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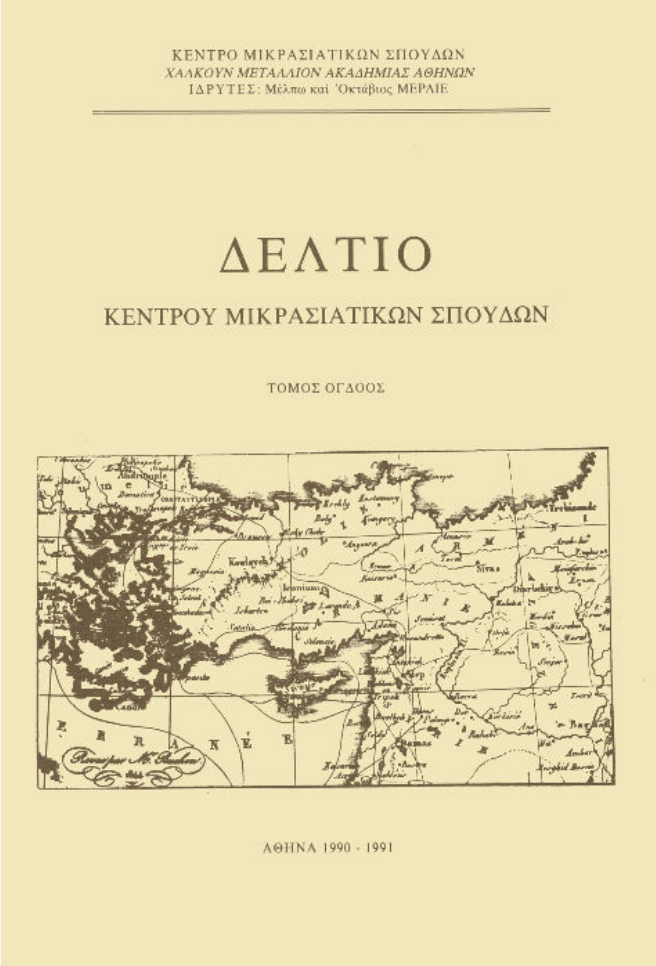

Apollon Myrikaios in an Erythraian war

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APOLLON MYRIKAIOS IN AN ERYTHRAIAN WAR

In Nikandros, *Theriaka* 612-614 the following instruction is given: «Take also of the tamarisk a young bush bearing no fruit, a diviner honoured among mortals, upon which Apollon of Korope bestows prophecies and ordinances over mankind».

612 *καὶ μυρίκης λάζοιο νέον πανακαρπέα θάμνον,*
μάντιν ἐνὶ ζωοῖσι γεράσμιον, ᾗ ἐν Ἀπόλλων
μαντοσύνας Κοροπαῖος ἐθήκατο καὶ θέμιν ἀνδρῶν.

613 *ἐν αἰζηοῖσι* Meineke, ed. Steph. Byz. p. 375 app. crit.

In the scholia, at line 613, it is stated that in Lesbos also Apollon holds a frond of tamarisk; that is why he was called μυρικαῖος there. Apollon with his tamarisk at his oracle in Korope beside the Gulf of Pagasai is thus connected with Apollon Myrikaios in Lesbos. Aeolians would have brought over the distinctive cult from Thessaly to Lesbos in the course of their migrations eastward across the Aegean.

The scholium continues:

καὶ Ἀλκαῖός (Fr. 444, Z 121 Lobel/Page) *φησιν †εν† τοῖς περὶ Ἀρχεανακτίδην Ἐρυθραίους πόλεμον φανῆναι τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα καθ' ὕπνους ἔχοντα μυρίκης κλῶνα.*

ἐν τοῖς codd., *ἐν* del. Welcker, *ἐν-* (v.c. *πρώτῳ*) ci. Bergk. *καὶ τὸν πρὸς Ἐρυθραῖον* codd., *κατὰ* em. Welcker, *Ἐρυθραίους* em. Bergk.

The family Archeanaktidai were mentioned elsewhere in Alkaios (Fr. 112, E 1, 24 L./P.), and an Archaianax of Mytilene is said to have taken stones from the walls of Ilion to fortify Sigeion (Strabo 13.1.38, 599 Cas.). The name Archeanaktidai is therefore authentically Mytilenean and the family were war-leaders in their city (there were also Archaianaktidai who ruled at the Kimmerian Bosporos [Diodoros 12.31.1], but it is not certain that they were kinsmen of the Mytilenean family).

D. L. Page remarked of the war in which Apollon of the tamarisk appeared to combatants in their dreams «Nothing further is known about this Ery-

thraean war»[1]. There is, however, some evidence to be examined in connexion with fighting between Erythrai and Lesbos. Concerning Sibyls Solinus in his *Collectanea* (2.18, p. 36, 2-8 ed. Th. Mommsen, Berlin 1895) states:

Delphicam autem Sibyllam ante Troiana bella vaticinatam Bocchus autumnat, cuius plurimos versus operi suo Homerum inseruisse manifestat. hanc Herophilen (*herofilia* M = Parisinus 7230, saec. X) Erythraea annis aliquot *intercedentibus insecuta est Sibyllaque appellata est de scientiae parilitate, quae inter alia magnifica Lesbios amissuros imperium maris multo ante praemonuit quam id accideret. ita Cumanam tertio fuisse post has loco ipsa aevi series probat.*

Thus according to Solinus the Erythraian Sibyl foretold the end of Lesbian naval power. A thalassocracy of Lesbos comes before that of Phokaia in the Eusebian list of thalassocracies. The origin of the list can be traced back to Kastor of Rhodes in the first century B.C. (*F.Gr.Hist.* 250 T 1). The learned Varro, who is the source of Solinus in the passage quoted above, was a younger contemporary of Kastor and is likely to have drawn upon his *Kanon* of thalassocracies in composing the *Antiquitates.*

Kastor's scheme of thalassocracies is preserved in Diodoros (7.11, 2.140 Vogel) and in Eusebian chronography. It placed the end of Lesbian naval power in a year equivalent to 576/5 B.C. The year is a terminus for the chronographic context of the Erythraian Sibyl's prophecy of Lesbian naval failure. Her prophecy should, however, not be placed much earlier than 576/5, because she began to prophesy later than the Marpessian Sibyl and, according to Pausanias (10.12.7), took over some of her oracles. The Marpessian Sibyl is said to have lived in the early to mid-sixth century B.C., *Solonis et Cyri temporibus* (Herakl. Pont. in Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 1.6.12). Therefore both Sibyls were active early in the sixth century, the prophecies of the Erythraian following soon those of the Marpessian. Both sets of prophecies had begun within the lifetime of Alkaios[2].

Alkaios in Z 121, as we saw, told of a war between Mytilene and Erythrai. Early in the sixth century the Erythraian Sibyl foretold the fall of Lesbian naval power. The forecast must have been welcome to the Erythraians if they were then engaged in hostilities with the Mytileneans. It is a fair inference that her prophecy was given to the Erythraians during the war to which Alkaios refers. Some of the Erythraian's oracles were borrowed from the Marpessian Sibyl; if this one was, then the Marpessian also foretold a Lesbian defeat-pos-

1. Denys Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus*, Oxford 1955, p. 175 note 4.

2. For Erythraian borrowing of Marpessian oracles see H. W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, ed. B. C. McGing, London and New York 1988, pp. 59-60 and Parke, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, vol. 25 (1984), p. 229 with note 29.

sibly in the Attic war over Sigeion. That, however, is conjecture. What is clear is that the Sibylline evidence confirms the testimony in Alkaios to a war between Mytilene and Erythrai; the war was fought early in the sixth century, Archeanaktidas led a Mytilenean force, and the Lesbians, as the Erythraian oracle had foretold, fared ill in the fighting at sea[3]. During the fighting Apollon Myrikaios, whom the Aeolians of eastern Thessaly and of Lesbos specially venerated, appeared to Archeanaktidas and his companions in their dreams. Thus not only the Erythraians had oracular support in the war: Apollon of the tamarisk frond, who was at home in the oracle of Korope, also brought advice to his votaries.

In conclusion, it is worthy of remark that Alkaios Z 121 is not the only local testimony to Erythraian activity in the Asiatic Aeolis. According to Hellanikos of Lesbos (*F.Gr.Hist.* 4 F 93) Erythraians drove Pelasgians out of Pitana, the Aeolian town. The Pelasgian occupation of Pitana was one of the many woes giving rise to the proverb Πιτάνη εἰμί (Zenob. 5.61, *Corpus Paroem. Gr.* 1.145 Leutsch/Schneidewin). Alkaios (Fr. 439, Z 116) mentioned the proverb, but the context does not show that the Erythraians' action at Pitana was an episode in the war with Mytilene. Erythraian interest in the Aeolis may have begun much earlier, when, in order to be admitted to the Panionion, Phokaia accepted rulers from Teos and Erythrai (Pausanias 7.3.10)[4]. Phokaia, however, would have offered a convenient base to Erythraians fighting against Mytilene early in the sixth century.

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3. Revolts against Mytilenean naval power are mentioned in a story in Aelian, *V.H.* 7.15 (p. 86 Hercher): *ἡνίκα τῆς θαλάττης ἤρξαν Μυτιληναῖοι, τοῖς ἀφισταμένοις τῶν συμμάχων τιμωρίαν ἐκείνην ἐπήρτησαν, γράμματα μὴ μανθάνειν τοὺς παῖδας αὐτῶν μηδὲ μουσικὴν διδάσκεσθαι, πασῶν κολάσεων ἡγησάμενοι βαρυτάτην εἶναι ταύτην, ἐν ἀμουσίᾳ καὶ ἀμαθίᾳ καταβιῶναι.* The passage is noted in W. W. Goodwin, *De potentiae veterum gentium maritimae epochis apud Eusebium*, Gottingae, G. F. Kaestner, 1855, p. 55, ch.xi Lesbii.

4. See also L. H. Jeffery, *Archaic Greece*, London and Tonbridge 1976, p. 227. Contrast M. B. Sakellariou, *La migration grecque en Ionie*, Athens 1958, p. 296.