GREEK KNOWLEDGE OF THRACIAN AND SCYTHIAN HEALING PRACTICES AND IDEAS ON AFTERLIFE AND IMMORTALITY

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Zalmoxis[1]

Of all the peoples that the Greeks met in the process of colonization, the Thracians, and the Getae more than other Thracians, were preoccupied with beliefs in immortality and the way to attain it. It is significant that for the Greeks the quintessential cure was immortality: Asclepius, the paradigm of healer, attained the absolute height in medical art by restoring the dead to life, which provoked Zeus to punish him with his thunderbolt.[2]

A lion's share of Herodotus' story on Thracian customs concerns immortality, whereas other beliefs are almost neglected, briefly mentioned at best. Herodotus' account concentrates on the figure of Salmoxis (other authors name him Zalmoxis or Zamloxis).[3] Herodotus' information, Strabo's account of pious Thracians and their beliefs, as well as occasional references to Zalmoxis by other ancient authors and explanations of lexicographs, constitute the basis for a most vivid discussion of the subject by modern authors.[4]

Plato discusses Zalmoxis and Thracian methods of healing in the *Charmides* (156D–157B)[5], where Socrates talks about approaches in the medicine current in his days:

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[1] On Zalmoxis and other cave-dwellers see *Ustinova 2002*.

[2] "The blameless physician:" Il. 4. 405; 11. 518. For Asclepios see E. J. and L. *Edelstein 1945*.

[3] Salmoxis in Herodotus; Zalmoxis in Plato, Diodorus, Apuleus, etc.; Zamolxis in Strabo, Lucian, Diogenes Laertius, etc. For the word and its etymology, obscure so far, see *Kretschmer 1936*, 43–47; *Pfister 1953*, 1113; *Detschew 1957*, s.v.; von *Fritz 1967*, 2303; *Eliade 1970a*, 44–47; *Nasta 1980*, 339; *Poghirc 1987*, 195.

[4] *Tomaschek 1893*, 62–67; *Rohde 1925*, 263–265; *Pârvan 1926*, 155–161, 737; *Pfister 1953*; Carpenter 1956, 112–135; *Dodds 1973*, 144; *Wiesner 1963*, 84–84; *Von Fritz 1967*; *Russu 1967*; *Eliade 1970a*, 21–75; *Bianchi 1971*; *Burkert 1972*, 156–159; *Crişan 1978*, 228–232; *Coman 1980*; *Nasta 1980*.

Radical views of Pârvan (1924, 277; 1926, 156), who regarded the religion of Daco-Getae as henotheistic, concentrated on the worship of Gebeleizis-Zalmoxis, are supported by very few, Coman among them (1950: 183). For their survey, see, 227–228.

[5] For a discussion of the whole passage, see, 11–19. For its place in the Platonic theory of soul see, 108–123.

I learnt it (the charm) on campaign over there, from one of the Thracian physicians of Zalmoxis who are said to make one immortal[6] (*παρά τινος τῶν Θρᾳκῶν τῶν Ζαλμόξιδος ἰατρῶν, οἳ λέγονται καὶ ἀπαθανατίζειν*). This Thracian said that the Greeks were right in advising as I told you just now: "but Zalmoxis," he said, "our king, who is a god (*ἀλλὰ Ζάλμοξις, ἔφη, λέγει ὁ ἡμέτερος βασιλεύς, θεὸς ὤν*) says that as you ought not to attempt to cure eyes without head, or head without body, so you should not treat body without soul (*οὕτως οὐδὲ σῶμα ἄνευ ψυχῆς*)... And the treatment of the soul, so he said... is by means of certain charms, and these charms (*ἐπῳδαί*)[7] are words of the right sort..." (translation by W. R. M. Lamb).

Plato obviously uses Zalmoxis for the sake of his own argument, and does not need to provide an accurate report on Thracian wisdom. However, since Socrates' interlocutors do not express surprise at the novelty of his information on Thracians, we may consider Plato's passage as reflecting in general terms the common opinion of Athenian upper classes[8]. Consequently, Thracians, or perhaps priests healing in accordance with Zalmoxis' commandments, were known as experts in treatment of diseases and preservation of life by means of magic cure (charms) and secret knowledge concerning the interaction between the body and the soul.[9] Zalmoxis himself was revered as a god, who appears to have been represented on earth by the king (or king-priest)[10]. For the purposes of the present paper, the most important implication of this passage is that Zalmoxis was regarded as a divine healer, and he had his own physicians -*ἰατροί*.

Herodotus states thrice (4. 93, 94; 5. 4) that the Getae, "the bravest and the most law-abiding of all Thracians," *ἀθανατίζουσι*, that is, "make themselves immortal." He records at length the views of the Getae on immortality (4. 94–96). They believe that they do not die, but go to a *daimon* Zalmoxis (*ἰέναι τε τὸν*

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[6] This translation is much more accurate than "pretend" or "claim to be immortal" (e.g. in the Loeb translation of Herodotus by A. D. Goodley), see, 1113; 31; cf. 12: "to hold oneself immortal." The verb (*ἀπαθανατίζειν*, rather than more common *ἀθανατίζειν*) emphasizes the cultic action performed in order to make one immortal (: 22–23; : 232).

[7] Julian, following Plato (cf. Or. 8. 244A) mentions *οἱ τὰς Ζαμόλξιδος ἐπῳδὰς θρυλοῦντες* (. 309C).

[8] The approach of Hartog, adopted by Hazebroucq (*Hazebroucq 1997*, 126), over-complicates the situation. Whereas Plato's Socrates could hint at Pythagoras, alluding to Herodotus' passage (4. 93–94), known to Athenian public, the idea that Socrates refers to what is in his own opinion discours fictif in order to stress the irreducible difference between Zalmoxism (sic!) and Pythagoreanism, which he however does not mention, may fit Hartog's hypercritical views on Herodotus, but seems to distort the logic of the dialogue.

[9] The literature on Greek notions on in the soul and its immortality is enormous. For divergent views, see *Rohde 1925*; *Nilsson 1960*; *Bremmer 1983*, 2002.

[10] *Eliade (1970a*: 56–57) observes, that "here we can discern three principal expressions of a religious system whose roots probably go back to the prehistory of Indo-Europeans: (1) identification, homologation, or confusion among god, king, and high priest; (2) the tendency to 'deify' kings; (3) the importance of the high priest..."

ἀπολλύμενον παρὰ Σάλμοξιν δαίμονα), known otherwise as Gebeleizis (*Γεβελέϊζις*)[11]. Every four years they send a messenger to Zalmoxis[12], by hurling him upon points. If the man is killed, they think that he is favored by the god (*ἵλεος ὁ θεὸς δοκέει εἶναι*). When there is thunder and lightening, the Thracians shoot arrows as a threat the god. The Greeks who live near Hellespont and the Pontus say that Zalmoxis was a slave of Pythagoras[13]. When he returned home to Thrace, he built a hall (*ἀνδρεών*), feasted there with the most prominent of his countrymen[14], and taught that neither he nor they or their descendants would die, but go to a place where they live forever having all good things (*οὔτε αὐτὸς οὔτε οἱ συμπόται αὐτοῦ οὔτε οἱ ἐκ τούτων αἰεὶ γινόμενοι ἀποθανέονται, ἀλλ' ἥξουσι ἐς χῶρον τοῦτον ἵνα αἰεὶ περιεόντες ἔξουσι τὰ πάντα ἀγαθά*)[15]. Meanwhile, Zalmoxis built himself an underground chamber (*κατάγαιον οἴκημα*), and descended into it for three years, the Thracians mourning him. In the fourth year he returned to them, making them believe the story he told[16]. Herodotus himself thinks that Zalmoxis lived many years before Pythagoras, without deciding if Zalmoxis was a mortal or a deity.

Other Thracian customs reported by Herodotus reflect strong beliefs in the afterlife. Thus, the Trausi lament their new-born children, and rejoice when they bury their dead, for the human destiny is suffering and sorrow, while the dead leaves all the grief and arrives at blessedness (Her. 5. 4: *κακῶν ἐξαπαλλαχθεὶς ἐστὶ ἐν πάσῃ εὐδαιμονίῃ*). Diodorus (1. 94. 2) also says that the Getae "make themselves immortal," *ἀπαθανατίζουσι*. Following Hellanicus (*FGH* 4. F73), Photius, Suida and Etymologicum Magnum (s.v. *Ζάμολξις*) add that other Thracians, Teretizoi and Krobyzoi, also "immortalize" (*ἀθανατίζουσι*): they believe that their dead will return, like Zalmoxis. Triballoi believed in the immortality of the soul (Iamblich.

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[11] For the etymology of the name and the cult, see *Detschew 1957*, s.v. Γεβελέϊζις; *Eliade 1970a*, 51–55; *Crișan 1978*, 232–233; cf. *Seure 1913*: 247–261.

[12] For Greeks sending messages to gods, see *Pfister 1953*, 1114–1115.

[13] Porphyrius (Vita Pythag. 14) also mentions that; Suida (s.v. *Πυθαγόρας*) says that Pythagoras had a slave named Zamolxis, to whom Getae sacrifice as to Kronos.

[14] This passage prompted perhaps to Plato his description of teletai consisting of feasting and incantations, that were performed by charlatans using writings of Musaeus (Rep. 363C-E).

For Thracian sacred feasts, especially in the funeral context, see *Pfister 1953*, 1120–1123.

[15] Hellanicus (FGH 4. F73) calls the rites introduced by Zalmoxis initiations (*τελετή*). Photius, Suida and Etymologicum Magnum (s.v. *Ζάμολξις*) follow him.

[16] Cf. the legend of Pythagoras' own descent to an underground chamber for seven years, Diog. Laert. 8. 41; *Eliade 1970a*, 25–27. For the myths on descend to underground dwellings, see *Carpenter 1956*, 116; *Eliade 1970*, 27–30; *Rohde 1925*, 88–114.

Graf (*Graf 1987*, 89–91) compares this story with the story of Orpheus' telesterion where he assembled Thracian warriors (Conon, FGH 26 F 1. 45).

It is assumed that underground galleries discovered in the depth of Belena Hill (Ruse district), on top of which the Borovo Treasure had been found, and the underground complex near the village Karan Vărbovka might serve as dwellings for Thracian priests (*Zdravkova and Ivanov 1990*). However, the chambers (2.50–2.80m in diameter and 1.00–1.70m in height) seem to be too small to allow prolonged human habitation.

De vita Pyth. 173)[17]. These beliefs were so well-known, that Lucian jokes about them: in the *Council of Gods* (9) the gods complain that the Getae do whatever they please, choose gods, as for instance Zamolxis, and make themselves immortal[18].

Strabo gives his own version of the legend of Zalmoxis (7. 3. 5)[19], whom he calls Zamolxis. After having been Pythagoras' slave, Zamolxis arrived to Getae, and impressed them with his mantic talents. He became the king's co-regent, and became the priest of the most venerated god of the Getae. Later, Zamolxis was declared a god. He lived alone in a cavernous mountain, seen only by the king and his own attendants. The cave, as well as its vicinity, became sacred, and since then the Getae always have such a councilor to the king, whom they deem divine. Strabo also mentions, that when Boerebista struggled against Julius Caesar, the job of the divine priest and king's councilor was performed by Decaeneus, "a sorcerer" (*γόης ἀνήρ*)[20].

Strabo connects his tale of Zalmoxis with a description of unusual customs of Mysians, who are in his opinion Thracian (7. 3. 2). Mysians, called pious, *θεοσεβεῖς*, *καπνοβάται*, and perhaps also *κτίσται* or *πλεῖστοι* (7. 3. 3), are idealized as a virtuous people of vegetarians, whose piety forces them to abstain from eating meat, marriage, and military endeavors. Dacian asceticism was so famous that Josephus Flavius appears to compare abstemious Dacians, in his rendering *πλεῖστοι*, with Essens (*Ant. Jud.* 18. 22)[21]. Thus, "Pythagorean" vegetarian customs introduced by Zamolxis, were still preserved in Strabo's time.

This association of Thracian ascetic mysticism with Pythagoras is also supposed by the assumed apprenticeship of Zalmoxis with Pythagoras. Later, it was Pythagoras who was considered indebted to Thracian wisdom. According to Iamblichus (*De vita Pythag.* 145–147), Pythagoras himself wrote that he became acquainted with the doctrine of the gods and the number theology in Thrace, when he was admitted to the rites of Orpheus.[22] This apparently fictitious report may

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[17] *Coman 1980*, 248.

[18] It seems improbable that all these authors would only project Greek ideas on foreigners, as Burkert (1972: 158) suggests concerning Herodotus' report.

[19] For the probable Celtic influence on the expansion of the high priest's authority, see *Crişan 1978*, 231.

[20] For Boerebista and Decaeneus, see, *Eliade 1970a*, 57–61; *Vulpe 1976*, 62–68.

[21] The word *κτίσται* in Strabo is problematic palaeographically; Josephus' mention of Dacian *πλεῖστοι* is no less controversial (see the survey of contradicting opinions in *Lozovan 1968*, 219–228).

For these groups, see *Eliade 1970a*, 61–67; *Bianchi 1971*: 233; *Crişan 1978*, 235–236; *Banu 1980*; *Popov 1982*. For Getic religious devotion, see *Pfister 1953*, 1119; *Coman 1980*, 258–262.

Burkert (*Burket 1972*, 162) compares kapnobatai with aithrobates Abaris (Porphyr. Vita Pyth. 29), and considers them genuine shamans. An exact parallel to kapnobatai is the ancient Indian designation of Brahmans as dhūma-gati, already current in the Mahābhārata (*Poghirc 1987*, 196). *Popov 1982* suggests that kapnobatai belonged to a caste separated from the rest of population by requirements of ritual purity.

[22] *Linforth 1941*, 251–252; *Graf 1987*, 90.

reflect the known proximity between Thracian ideas of immortality and Pythagorean doctrines which had earlier inspired Herodotus' story[23].

Pythagoras' golden thigh, ability of bilocation, magical healing, and other extraordinary traits (Diog. Laert. 8. 11–12; Ael. *Var. Hist.* 2. 26; 4. 17; Iamblich. *De vita Pythag.* 140)[24], as well as his catabasis,[25] belong to the sphere which was associated with Apollo by the Greeks, and which is connected with shamanic experiences by many modern scholars[26]. Pythagoras' connection with the Scythian area is testified by his attire: Aelian says that he wore trousers (*Var. Hist.* 12. 32). Pythagoras' ability to treat sick souls by means of charms, magic and *mousike* (Porphyr. *Vita Pythag.* 33)[27] resembles the talents of Zalmoxis' doctors.

Thus, the Getae worshiped Zalmoxis, apparently a god, whose high priest-king seems to have been considered his substitute on earth. Zalmoxis endowed his priests with the power of healing, and they were known as physicians-*ἰατροί*[28]. The myth of Zalmoxis' descend into an underground chamber or a cave, and his priest's habitation in such a cave appear to represent an initiatory ritual, including a temporary death[29]. In later time, the eternal happiness after the death, promised by Zalmoxis, made the Greeks compare him with their lord of Elysium, Kronos[30].

This ritual is based on a most fascinating phenomenon, the search of revelation of ultimate truth and wisdom by means of altered states of consciousness. Altered states of consciousness, deliberately sought by various mystics and visionaries worldwide, but first and foremost by shamans, may be induced by a variety of means, one of the easiest being sensory deprivation, during which a reduction of external stimuli leads to the release of internal imagery[31]. As a means of attaining these visions in the geographic setting of the Balkans, caverns, grottos, and underground chambers provide an easy way to isolate the mind from

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[23] Cf. *Linforth 1918*: 30.

[24] *Corssen 1912*, 30–38; *Lévy 1926*, 12–14; 1927: 40–42; *Detienne 1963*, 69–70; *Burkert 1972*, 141–143, 160.

[25] *Lévy 1927*, 29; *Burkert 1972*, 155–161.

[26] *Kahn 1960*, 32; *Detienne 1963*, 82; *Dodds 1973*, 144; *Burkert 1972*, 140–165; *Metzler 1982*; *West 1983*, 149; for a denial of such association see *Zhmud 1997*, 108–116.

[27] *...καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς δὲ νοσοῦντας παρεμυθεῖτο... τοὺς μὲν ἐπῳδαῖς καὶ μαγείας τοὺς δὲ μουσικῇ.* For the use of music for magical purposes by Pythagoreans, see *Boyancé 1937*, 100–117; *Dodds 1973*, 154. For Pythagoras as healer see *Lévy 1927*, 42.

[28] Cf. *Pârvan 1972*, 78 on Zalmoxis as a healer.

[29] *Eliade 1970a*, 27; 48–51. This does not necessarily characterize Zalmoxis as a chthonic deity (*Eliade 1970a*, 44).

[30] Photius, Suida, and Hesychius report (following Mnaseas) that Getae worship Kronos and call him Zalmoxis (s.v. *Ζάλμοξις*).

[31] *Winkelman 2002*, 1876; *Harner 1990*, 22; *Lewis 1989*, 32.

the outside input and allow its concentration on the spiritual quest. Zalmoxis' behavior finds more than a few parallels in the life legends of Greek sages and prophets[32].

Vegetarian commandments of Zalmoxis, his catabasis, and above all the doctrine of immortality induced the Pontic Greeks to link him with Pythagoras already by the fifth century. Disregarding the Greek prejudice of superiority of the Hellenes over the barbarians, which is reflected in the tale making Zalmoxis Pythagoras' slave, this *interpretatio Graeca* of Thracian ideas on immortality demonstrates that the cult of Zalmoxis involved a belief in the blissful postexistence[33], certain initiatory rites, magical healing, and descent into a cave as a means to attain ultimate wisdom.

Other Thracian mythical healers

In Euripides' *Rhesus* (969–973), the mother of the slain Thracian king predicts, that although she will never see her son again, he will live, hidden in a cavern, a spirit in a human form (*anthropodaimon*), a god revered unto his votaries[34]. This description is strongly reminiscent of Zalmoxis, and even of the vocabulary used by Herodotus in his account of Thracian worship of this deity[35]. Rhesus, king and priest, was worshipped as a god by the initiates in his mysteries. His name may mean simply "king," deriving from the same root as *rex*[36]. Like Zalmoxis, Rhesus was also considered a healer: he is said to have removed pestilence from the mountain where he lived[37].

Furthermore, Thracians were ascribed magical medical skills and knowledge of drugs. Euripides (*Alc.* 965–972, with schol.) mentions "medicines on Thracian tables recorded by Orpheus, the gift of Apollo to the mortals"[38]. Plato (*Rep.* 364B–365A) talks about "the hubbub of books" by Orpheus and Musaeus, which were recommended to individuals (and cities) seeking purification from sin or cure of

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[32] *Ustinova 2004.*

[33] It remains unclear whether it was expected to be in flesh and blood, like that of Zalmoxis himself, or in the form of eternal happiness of the soul. Already Pomponius Mela (De chronographia 2. 18) reports both alternatives as current among the Thracians. Cf. *Bianchi 1971*, 232. Either form of "return of the dead" does not imply metempsychosis, suggested by Rhode (*Rhode 1925*, 263); see, *Eliade 1970a*, 32.

[34] In fact, the description of Rhesos' shining golden arms and majestic horses in the Iliad (10. 435–445; 545–550) hints at the divinity of the Thracian king (*Wathelet 1989*, 227, 230–231). For a discussion of Rhesos' mythology, see *Borgeaud 1991*.

[35] *Nock 1926.* For the controversy on the date of Euripides' play, see *Geffcken 1936* (suggesting the fourth century), *Ritchie 1964* (suggesting 437 as *terminus ante quem*).

[36] *Tomaschek 1893*, 53; *Perdizet 1910*, 17; *Seure 1928*, 106–110; *Poghirc 1987*, 196; *Wathelet 1989*, 222; *Borgeaud 1991*, 13, cf. *Toporov 1990*, 51–52. For the cult of Rhesos in Thrace, see *Perdizet 1910*, 18–20; *Seure 1928.*

[37] Philostratus of Lemnos, Heroikos p. 680: λοιμοῦ ἐρύκειν τοὺς ὄρους; cf. *Perdizet 1910*, 20, 29; *Venedikov 1976*, 15; *Seure 1928*, 118, 121–122. For Philostratus, see *Seure 1928*, 114.

[38] Cf. Cycl. 646, *Linforth 1941*, 119–138.

sickness.[39] During the Roman period, treatises on such subjects as medicine, herbs, and antidotes circulated under the name of Orpheus[40]. Pausanias (9. 30. 4) argues that the main reason for Orpheus' great influence was his knowledge of purifications and remedies against diseases. Musaeus, frequently called Thracian (Strabo 10. 3. 17), Orpheus' pupil, son, or simply Attic counterpart[41], was considered able to heal with his music. Aristophanes (*Ranae* 1032 and schol. *ad loc.*) mentions that Musaeus revealed to men the healing of diseases and the use of oracles[42]. Rhesus, said to be a cousin of Orpheus and an initiate in his mysteries (Eurip. *Rhes.* 895; 944)[43], was also praised for his abilities as a healer.

Scythian healers

The importance of healing in Scythian culture is highlighted in scenes depicted on an electrum vessel from a fourth-century Kul'-Oba tumulus, located in the vicinity of Panticapaeum[44]. Out of the three scenes representing pairs of Scythians, two picture treatment of sick, dressing a wound in one case and manipulating inside the patient's mouth in another[45]. The cultic significance of this vessel, which served as a part of grave goods placed into a princely tomb, is doubtless. Since the vessel was manufactured by a Greek artisan, working for the Scythian market[46], it also indicates how the knowledge of Scythian healing practices and their cultural importance could reach the Greeks.

Shamanic experiences, identified by Meuli and Moravcsik in the legends of Abaris and Aristeas, connected with Scythians and Hyperboreans[47], involve first and foremost healing. Abaris, a Hyperborean priest of Apollo, known already to Pindar (Harpocrat. s.v. Ἄβαρις) and Herodotus (4. 36), is said to have traveled with (or on) the arrow given to him by the Hyperborean Apollo; he performed purifications and cleansed countries of pestilence[48]. Anacharsis the Scythian

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[39] *Linforth 1941*, 75–91; *Guthrie 1966*, 158–162.

[40] *Coman 1939*, 159–161, with refs.

[41] *Linforth 1941*, 125; *Guthrie 1966*, 191; M. L. *West 1983*, 39–44.

[42] M. L. *West 1983*, 41.

[43] *Perdizet 1910*, 16, 30.

[44] Reproduced in numerous publications, e.g. *Artamonow 1970*, figs. 226, 229, 232, 233; *Rayevskiy 1985*, fig. 1.

[45] For a different interpretation of the latter scenes, see *Rayevskiy 1985*, 17–20; for a convincing criticism of Rayevskiy's hypothesis, see *Dumézil 1978*, 198–199.

[46] Cf. *Ustinova 1999*, 22 with refs.

[47] *Meuli 1935*; *Moravcsik 1936*; cf. *Dodds 1973*, 141–144; *Nilsson 1960*, 45; *Burkert 1972*, 149–150; *Kindstrand 1981*, 18; *Bongrard-Levi* and *Grantovskiy 1984*, 94–98. For a different view on this issue, see *Bremmer 1983*, 47–48; *Dowden 1980*; *Zhmud 1997*, 108–116.

[48] Sources on Abaris are abundant. For their discussion, see *Corssen 1912*; *Lévy 1926*, 14–18, 23–27, 79–81; 1927, 49; *Boyancé 1934*; *Moravcsik 1936*; *Bolton 1962*, 158–159.

carried our purifications, too (Plut. *Sept. sap. conv.* 3. 148DE)[49]. Another Scythian sage, Toxaris, cleansed Athens of plague (Luc. *Scyth.* 1, discussed below). Herodotus (4. 68) records only one function specific to *Enareis*, androgynic Scythian soothsayers, regarded by many as shamans[50]: they were summoned to the king whenever he fall sick, and were requested to divine, who among the king's subjects had forsworn and was culpable for the illness. Healing practices of the Enareis contributed to the Greek appreciation of Scythian (mantic) medicine. Moreover, shamanic rites presuppose the faith in the independence of the soul, which almost inevitably brings in the faith in its immortality.

Greek confusion of Scythian and Thracian healers

The Greeks perceived medical skills, as well as ideas of immortality or/and independent traveling of the soul[51], as shared by Pontic barbarians. Most Greeks, except a few extremely inquisitive individuals, did not distinguish between Thracians, Scythians, and other local peoples. Strabo was not only aware of Homer's inability to tell the difference between Thracians and Galactophagoi (*Il.* 13. 5–6): in Strabo's own time, the latter tribes, Scythian and Sarmatian in Strabo's opinion, were also confused with the Thracians (7. 3. 2)[52]. Lucian ascribes Zalmoxis either to Thracians (*Ver. Hist.* 2. 17; *Jup.Trag.* 44; *Deorum conc.* 9), or to Scythians (*Scyth.* 1, 4). Photius' (s.v. Ζάλμοξις) and Suida's (s.v. Ζάμολξις) characterization of Zalmoxis as Scythian may result from such a confusion in their sources.

Socrates in the *Charmides* (158B) juxtaposes the Thracian Zalmoxis and the Scythian Abaris: "the charms of Zalmoxis or of Abaris the Hyperborean." Much later, Lucian in *The Scythian* (1) mixes together healing powers of Scythians and Thracians:

> ...This Toxaris [a Scythian] never went back to Scythia, but died in Athens, where not long after his death he came to be considered a hero, and the Athenians sacrifice to him as "The Foreign Physician" (*καὶ ἥρως ἔδοξεν καὶ ἐντέμνουσιν αὐτῷ Ξένῳ Ἰατρῷ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι*) –this was the name they gave him when they made him a hero. The reason for this designation... and his reputation as one of the sons of Asclepius are perhaps worth telling. Then you may see that to confer immortality on someone and to send him to Zalmoxis (*ἀπαθανατίζειν καὶ πέμπειν παρὰ τὸν Ζάλμοξιν*) is a custom not of the Scythians only – it is also possible for Athenians to deify (*θεοποιεῖν*) Scythians in Greece." (Translation by K. Kilburn).

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[49] *Kindstrand 1981*, 22. Kindstrand argues at length that Anacharsis is a shamanic figure (1981: 21–23).

[50] For a discussion, see *Ustinova 1999*, 75–79, with refs. See, also *Margreth 1993*.

[51] Testified for the Thracians by their sending a dead messenger to Zalmoxis, Her. 4. 95.

[52] Cf. the confusion between Orpheus and Abaris in Sparta (Paus. 3. 13. 2).

This introduction is followed by a story of an Athenian woman who dreamt during the great plague of 430/29 that Toxaris gave her an advice on the way to purify Athens, and his cure indeed helped. This passage[53] emphasizes Greek appreciation of both Scythians and Thracians as great healers, this time putting an emphasis on purifications. Deification of a Scythian, which took place in the fifth-century Athens, would be even more appropriate in contemporary Pontic colonies.

Thus, the Greeks assigned similar ideas of immortality and iatromantic powers to Pontic barbarians, disregarding the differences among them. These views seem to reflect a reality, distorted as it was by the Greek interpretation.

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[53] This seems to attest a real Athenian cult. Even a cult statue described by Lucian has perhaps been discovered: it shows a Scythian holding a book, one of his hands having a hole just enough to hold a bow (*Goodwin 1900*). *Pfister 1953*, 1117 regards Lucian's story as reliable Athenian Kultlegende, in which Lucian turned a Getes into a Scythian. In Rhode's opinion (*Rhode 1925*, 557), the special name of the hero may be Lucian's invention, but not what he tells of his cult. For healer heroes in Attica, see *Usener 1896*, 147–153; *Kerényi 1945*, 34–39.

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