortal while bathing him in the River **Styx**, as shown in the unfinished work **Achelleid**, written by **Stattius** in the first century AD. Legend has it, that by holding him from the tendon of his foot, it remained


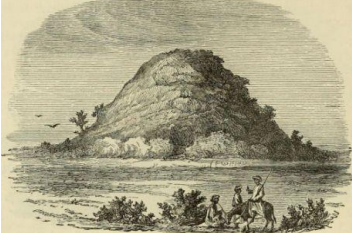

the vulnerable part of his body. Hence the expression "the Achilles' tendon", meaning something vulnerable.

A great achievement of the hero Achilles during the Trojan War was the murder of the Trojan prince Hektor in front of the Troy's gates. The death of Achilles is not reported by Homer, but from other sources it is said that, he was killed near the end of the war by Paris, as predicted by Hektor before he died, when he wounded him at the heel of his foot with an arrow, directed by Apollo.

In *Odyssea*, Agamemnon tells Achilles about his burial and the erection of a funeral mountain in the Hellespont where he would be buried. They built this massive mountain on the beach of Ilium, Troas, which can be seen by anyone coming from Ocean Stream. (n.b. Istros river!) (Odyssey 24:36-94).

A tumulus, traditionally considered Achilles' mentioned in the book 'Troy and Its Ruins' by Heinrich Schliemann, has been identified near the promontory named Beshika, in Troas. He excavated this tumulus, but found nothing.

In 'Aethiopsis' (7th century B.C.), an epic poem about the Trojan War, lost today, and in a work by Quintus of Smyrna, 4th century A.D. called 'Post Homeric', the events after the Trojan War are further recounted. In the surviving passages of 'Aethiopsis', it is said how, after Achilles died, Thetis took his son's body from the funeral pyre and brought it to the holy island, Peuce (White).<sup>5</sup>

 <p><b>TROAS. ACHILLEON.</b> Bronze, Sec 4 BC. Obverse: Crested helmet* Rev: monogram of the city. SNG Copenhagen 64. Condition: Weight: 0.90 g., Diameter: 9 mm * Resembles the crested helmet of ARES, the Thracian God of war.</p>	 <p><b>A tumulus, which was traditionally considered Achille's in the book 'Troy and Its Ruins' by Heinrich Schliemann,</b> was identified next to the promoter named <b>Beshika, Troas.</b> He dug into this tumulus, but found nothing.</p>	 <p><b>TROAS. OPHRYNION.</b> bronze, (circa 350-300 BC). Obv: <b>HEKTOR's head with helmet.</b> Rev: <b>ΟΦΡΥ. DIONISE,</b> child, kneeling to the right, holding a bunch of grapes. SNG Copenhagen 456-9; SNG von Aulock 1559. Condition: weight: 1.81 g. Diameter: 11 mm.</p>
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(5) The White Island (PEUCE), to which the antique authors from 7 century BC refer to, was probably a real island, today a grind incorporated in in Ister's Delta (Danube) waters, maybe it – the Grind Letea or Caraorman. The places, the Island of the Blessed, Achile and other heroes, all being mythical no one should expect to find archeological artifacts. But today, there is in the Danube Delta a branch channel named 'Chilia' and a town 'Chilia Veche', resembling the name of Achilles

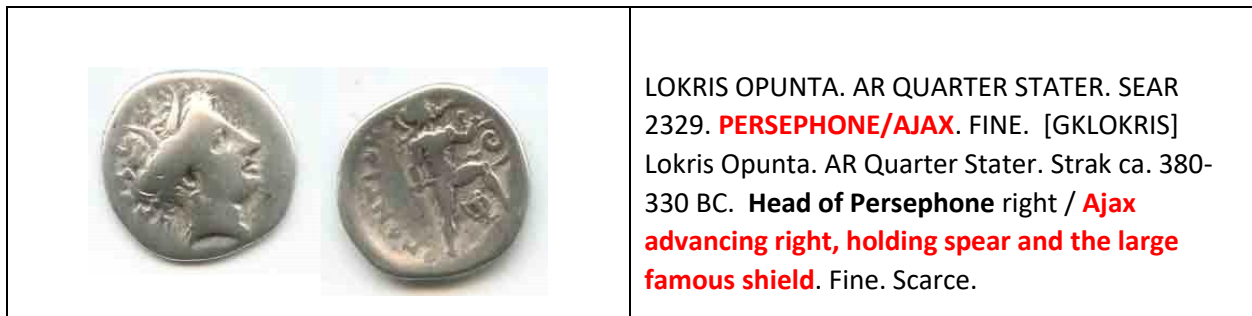


**Ovid**, who was exiled during the reign of Emperor **Agustus**, AD 8. at **Tomis**, he mentions the island of **Leuce**, also **Ptolemy** and **Strabo** [*Geography, book II.5.22*]. The island is also described by **Pliny the Elder** (23 AD-79AD) in his book [*Natural History*], IV.27.1 - "**Insula Achillis tumulo eius viri clara**", says Pliny, and Pomponius Mela (43 AD). Repeat - "**ibi Achilles situs est**".

In other sources, **Hercules** married **Medea** alive on the **Isle of Leuce (White)** and after their death they were united **in the Elysian fields, as Hera promised Thetis, in Apollonius Rodius' - "Argonautica, Jason and the Golden Fleece"**. (3rd century BC).

Pindar mentioned a cult of Achilles in the shining Island (phaenna nasos) of Pontus Euxine (Pindar, Nemean Ode 4:49), while in another Ode, Olympian 2:78 speaks of the immortal Achilles living—"**where the breeze of the Ocean blows around the 'Island of the Blessed', and where golden flowers bloom, some of which are of splendor trees on earth, while the waters nourish others**"—brought there by his mother, together with other heroes such as Ajax, Patroclus.



**Thus, is made the connection between these "Islands of the Blessed," or <Homeric Elyseum>, with the Ocean River –"Istros" - at Pontus Euxine.**



**In "Argonautica", Jason and Medea arrived at Leuce (Peuce) Island (Istros Delta)**

Valerius Flaccus, in his "Argonautica" [*Book 8 [217]*], also speaks of the island of Leuce, after Jason with Medeia's help retrieves the Golden Fleece from Colchis, **carried there by Phrixos, flying, as legend has it, on the back of a Ram and losing his sister Hella in the Hellespont.**

Medea was the daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis and granddaughter of Circe, **eldest daughter of the Sun God and sister of Phaethusa**. **They returned from Colchis by sailing in Pontus Euxine, being pursued by the ships of Aeëtes, and thus reaching the mouth of the Istros:**

	<p>THESSALY - HALOS ca 380-340 BC - AE - HEAD OF ZEUS LAPHYSTIOS - <b>PHRYXOS riding the RAM</b> Obv: Diademed head of Zeus Laphystios right. Rev: <b>PHRYXOS riding the Ram to right</b>. Rogers 241, Condition: VF+, Weight: 2.3 gm.</p>	 <p>Etruscan Phrixus, the son of Athamas and nympha Nephele (Cloud)</p>
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*"An island named Leece, from the name of a Sarmatian nymph, is where 'Istros', the swift river, whose banks are always wild, flows into the sea; there, the ruler (Jason) was clever to maintain the trust that remained, and told the Argonauts his intention and thoughts for the celebration of the wedding; they all, with great joy, urged him to do it, and cherished her (Medea) for her worth."* [217].

### Toponymy of city Tomis, the modern Constanta, Romania

Below it is a coin from the ancient city of **Tomis**, whose toponymy, an ancient myth from the **Bibliotheca (Pseudo - Apollodorus)** says to be related to "*Medea daughter of King Aetes of Colchis, who killed her brother in this place, to escape his pursuit by cutting him to pieces, and that's why this place was called **TOMI***."

Another legend regarding the toponymy of the ancient city of **Tomis** is narrated by **Jordanes** [*The Origin and deeds of the Goths*], quoting **Cassiodorus** who attributes the founding of the city to **Queen of the Massa-Gaete**, after her victory over **Cyrus the Great**<sup>1</sup> (559 BC – 530 BC). "*Queen Tomyris passes into the western part of Pontus Euxinus, called Getia, and builds a city called Tomi, after her name*". **Some historians say that this was the reason of the Achaemenid empire king Darius I campaign in Getia on 513 BC, against the Scythians.**

(1) The name Cyrus is the Latinized form of the name Kuros (Kyros) in Greek, coming from the name Kurus in Old Persian that appears on record in ancient inscriptions. The Greek writers Ctesias and Plutarch say that Cyrus was named from Kuros (sun), meaning Khurevash, <Like the Sun>, unrelated to the Persian Khor (Sun). Karl Hoffmann suggested a translation based on the meaning of the Indo-European root <humiliation>, and thus the name Cyrus would mean "humiliating to the aggressor in the verbal context" [Schmitt, Achaemenid dynasty 2010, p. 515].



**TOMIS MOESIA INFERIOR**, AE16 founder of Mythic - **TOMOC / ATHENA**, A.D.<sup>2</sup> 3rd Century Bronze AE 16, AMNG I/2 pp. 671, 2565; SNG Cop -, SNG BM -, SNG Stancomb -, SNG Munich -, BMC Thrace -, VF, 2.424g, 16.0mm, issued in Tomis, KTICTHC TOMOC, head of young **Tomoc**, wearing taenia; reverse TOMEQC, bust of Athena, straight with helmet, armor and right shield; very rare



**Queen Tomyris learns that her son SPARGAPISES<sup>3</sup> has been taken hostage by Cyrus the Great**, by Jan Moy (1535–1550)

[Wikipedia] · <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomyris#Legacy>

(2) **AD (Anno Domine)**. The numbering of years beginning with the Christian era since the incarnation of the Lord was established by Dionysius Exiguus, a Christian priest from Tomis, Scythia Minor, born AD 470. The calendar was adopted in Italy in AD 527 and later in France and England (Council of Whitby, AD 664).

(3) Interestingly, a king by the name of *Sparagapises* of *Agatirsus* tribe of *Dacia*, is also mentioned by Herodotus

<https://www.crestinortodox.ro/religie/sfantul-dionisie-exiguul-parintele-erei-crestine-96709.html#:~:text=Pe%201%20septembrie%2C%20Biserica%20Orodoxa%20face%20pomenirea%20Sfantului%20Cuvios%20Dionisie%20Exiguul>

### Pausanias about the poet Stesichorus of Himera, Leuce (White) Island and the healing waters of the Istros Delta.

A piquant story is narrated by **Pausanias** (2nd century AD) in "**Description of Greece**" [Book 3. 19.8-20]. **It is interesting how this land in the Istre's Delta was considered since the "antiquity of the classics" a sacred land, where the souls of heroes and divinities reached the Island of Leuce (White) and where holy curative waters, legends say, were recommended by the Oracle of Delphi, for healing diseases.**

Several references to the **White Island** are made by **Leony's**, king of **Crotona** (city in southern Italy), who had war with the **Locrians** and how he was the first to sail to this island, at the mouth of the **Istros (Danube)**. [Pausanis.3.19.12ff].

**Hellene of Troy** was not well regarded by poets such as **Sapo** and **Alcaeus**, because she provoked, through her actions, the Trojan War. **Stesichorus** (630–555 BC) **he saw Hellen in the same way, until she punished him, by taking away his sight because of blasphemy in one of his poems. After receiving the**

message from Hellene of the White Island, Stesichorus composed *Palinodes*<sup>4</sup>, thus absolving her of all charges for the Trojan War, and thus regained his sight.

(4) *Palinode*, a poem in which the poet retracts a certain opinion expressed in an earlier work.

"The story I'm going to tell you I have it from the people of Crotona who told me about Hellene. The people of Himera also consented to this story. In Euxine, at the mouth of the Istros, is a sacred island to Achilles. It is called 'White Island' and has a circumference of twenty stadiums. It is totally forested and abundant in wild and domestic animals, and in it is a temple of Achilles with an image of him. The first to sail nearby was Leonymus of Crotona. Because of this, when the war broke out between the people of Crotona and Locri in Italy, the Locrians having relations with the Oppuntants, they called upon Ajax, son of Oileus, to assist them in the battle. ...

Leony's, the general of Crotona, was wounded in the chest and went to Delphi with his wounds. When he arrived there, the Pythian preacher sent Leonymus to White (Peuce) Island, telling him that Ajax would appear and heal his wounds. During this time, he recovered and returned from the White Island, where he declared that he had seen Achilles and Ajax, son of Oileus and Ajax, son of Telemon. With them were Patroclus and Antilochus; Helena, who was married to Achilles, sent him to sail to Stesichorus in Himera and to inform him that his loss of sight had been caused by her anger.

For this, Stesichorus composed his recantation. [Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Translated by W.Sh.S. Jones and H. A. Ormerod]

Stesichoros (master of the choir), or Tisias was one of the fathers of Hellenic lyric poetry and the first to unite choral music with lyric poetry:



*"Forget the wars, It's time to sing, Take the whistle from Phrygia and call the songs of our blonde Graces."* [Season of Songs, Stesichorus].

Stesichoros lived in Himera in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. and wrote 12 books of lyric poetry. Not much of his work has been preserved, but he is known to have written in Doric dialect and he was inspired by Homer. In 480 BC, the Himerians won a great victory, in the same year with the Battle of Thermopylae, following the attack of the Carthaginians in which their leader, Hamilcar, lost his life.

..but for the Himerians' the beautiful dream of survival would become "a himera" - an unattainable dream<sup>5</sup> when, later around 409 B.C., their city was razed to the ground by the Carthaginians, who returned to take revenge under Hannibal the Great, grandson of Hamilcar.


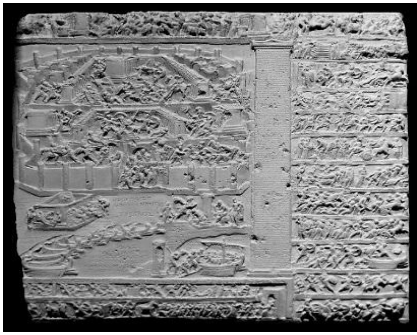

(5) Some people confound today, the word "Himera" meaning a desirable, unattainable dream", with Chimera a scary, mythological mixed breed creature. Chimera, as a hybrid animal, has a body of a lion, another head of a deer and snake tail.

**A himera it is an unattainable, desirable dream, but not a nightmare dream!**

 <p>Sikyonia, Licia Ca. 330/20-280 B.C. AR triobol (14 mm, 2.83 g, 6 h). ΣΙ, CHIMERA (Echidina) advancing left / Dove flying left; pellet above tail. Ref: BCD Peloponnesus 292; BMC 124. Toned. Very fine</p>	<p>In Etruscan civilization, the <b>CHIMERA</b> appears in the "Orientalizing" period that precedes Etruscan Archaic art; that is to say, very early indeed. The CHIMARA appears in Etruscan wall-paintings of the fourth century BC</p>	 <p><b>Chimera</b> on a red-figure Apulian plate, c. 350–340 BC Apulia Louvre</p>
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The survivors of Himera moved 7 miles away from the destroyed city, where they formed the new town of **Thermai Himerensis**.

**The statue of Stesichorus in Thermai Himerensis, which can be seen on the coin below, is described by Cicero as having been restored by 'Scipio the African', after the Second Punic War, 218-201 BC. [Cicero, book II, Verr. ii.35].**

 <p><b>SICILIA, CHIMERA (as Thermai Himerensis)</b> 29. c. 200-150 BC, Bronze Hemilitron, <b>Depicting the statue of the famous Lyric Poet, STESICHOROS</b>, 150 BC. 29 mm 13.5 gm. Obv: Crowned Head of Tyche, right; Cornucopia to the left. Rev: <b>Stesichoros ("leader" of the choir, originally called Tisias)</b> standing to the right, holding a flag and writing on a wax tablet. Campana 18; BAR Issue 5; CNS 18; HGC 2, 1616. <b>Extremely rare, historical value, one of the best known!</b></p>	 <p><b>TROYA, Iliac Tabula, Musei Capitolini.</b> A scene from the Iliac Tabula, with the inscription "The fall of Troy after <b>Stesichorus</b>"</p>	 <p><b>FRIGIA APAMEIA</b>, bronze. About. 88-40 BC. Tyche – Marsyas. Obverse: <b>Artemis-Tyche's</b> turreted head, right, arch in sheath on back. Reverse: ΑΠΑΜΕ / ΠΑΝΚΡ / ΖΗΝΟ. <b>Marsyas, associated with Dionysus, with the double whistle of Phrygia, below "paternal meander"</b>. SNG Copenhagen 193. Apameia (Phrygia) mint, c. 88-40 BC.</p>
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Paul M Cristea, Oct. 2023. Reviewed Dec. 27, 2023/ May20, 2024/ July 2024/ Feb. 2025