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# 7. Greeks and natives in the region of Odessos

## **Margarit Damyanov**

dessos (located under the present-day major port city of Varna) is situated on the coast of a shallow bay, on a coastal terrace enclosed between two plateaux – the Frangensko to the north and the Avrensko to the south. The former has high and steep slopes that form a natural barrier protecting the city from the cold winter winds from the north. To the west, along the coasts of the Varnensko and Beloslavsko lakes, the valley broadens to some 5 or 6 km across and provides arable land. It is also the main route to the interior.

The foundation of Odessos does not pose particular problems. According to Pseudo-Skymnos', the city was founded during the reign of Astyages, king of the Medes (Ps.-Skymnos, 748-49). A recent analysis set the foundation date of Odessos between 584 BC and 575 BC, when the Medes waged war against the Lydians (Boshnakov 2007, 168-170), whilst the archaeological finds suggest a date in the second quarter of the 6th c. BC (Minchev 2003, 213-214). Thus, Odessos was part of the second group of Greek colonies founded on the western coast of the Black Sea (after Histria, Orgame and Apollonia, settled by Milesians in the middle or the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. BC). This is an important fact for our purposes, as it allows us to presume that the colonists, coming from the same metropolis as the first Greeks in the region, settled a place that was relatively well-known (in terms of geographical situation, ethnic context, etc.). It seems obvious that at least some ships sailing along the western Pontic littoral (to Histria, Orgame, or Boristhenis/Olbia further north) will have used the bay as shelter, when necessary. The coastal waters to the north are rather less hospitable.

More settlements subsequently appeared in the region to the north of Odessos – Dionysopolis, Bizone, and Tirizis. However, the written sources for these are few and contradictory. Dionysopolis is the only one that developed as an independent polis, but this transformation seems to have occurred only in Early Hellenistic times. The earliest authority, Pseudo-Skymnos again (Ps.-Skymnos, 751-757), indicates neither the metropolis of the settlement, nor the date of its foundation. This could be an indication of a somewhat different mechanism for the emergence of the city when compared to

the rest of the Greek colonies in the region (Damyanov 2007a, 3-6). The same source says that Bizone was considered by some to be a barbarian settlement, while others thought it was an apoikia of Mesambria (758-760). The earliest source that mentions Tirizis relates the settlement to the reign of Lysimachus (Strabo 7, 6, 1).

The early history (and archaeology) of Odessos is poorly known. Nonetheless, it could offer circumstances that are more promising for the study of the relations between Greeks and natives than those of Apollonia or Mesambria to the south, as the situation in its hinterland is much better known than that to the south of the Balkan range. To the north dozens of necropoleis prove the presence of indigenous communities at least from the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. BC. Furthermore, the Thracian territories to the south of the Balkan Mountains were open to Greek influence from both the Black Sea and the Northern Aegean, especially along the valleys of the rivers Maritsa and Tundzha.

In fact, the evidence from Odessos' hinterland is much more copious than the data we have about the city itself. The explicit written evidence for the native population around Odessos is limited to Pseudo-Skymnos' information that "Krobyzai live around it in a circle" (Ps.-Skymnos, 750). The original source may have been Demetrios from Callatis, whose work could be dated to the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC (Boshnakov 2007, 69-79). On the other hand, Demetrios' description of the native peoples along this part of the Black Sea coast, on which Pseudo-Skymnos seems to have depended heavily, included Scythians in Southern Dobrudzha (from Dionysopolis to Tomis), which seems to correspond to the situation in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC. Therefore, the picture depicted by Pseudo-Skymnos, though a very systematic one, is not necessarily entirely valid for the beginnings of Odessos some three centuries earlier.

An indication of possible differences is the localisation that Herodotus offers for the Krobyzai-in the interior (Herod. 4, 49) rather than on the coast (where he places the Getai). His evidence brings us back to the late 6<sup>th</sup> c. BC and the Scythian campaign of Darius of Persia. The only Thracian people between the eastern spurs of the Balkan range and the river Istros that Herodotus mentions

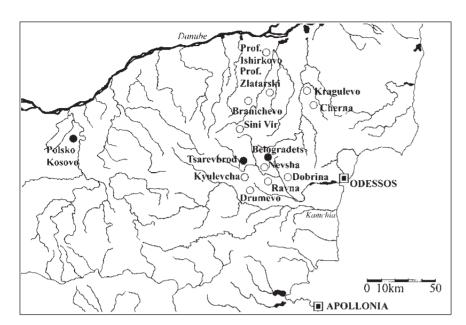


Fig. 174. The hinterland of Odessos in 7th–6th c. BC, with graves of warriors of possible Northern Pontic origin (black circles) and Thracian necropoleis with inhurned cremations (white circles).

are the Getai (Herod. 4, 93). Somewhat later Thucydides describes the Getic tribes as neighbours of the Scythians (Thuc. 2, 96). One more curious account worthy of mention is that of the Gothic historian Jordanes, who wrote that during his campaign in 342-340 BC Philip II of Macedon marched against "the kingdom of Odessitai", ruled by the Goths (i.e. the Getai), all the way to Tomis. When Philip approached, the Gothic (Getic) priests emerged from the city gates, dressed in white garments and playing lyres; they convinced the king of Macedon to pull back his forces (Jord., Get. 10.65). Jordanes' source would have been the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC Greek historian Theopompos (Delev 2004, 229-230). This account, if taken at face value, seems to imply that in the mid-4<sup>th</sup> c. BC Odessos was under the control of the Getai.

Archaeological research fills the gaps for the earlier period. A few graves from the 7th c. BC could be related to peoples who came from the Northern Black Sea steppes (**fig. 174**). Inhumations of warriors discovered at Tsarevbrod, Belogradets and Polsko Kosovo (Popov 1931, 97-102; Tončeva 1980; Stanchev 2000) could indicate that migrations of Scythians and Cimmerians in the early 7th c. BC affected what is now north-eastern Bulgaria.

The second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. BC seems to have been marked by significant changes, as the necropoleis that succeeded these early graves are completely different – cemeteries with numerous cremations that indicate a settled population (**fig. 174**). Closest to Odessos are those at Ravna and Dobrina, some 30-35 km to the west of the polis, along the River Provadijska (Mirchev 1962; Mirchev 1965; Vasilchin 2004). At Dobrina, the ashes were collected in urns placed in simple pits. At Ravna, there were similar pits, but also small cists of

stone slabs. Low mounds could cover more than one grave (and at Ravna some cists contained more than one urn). B. Hänsel identified three spatial (and chronological) groups of graves at Ravna (Hänsel 1974). The first group consists of pit graves with only handmade pottery, and the third comprises cist graves with only wheel-made pottery. The intervening group featured both pits with wheel-made urns and cists with hand-made urns. The absence of Greek imports makes dating very difficult. This problem was partly resolved by a tumulus at Dobrina: the primary grave contained a hand-made urn of the earliest type and a secondary grave an East Greek oinochoe from the first half of the 6th c. BC (Alexandrescu 1976, 118, No. 12). Therefore, B. Hänsel proposed the late 7th c. BC as the initial date for the functioning of the necropoleis, with the transition to the phase with wheel-made pottery occurring in the late 6th or early 5th c. BC. Recent studies dated the appearance of these necropoleis to the early 6th c. BC at the latest (Archibald 1998, 58-63).

For Odessos itself, these chronological uncertainties are of little importance, as the necropoleis are either earlier or contemporary to its foundation. Similar early necropoleis have been excavated in the region to the north of Odessos, e.g. at Cherna and Kragulevo (Bobcheva 1975; Vasilchin 1985; Vasilchin, 1998-1999). Some regionally-specific characteristics could be observed, but the graves are similar enough to those in the south (Ravna and Dobrina) to illustrate processes that took place over vast territories. In the course of the centuries from the 6th c. BC onwards, a dense network of necropoleis covered the whole of present-day northeastern Bulgaria. They prove the presence of a more or less homogeneous population that could be identified as

the Getai of the written sources (and the tribes related to them, e.g. the Krobyzai). A few centuries later, Pseudo-Skymnos describes a similar situation – the encirclement of Odessos by the Krobyzai; the use of some of the necropoleis without visible breaks can indeed be traced from the early 6<sup>th</sup> to the early 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC.

The conservative character of the Getic necropoleis, in which almost no imports have been discovered, is noteworthy. At Cherna, where 137 graves were excavated, imported goods were found in only four graves, all of them Early Hellenistic.

This situation is very different from what is known about the northern regions of the Black Sea littoral, for example, where numerous Greek imports were already penetrating deep into the hinterland in the latter half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. BC (Vachtina 2007). A group of mid-5<sup>th</sup> c. Chian amphorae in Southern Dobrudzha (Lazarov 1982, 9) is an exception in a hinterland that is otherwise virtually devoid of imports. This could in part be a product of the state of research, however, as not a single Thracian settlement from the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> c. BC has been excavated; all the evidence for this period comes from necropoleis.

Another possibility is to relate the wide distribution of wheel-made pottery (from perhaps the late 6th or the early 5th c. BC on) to the influence of Odessos. Wheel-made pottery forms some 50 % of the finds in the Getic necropoleis from the 5th c. BC, although traditional hand-made vases remained the preferred urns. The excavations at Histria proved that the production of grey pottery started at the latest in the second half of the 6th c. BC. One might presume that at least some of the wheel-made pottery in the indigenous necropoleis was manufactured in Odessos (Alexandrescu 1977, 136-137), but this remains hypothetical in the absence of specific studies. In fact, some hand-made and wheelmade vases with parallels in the Getic necropoleis have been found in Odessos (Toncheva 1967). They come from an uncertain chronological context, but at least indicate some contacts between Greeks and natives.

Readily-identifiable Greek objects (amphorae, black-glazed and red-figure vases) started appearing in the necropoleis of the common native population after the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC and became more numerous in Early Hellenistic times. It could be that some changes occurred in burial ritual as a result, as in some cases transport amphorae were used as urns.

The rich (or aristocratic) graves demonstrate a somewhat different situation, but the earliest known so far date from the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC (e.g. a tumulus at Golemani near Veliko Tarnovo, the publication of which is awaited). The earliest published complexes are tumular graves in the region of city of Ruse on the Danube (Obretenik, Koprivets) (Stanchev 1994, 173-174),

and to the south, between the towns of Popovo and Targovishte (Svetlen and Rouets) (Velkov 1929, 37-39, 50-52) (fig. 175). It seems that all of these were warrior graves, with arms and armour, imported bronze and ceramic vases, and golden jewellery; the imported items suggest a date in the 5th c. BC. The grave structures are very diverse - from a chamber of logs in a pit lined with stones (Koprivets) to a tomb of ashlars with double-pitched roof (Rouets). The grave goods are similar to those in the rich graves to the south of the Balkan range - e.g. the well-known necropolis at Duvanlij and its associated finds (Filov 1934; Archibald 1998, 165-166). It seems that the pieces of armour that were placed in the graves had been used for several generations a fact that harks back to somewhat earlier times, perhaps antedating the middle of the 5th c. BC (Stoyanov 2001, 172). The written sources inform us that the Odrysian kings Teres and, later, Sitalkes established their control to the north of the Balkan range before the middle of the 5th c. (Herod. 4, 80-81; Thuc. 2, 96-97). The penetration of influences from the south can be illustrated by a few graves, unfortunately not published, near the passes in the eastern parts of the Balkan range – the above-mentioned tumulus at Golemani and another one at Kapinovo near Veliko Tarnovo, and a grave at Gradnitsa near Gabrovo (Archibald 1998, 157-158; Marazov 1998, 205-206; Tonkova 2003, 500-502). As a result, one cannot be sure by which route the Greek imports arrived - from the Black Sea via Odessos, or (more probably) from the south.

To the group of early, rich burial complexes one could add another grave in the immediate vicinity of Odessos – a tumulus near Dolishte on the Frangensko Plateau, some 15 km to the northwest of the polis. Only the golden ornaments among the finds have been preserved, but black-glazed pottery and an alabastron are also mentioned in the publications. The ornaments include a necklace, a fibula, a bracelet, two pectorals, and some other small items, dated broadly to the 5th c. BC (Tonkova 2002, 285; Doncheva 2006). These finds offer proof that the processes that were under way in north-eastern Thrace had their influence on the region of Odessos. It could be presumed that it was one of the poleis reported by Thucydides to have paid tribute to the Odrysian kings Sitalkes and Seuthes I (Thuc. 2, 97, 3).

The Thracian centre near Ruse continued its existence in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC, as evidenced by the treasure of Borovo (Marazov 1998, 222-225, Nos. 173-177; Stoyanov 2001, 173). Inscriptions on three of the vases mention the Odrysian king Kotys; they prove the relations of the local dynasty with the Odrysian Kingdom, and the circulation of royal gifts that came from the south. To the north of the Balkan range, similar inscriptions were

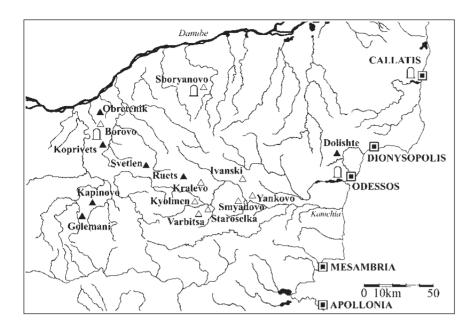


Fig. 175. Rich Thracian graves in the hinterland of Odessos in the 5th c. BC (black triangles), and in late 4th and early 3th c. BC (white triangles).

Barrel-vaulted tombs at Callatis, Odessos, Sboryanovo and Borovo.

attested on vases from a tumulus at Alexandrovo, near Lovech, from the rich graves at Adgighiol in Northern Dobrudzha and Vratsa in north-western Bulgaria, and from the treasure of Rogozen (Archibald 1998, 260-261). These finds further illustrate the penetration of royal gifts from the south and offer a useful parallel for the earlier period.

There is more evidence from the last decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC. Several necropoleis of this period have been investigated along the upper course of the River Kamchiya and its tributaries (**fig. 175**); it seems that the river was a major route into the interior. A few examples could be mentioned from a group characterized by the presence of imported items.

A primitive tomb at Staroselka is among the earliest, with mid-4th c. BC lekythoi and black-glazed pottery (Vasileva 1971; Tacheva 1971). At the nearby village of Kyolmen, a few warrior graves were excavated under small tumuli (Dremsizova-Nelchinova 1970): cists of stone slabs with weapons and imported objects (lekythoi, alabastra, amphorae, etc.). One of the tombs was covered with a slab, on the lower surface of which an inscription was engraved - in Greek letters, but in non-Greek language. The imported pottery suggests a date in the late 4th to early 3rd c. BC. At Varbitsa near Kyolmen, a primitive tomb from the same period contained richer grave goods – a bronze set for serving wine (a situla, an oinochoe, and a strainer) and some silver vases. The deceased was cremated and the ashes were collected in a clay urn (Filov 1934, 171-180).

Still along the River Kamchiya, more monumental structures were discovered under tumuli at the village of Yankovo (Dremsizova 1955) – three tombs, unfortunately plundered and mostly dismantled. Two of them

had rectangular antechambers and round chambers – a layout that is typical of many tombs in Southern Thrace. The burials of horses with their harnesses on are one of the characteristic features of this necropolis; they were discovered in all three tumuli, in front of the tombs or in the antechambers. Finds from secondary cremations in urns are indicative of a date in the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC. Under a tumulus at Ivanski, near Yankovo, a cist with a secondary cremation contained numerous imported items (two amphorae, metal vases, and pottery) of similar date (Velkov 1931).

Somewhat later are the graves at Kralevo to the north, representative of the beginning and the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC. In the three graves in Tumulus No. 1 (two primitive tombs and an urn), numerous imported ceramic vases were discovered (Ginev 2002). Most interesting is the grave in Tumulus No. 3, where the ashes of an important person were buried together with rich gifts. The structure itself is rather simple – a large pit with its sides lined with stones. The urn was a gilded clay hydria. The bridle and the golden ornaments for the horse's gear emphasize the Thracian character of the complex, dated by a Thasian amphora to the second quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC (Ginev 2000).

The above-listed graves from the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the first decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC illustrate a significant diversity of grave structures – from pits and cists to different types of tombs. A relatively substantial penetration of imports could be observed in the interior. The graves feature items typical of the funerary practices of the Greek colonies (e.g. lekythoi and unguentaria). This is the period when transport amphorae were used as urns, and a few Early Hellenistic graves in pithoi have been discovered (Radev 2000). Nonetheless, the

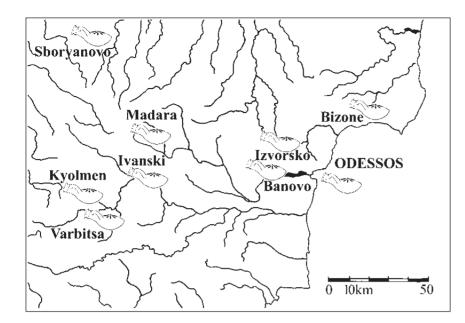


Fig. 176. Finds of lenticular askoi in the hinterland of Odessos.

Thracian aristocracy stuck to its typical burial customs – their graves contained weapons, horse-trappings (and sometimes horses), and hand-made pottery.

It can be presumed with more certainty that these imports came via Odessos. This is suggested by their appearance along the valley of Kamchiya, a natural route to the interior, as well as by the presence of certain types of object. Notably, lenticular askoi became widespread in late 4<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC. They are typical of the necropolis of Odessos (Toncheva 1961, 29-30; Toncheva 1974, 301; Ivanov 1956, 95; Georgieva 1991, 33; Lazarenko, Mircheva, Stoyanova 2008, 85-86), but rare in the rest of the Greek necropoleis in the region. Such vases were discovered at Varbitsa, Kyolmen, Ivanski, Madara, Sboryanovo, etc. (fig. 176).

Greek influence was probably not limited to the deposition of imported goods in native graves. The inscription from Kyolmen is an important example. Still more revealing is an Early Hellenistic tomb, excavated recently near the town of Smyadovo (Atanasov, Nedelchev 2003). It consists of two chambers, covered with double-pitched roof of stone slabs, and an inscription on the facade reads "Gonimaseze Seuthou gyne" – a common Greek formula, but with two Thracian names.

It is evident that the late 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC was a time of change in the Thracian hinterland of Odessos. It was influenced by processes that developed over vast territories and resulted from the activity of a series of Macedonian rulers, first Philip II, then Alexander the Great, and finally Lysimachus, who inherited Thrace after Alexander's death. The new trends are exemplified by the centre at Sboryanovo (Stoyanov 2002; Stoyanov 2003), some 100 km to the northwest of Odessos. The size of the settlement (with a fortified area of 11 ha), the massive

fortifications and the large volume of imports could indicate this was the capital of a Getic state – an impression strengthened by investigations in its necropolis. In addition to the well-known Sveshtari Tomb (Fol *et al.* 1986), three more barrel-vaulted tombs were discovered, two of them dismantled (Gergova 1996; Rousseva 2000, 134-154). The quality of construction and the presence of Hellenistic elements in its architecture and decoration prove the strong influence of Greek monuments, or even the workmanship of Greek (or Macedonian) masons. Following the typical tradition of the times, the Thracian ruler depicted in the Sveshtari Tomb had "the horn of Ammon" – as did many of Alexander's successors.

All this gave birth to the hypothesis that Sboryanovo is identifiable with the Getic capital Helis that appears in the written sources (Delev 1990), and that the ruler buried in the Sveshtari Tomb was Dromichaites (Stoyanov 1998) – the only Getic king that we know of in this period. In the early 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC, Lysimachus led one or two unsuccessful military campaigns against him. According to Diodorus, Lysimachus was forced to make peace with the Getic king (21, 12), and Pausanias relates that he even gave him his daughter (1, 9, 6). The appearance of "Macedonian" tombs in Sboryanovo could indicate the presence of Macedonians in the local court and among the residents of a city that existed from the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. until the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC, when it was destroyed by an earthquake.

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This review of the evidence from the hinterland of Odessos leads to the conclusion that from its very foundation the polis developed in an area that was densely inhabited. The necropoleis at Ravna at Dobrina are relatively far from Odessos, but chance finds from the Frangensko Plateau could be dated to the 6th c. BC (Georgieva 1993). The grave at Dolishte shows that in the 5th c. BC Thracian aristocrats lived in the vicinity of the polis. Cremations in urns from the 4th c. BC have been excavated near the villages of Ezerovo, Banovo and Kipra, some 10 to 20 km from Odessos (Toncheva 1956, 54; Margos 1961, 54-55) (fig. 177). Recently, near the village of Banovo, a small early 3rd c. BC tomb was discovered (Lazarenko, Mircheva, Stoyanova 2008). Some of the finds imply the non-Greek ethnicity of the deceased and there are engraved images at the entrance that do not look Greek. This could be a further indication of the presence of Thracians near the city in the Hellenistic period.

In the earlier period, however, it is very difficult to trace the influence of Odessos on the indigenous populations. The 6th and the 5th c. BC are known only from necropoleis, in which there are virtually no Greek imports (except for wheel-made pottery that may have been manufactured in Odessos). The presence of imported items becomes more visible in the rich graves of the 5th and the 4th c. BC, but at least for the 5th c. it is uncertain by which route these imports reached the interior. The latter half of the 4th c. BC seems to be a time of change. More imports arrive in the hinterland and items that are typical of Greek burial customs appear in Thracian graves. The tomb of Gonimaseze may illustrate this adoption or imitation of Greek models at an elite level. The city and the burials at Sboryanovo (and their historical interpretation) indicate the integration of the Getic territories into the Hellenistic world.

However, it would seem that it was not Odessos that created this situation, but the Macedonian conquest. First Philip II and then Alexander the Great led campaigns in these parts of Thrace, and in the late  $4^{th}$  – early  $3^{rd}$  c. BC Lysimachus was particularly active in the region, where, in order to establish and strengthen his control, he waged several wars against the Greek poleis and the Getai.

\* \* \*

Odessos itself is poorly studied. Mid-6<sup>th</sup> c. BC dwellings with a single room have been reported, but never properly published. Parts of the city-walls have been excavated, and dated to the mid-4<sup>th</sup> c. BC – mainly on historical grounds (Preshlenov 2002, 16; Minchev 2003, 240-241). In the western part of the fortified area of Odessos, the temenos has been identified, but evidence of temples is elusive. Two late Archaic Ionic capitals, dated to around 480 BC, have been discovered (Minchev 2003, 245), as well as architectural elements of at least

two Early Hellenistic buildings: a Doric temple and a tholos (Stoyanov, Stoyanova 1997; Stoyanova 2003).

The necropolis is also poorly known, mainly from rescue excavations (fig. 178). It seems that its organisation followed the usual pattern; it lay outside the settled area, along the main roads. The few published graves are spread unevenly in time. Not a single Archaic grave has been discovered and there are only slightly more from the later Classical period. Next to the western city wall, a small plot with four graves from the first half of the 4th c. BC was excavated (Toncheva 1964). Three of these were cremations in urns, with the ashes collected in two red-figure bell-craters (Reho 1990, Nos. 15-16) and another vase. Nearby, a child inhumation in a pit was discovered; among the grave goods, there were 192 knucklebones. But these data come from a limited area and cannot be regarded as representative of the necropolis as a whole; the clear domination of the cremation rite does not correspond to the situation in the late 4th and the 3rd c. BC, for which there is more evidence.

Another mid-4<sup>th</sup> c. grave was discovered under a tumulus some 2-3 km to the south of the city (Shkorpil 1931, 68-76). The structure was a small cist of ashlars, built on the ground and covered with a cairn of field-stones, then with an earthen mound. The interior of the chamber was painted in red. The deceased was cremated and the ashes were collected in a bronze hydria; three alabastra, a lekythos, a strigil, and other items were placed in the grave.

More data are available for the Early Hellenistic period. Thirty-six graves of late 4th and 3rd c. BC date that could be considered Greek have been excavated (i.e. published) in either the urban necropolis or in the vicinity of Odessos up to 8 km from the city. Of particular interest is a tumulus near the village of Topolite to the west (Toncheva 1964a, 56-59) – in a region, where earlier Thracian cremations (Ezerovo) have been excavated. Several barrel-vaulted tombs were also discovered at some distance from the city (Mirchev 1958), and a small necropolis of tumuli was excavated on Galata Promontory, opposite Odessos across the Bay of Varna (Toncheva 1951; Minchev 1975; Damyanov 2007b).

No compact areas have been properly excavated, so it is not yet possible to suggest the structure of any part of the necropolis. To the west of Varna a group of Early Hellenistic tumuli was excavated in 1908; they covered graves built of quarried blocks or slabs that contained funerary wreaths, a glass alabastron, etc. (Shkorpil, Shkorpil 1909). More vases were discovered between the tumuli, possibly from disturbed plain graves; it could be that the two types coexisted in the same areas. In another tumulus, two graves were discovered, presumably of a

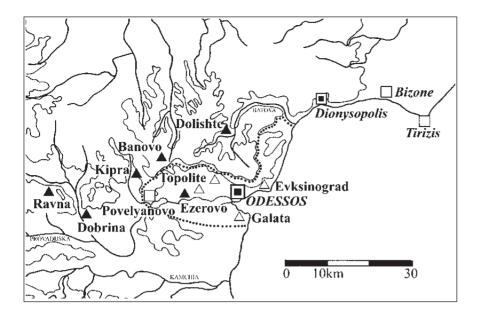


Fig. 177. The region of Odessos, with Greek poleis (white squares with inscribed black squares), settlements of Greek or mixed character (white squares), Thracian necropoleis (black triangles) and Greek Hellenistic burials (white triangles); the dotted border demarcates the possible limits of Odessos' chora in late 4th – early 3rd c. BC.

man and a woman, as one of them contained rich golden jewellery (Savova 1971). This seems to be an indication of the existence of family complexes.

The evidence reveals a pronounced predominance of inhumations. Of all 36 graves, only five are cremations. Good data are available for two of the cremations: a tumulus with a grey-ware amphora placed in a triangular cist in the necropolis at Galata (Minchey 1975) and a bronze urn in a small cist near the Roman Baths (Toncheva 1974, Grave No. 3). Two more graves from the necropolis at Galata were published as "cremations", without any supplementary detail (Toncheva 1951, Tumuli Nos. 5 and 6). Another grave was described simply as "cremation" (Mirchev 1956, 5). One could add two more graves of uncertain character: a disturbed grave, possibly a primary cremation (the grave-goods had traces of secondary burning) (Minchev 1978), and a grave with golden jewellery from late 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC (Mirchev 1947). Including all the uncertain cases, cremations would then account for about 20 percent of the total.

Various grave-structures have been attested – simple pits, tile graves, cists of quarried slabs or blocks, and barrel-vaulted tombs. Some of the structures that were built of blocks were covered with cairns of field-stones. The combination of monumental structures and the presence of rich golden jewellery within them shows the existence of a wealthy group among the citizens (or the inhabitants) of Odessos. A quarter of all excavated graves contained golden ornaments. Such lavishness in funerary practice seems to be exceptional among the necropoleis in the region (Tonkova 1997, 86). Seven graves from the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC form a homogeneous group. A whole set of female personal ornaments seemingly comprised a ring, a necklace, and

a pair of earrings (Ivanov 1956, 91-93; Toncheva 1951, 60-61), but in the majority of cases one of the elements is missing. The recurrence of more or less similar types is indicative of a certain fashion among the rich. For example, in three graves (two in the necropolis at Galata and another one to the north of the city), similar discoid earrings were discovered.

Most of the grave-goods are typical of contemporary Greek necropoleis – containers for oil and perfume (unguentaria and alabastra), drinking cups, jugs, etc. One peculiarity distinguishes the necropolis of Odessos from the other Greek colonial cemeteries in the region: the presence of a clay lamp as a near-obligatory grave item (in almost 80 percent of the undisturbed graves).

The necropolis of Odessos fits with what is known about funerary practices in the Black Sea area. Due to insufficient data, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which the colony was affected by indigenous influence. In earlier publications, the burning of bodies and building of tumuli were interpreted as indices of Thracian ethnicity or at least of Thracian influence. However, there is little else to support such a hypothesis. One should remember that in all Greek necropoleis in the Black Sea area both rites have been attested, including those in the Northern Pontic area, where cremation was not typical for the natives. Various types of cremation graves have been discovered in the necropoleis in the Western Pontic region, and at Histria, Orgame and Tomis burning the body was the usual practice (Lungu 2007). Similarly, the tumulus by itself cannot be regarded as defining ethnicity, and what were presumably Greek tumuli have been excavated around the colonies in the region, e.g. at Histria, Orgame, Callatis, etc. Late in the 19th c., the Škorpil brothers counted 286 tumuli around Varna (Shkorpil, Shkorpil 1898, 20) and many of the Hellenistic graves

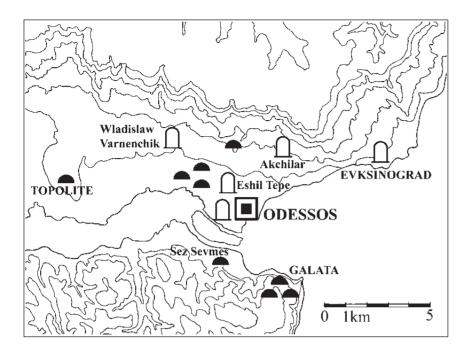


Fig. 178. The necropolis of Odessos in 4th\_3rd c. BC, with excavated tumuli and barrel-vaulted tombs.

(and at least one of the Classical period) were covered with mounds. Only the grave goods might therefore hint at the ethnicity of the deceased.

In fact, almost none of the graves did contain any objects that could be considered Thracian. A comparison with the contemporary tumuli in the interior (e.g. Kyolmen, Yankovo, or Kralevo) is rather revealing; they contain weapons, arms, horse trappings (and indeed the horses), and items of precious metals – the accessories of male warriors. On the contrary, in Odessos rich grave goods appear mostly in female graves (if one accepts that the associated personal ornaments identify them as women). Male graves (those with funerary wreaths are usually regarded as such) are much poorer – despite the tumuli.

There are exceptions, however, such as the small golden pectoral and golden torque that were discovered in the necropolis (Toncheva 1956, 52, 63, fig. 5, 6). These could be dated broadly to the Classical period, though the lack of context and associated finds make this speculative. Torques and especially pectorals have been discovered in many Thracian graves from the  $5^{th}$  c. and the  $4^{th}$  c. BC – both to the south and to the north of the Balkan range, Dolishte being the nearest to Odessos. These two objects could indicate some interaction between noble Greeks and Thracians. There are other isolated finds with possible non-Greek connotations. In one tumulus (with a cist-like structure built of ashlars and remains of a wooden sarcophagus with glass inlays), a small hand-made vase was unearthed, which is nonetheless insufficient to provide a basis for ethnic interpretation (Toncheva 1964a, 56-59). In a grave from the first half of the 4th c. BC, a spearhead was discovered, along with Greek vases typical of the period (Toncheva 1961, 31). Among the grave goods of a presumed primary cremation from the Early Hellenistic period, a cheek-guard of a helmet was found (Minchev 1978). Weapons and hand-made pottery are rare in the Greek necropoleis, but such isolated items are hardly enough to consider the deceased to be Thracians; what is more, the Hellenistic period introduced some changes in Greek practices.

\* \* \*

We should also consider here a problem that reaches beyond the necropolis of Odessos – the presence of barrel-vaulted tombs of the so-called "Macedonian" type (Mirchev 1958). There has been a tendency to attribute them to members of the indigenous (i.e. Thracian) aristocracy, or to regard them as the result of native influences (most recently in Oppermann 2004, 171-172). This is a wider problem as a few similar tombs (interpreted in a similar way) have been excavated in the necropolis of Callatis. Most Romanian scholars tend to attribute them to the so-called "Scythian kings" in Dobrudzha (see below).

Five barrel-vaulted tombs have been excavated around Odessos, in the immediate vicinity of the city walls and further out within the presumed territory of the city. Two of the tombs have a dromos; three have only a chamber. As far as it is known, all of them were dug into the ground up to the beginning of the vault (Stoyanova 2007, 576).

In two cases, more data about the contents is available. The bodies were laid into wooden sarcophagi – with bone ornaments in the tumulus Eshil Tepe (Ivanov

1956, 94) and with terracotta figurines in the tumulus near Akchilar (Mirchev 1956, 3-5; Ivanov 1956, 97). In the first tomb, numerous Greek vases were discovered; in the second, the remains of a funerary wreath, a lamp and three alabastra were found (Ivanov 1956, 94-97). Both complexes belong to the first quarter or more generally to the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC. In the third one, an Egyptian faience vase was discovered, with a date in the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC. Black-glazed vases are said to have been found in the fourth, which could point to the same period (Mirchev 1958, 574-575). The last was empty. Nothing suggests the deceased were anything but Greeks. Only the structures distinguish these tombs from other graves in the necropolis.

Barrel-vaulted tombs are rare in the territories to the north of the Balkan range (fig. 175). There are three larger groups – the tombs around Odessos, five tombs around Callatis, and four tombs in the necropolis of the Getic capital at Sboryanovo. Another tomb has been discovered near the village of Borovo (Stanchev 2002).

The tombs at Callatis had already been plundered when discovered, but they could be dated - like those at Odessos - to the Hellenistic Period. The author of the earliest publication already concluded it was improbable that some Greeks had been buried apart from the rest; he therefore suggested relating the tombs to non-Greeks, for whom the most probable candidates would then be the so-called "Scythian kings", unknown but for their coins (Preda 1962, 170-171). This interpretation is vigorously defended in A. Avram's studies on the territory of Callatis (Avram 1991, 120-121; Avram 1999, 21). His argument is based on the assumption that similar structures have not been discovered in the necropolis of the city. Moreover, their aristocratic character contradicts the democratic constitution of Callatis. No important Thracian centres have been identified in the region and therefore the tombs cannot be related to the Getai or the Krobyzai. Thus, the only possibility we are left with are the Scythians, as written sources and coins attest the presence of Scythians and Scythian kings in Dobrudzha in Hellenistic times. Lately, M. Oppermann has nevertheless suggested that the persons buried in these tombs could have been Thracian aristocrats - mercenaries in the service of Callatis (Oppermann 2004, 165).

At least some of these arguments are valid for Odessos. In fact, the weak spot of earlier analyses is the tendency to consider the tombs at Callatis as a unique group, without tracing parallels with the structures around Odessos. Hellenistic decrees from Odessos describe a democratic polis with boule and demos, as was the case with all other poleis in the region. Nonetheless, there are numerous documents that attest the presence in the Greek poleis along the Western Pontic littoral of

a group of rich and influential citizens that were proclaimed *euergetai* of their (or other) cities (Anghel 2000). These benefactions were often linked with donations or loans of large amounts of money. There are a few such documents from Callatis. The golden jewellery in the Hellenistic necropolis of Odessos speaks of the presence of wealthy people that were willing to invest money in their funerals. Nothing indicates an egalitarian funerary community. In this respect, the barrel-vaulted tombs differ from the rest only as structures.

The absence of an important Thracian centre is also relevant in the case of Odessos. Numismatic studies show that issues of the Scythian kings were minted in both poleis (Youroukova 1977; Yurukova 1992, 160-163). However, they seem to date from after the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. and mostly from the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC, and the tombs around Odessos belong to an earlier period. If we are to believe Pseudo-Skymnos, in late 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> c. Odessos was not in Scythian territory – the border between Scythians and Krobyzai was around Dionysopolis (Ps.-Skymnos, 756-757). This would mean the "Scythian hypothesis" could not be applied to the tombs around Odessos.

It would be natural to make a comparison with the barrel-vaulted tombs at Sboryanovo. These, however, appear in an undoubtedly indigenous setting and in a finished form, and should be studied in the context of their time, namely Lysimachus' reign and the incorporation of north-eastern Thrace into the Hellenistic world. The historical interpretation of the centre at Sboryanovo – as Dromichaites' capital Helis – could explain the appearance of "Macedonian" tombs there.

The same context could equally explain the appearance of the tombs around Odessos and Callatis. In 313 BC, the Western Pontic poleis, led by Callatis, revolted against Lysimachus' rule and chased his garrisons from the cities (Diod. 19, 73), indicating that the Macedonian king had previously established his power over them. Later, Odessos opened its gates to the troops of Lysimachus, and Callatis had to surrender after a long siege. Before the battle of Ipsos, Pleistarchos used the harbour of Odessos to send reinforcements to Lysimachus (Diod. 20, 12). Strabon says that Lysimachus kept his treasures in the fort of Tirisis, to the north of Odessos (7, 6, 1). These are indications of the remarkable activity of the Macedonian king in this region, and for a very long period (from before 313 to at least 290 BC), as well as for the physical presence of Macedonians at Odessos, at least in the garrison of the city. Here an essential difference between the tombs around Odessos and Callatis and those at Sboryanovo should be noted. The former were dug into the ground, as is normal for such tombs in Macedonia, and the latter were built on the surface, as it is usual for such structures in Thrace (Stoyanova 2007, 576).

It would seem that the tombs around Odessos and Callatis had nothing to do with the indigenous (be it Thracian or Scythian) hinterland, but were probably related to the Macedonian presence in the region. They could have been constructed for Macedonians (e.g. officers from the garrison), or for rich citizens of Odessos that followed the fashion of the time. The richness of some of the graves around Odessos speaks of prosperity around the end of the 4th and the first decades of the 3rd c. BC. Other data indicate an overall change in the situation in the region. It seems that the chora of the polis was enlarged (fig. 177), as evidenced by the appearance of a settlement with Greek architecture, and probably fortified, near Povelyanovo some 20 km to the west of Odessos (Damyanov 2004, 53).

These decades correspond to a period of increase in the volume of Greek imports and of stronger Greek influence in the interior of north-eastern Thrace. This development, however, was a result of the overall historical situation in the region, when the polis and the neighbouring territories were incorporated into the Hellenistic kingdom of Lysimachus. From what we know, it was precisely those changes in the latter half of the 4th c. BC that opened up the interior of northeastern Thrace.

Certainly, the Greeks at Odessos had relations with their Thracian neighbours before that, but the scale of the exchange of goods and ideas seems to have been rather insignificant. As far as we know, in the early period Odessos did not play the role of a major redistributing centre of Mediterranean goods towards the Thracian hinterland – this happened only after about 350 BC. It was not trade that pushed the Milesians to found yet another colony. Possibly, the colony tried to compensate with its own production; this would account for the presence of wheel-made vases in the Getic necropoleis. On other hand, the region does not provide ideal conditions for extensive agriculture and territorial expansion. In the framework of the Milesian colonisation of the Western Black Sea littoral, Odessos seems to have filled the gap between the colonies that were founded in the second half of the 7th c. - Apollonia to the south and Histria and Orgame in Northern Dobrudzha. Perhaps the demands of coastal navigation predetermined the choice of the site. To some extent surprisingly, the colonists apparently preferred Odessos to the peninsula of Mesambria that was settled several decades later. The coast to the north offers only a few suitable anchorages and no good harbours. A tentative conclusion could be that in the early period of its existence Odessos was an important harbour, and little more.

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