

В.С. Ф. МИЛЛЕР И ИРАНСКИЕ НАРОДЫ КАРПАТСКОГО БАССЕЙНА

Геза Сабо

Опираясь на свой, безусловно, широкий кругозор, Всеволод Федорович Миллер, принимая во внимание историю иранских народов, живущих на западе, также обратил внимание на сигиннов Дунайского региона, упомянутых в главе 9 книги V, написанной Геродотом. Внимание Миллера было обращено в первую очередь на эту иранскую этническую группу, поскольку, согласно соответствующим источникам, они происходили из Мидии и даже одевались аналогично мидийскому народу. В свете открытий, обнаруженных в Карпатском бассейне, замечание Миллера о сигиннах и срединно-сармато-осетинском родстве, проясненное В. И. Абаевым, поднимает также и другие интересные вопросы в отношении иронского и дигорского диалектов осетинского языка. Отправным пунктом исследований направлений на сегодняшний день по-прежнему остается точка зрения В. И. Абаева, согласно которой дигорский диалект осетинского языка в сравнении с иронским в большей степени сохранил архаичные черты общего языка предков. В этом смысле упомянутые диалекты являются стадиями развития одного и того же языка, представляя собой последние фазы его эволюции. Тем не менее, многочисленные различия, наблюдающиеся в обнаруженных археологами памятниках материальной культуры, а также в обычаях носителей данных диалектов, все чаще дают основания говорить об указанных диалектах не как о разных стадиях развития одного и того же языка, а как о средстве общения двух, безусловно, взаимосвязанных, но следовавших различными путями развития, групп. Именно этим, по-видимому, и обусловлена столь существенная разница в языке. Об этих и некоторых сопутствующих раскрытию темы вопросах и пойдет речь в настоящей статье.

Ключевые слова: В.С. Ф. Миллер, иранские народы Карпат, сигинны Дунайского региона, дигорский и иронский диалекты осетинского языка.

Relying on his characteristically broad range of vision, Vsevolod Fedorovich Miller, while taking account of the Iranian peoples living in the west, also drew attention to the Sigynnae of the Danube region, mentioned in Chapter 9, Book V written by Herodotos [1]. Miller's attention was primarily drawn to this Iranian ethnic group because, according to relevant sources, they originated from Media, and even dressed similarly to the Median people. Miller thought that the remarks on the Median-Sarmatian relationship based on almost concurrent ancient sources could hardly be unfounded, and therefore, Asia Minor's elements should be considered among the Ossetian, particularly Digorian ancestry [1, l. 55, ll. 85–86]. The researchers generally agree that the history of the Sarmatians is closely related to the Cimmerian-Scythian precedents, as well

as to the subsequent Alanian and Ossetian archaeological findings and traditions. In the course of his still crucial work, V.I. Abayev, by clearly delimitating the chronological and territorial elements of the Iranian language groups, clarified the assumptions of the 19th century researchers, and also departed from the views derived from Herodotos's work [2; 3; 4]. For the time of separation of the Indo-Iranian peoples, he established it to take place earlier, in the later part of the 2nd millennium BC, defining South-East Europe as the starting point of their wanderings. Abayev distinguished two large language blocks; the Cimmerian-Scythian group living in the western part of the researched territory, later on adding the Sarmatians, the Khorezmians, the Sogdians, the Avestians and the Bactrians as well [5]. The other group was made up by the communities crossing the Caucasus toward the Iranian highlands: the ancestors of the Medes, the Persians, the Kurds and the Balochis. Therefore, he separated the Iranian world into two large territorial units in the early 1st millennium BC, in addition to the language aspects: the territory defined by the Lower Danube, the Prut River and the Aral Sea, and the southern Asian territory defined by the Arax River, Lake Urmia and today's Turkmenia. Accordingly, he also drew attention to the fact that, contrary to the views derived from the interpretation of ancient sources, the first European appearance of the Iranian peoples wandering across the steppes could not be linked to the westward movement of the Scythians taking place from Central Asia in the 8-7th centuries [5]. Based on Abayev's findings it is also clearly visible that the Median-Sarmatian relationship suggested by V.F. Miller has real language-historical foundations – although not a direct link, but dating back to a period much earlier than assumed by the 19th century researchers, i. e. before the separation of the two Iranian language blocks in the later part of the 2nd millennium BC. It is also particularly important because it supports a continuous thread in connection with the Iranian peoples from the 7th century BC based on Central European written sources as well, providing a real and direct link to the Sigynnae and the Medes chronicled by ancient sources to have settled down along the Danube, and through the latter, via numerous transpositions, to the present-day Ossetians. (Based on Miller's observations, this paper does not address the multiple waves of Indo-Iranian influence reaching the Carpathian Basin from the late 5th millennium BC (according to C information), taking place earlier with no close relevance to our subject [4].

The history of the Sarmatian tribes that settled east of the Danube in the vicinity of the Roman Empire was addressed by Hungarian researchers as well, based on ancient sources, from as early as the turn of the 19-20th centuries. Géza Nagy reconstructed the clothing worn by the Sarmatians in the Carpathian Basin based on the imagery on Trajan's Column [6]. However, it was only decades later that Mihály Párducz managed to distinguish the archaeological findings as well, in parallel with the written sources [7; 8]. The most crucial steps in the assessment of ancient sources are primarily attrib-

uted to András Alföldy [9], and in linguistic terms to János Harmatta [10; 11; 12]. In the Carpathian Basin the Great Plain was initially occupied by the lazig tribe in the early 1st century AD, having lost their power in the steppes, followed by several waves of the Rhozolani and the Alans. Until recently however, apart from the information provided by Herodotos (V. 9), we had very little knowledge of the Sigynnae mentioned by V. F. Miller as well. Formerly the Hungarian researchers were of the view that the Sigynna people lived in the neighbourhood of the Agathyrsi in the South Great Plain, at the confluence of the rivers Tisza and Maros [13; 6]. Based on the excavation sites in the territory of Serbia, they took it for almost certain that no findings similar to the Scythians in the Great Plain or Transylvania could be expected south of the Maros confluence. From the pre-Scythian times a unique new culture, the Bosut Group had developed there, closely related to the Basarabi culture in Romania. (However, the dating of the Bosut Group's findings in the Szegeged region established the turn of the 8-7th centuries BC, and therefore, as we will see later on, the possibility of a Sigynna-Bosut-Basarabi identification could be excluded in both chronological and territorial terms [14].) It was assumed that the much debated Sigynnae could have been the carriers of these two cultures [15; 16, 258]. The name of the Sigynnae was thought to originate from the ancient Iranian word «sikvan»=«strong», and based on the names of the rivers Tisza and Maros believed to be of Iranian origin it was thought that this people could have moved west from the Cimmerian tribal alliance of the steppes.

For the date and time of separation Ottó Trogmayer suggested the Cimmerians' displacement from the Pontic steppeland by the Scythians. In his opinion the Sigynnae also split into an eastern and a western branch at that time, the latter moving to the Carpathian Basin and presumably existing there until the Celtic times [15, 106]. He also assumed the Spartan bronze vessel (hydria) found in Ártánd by the river Körös to be an archaeological evidence of the Sigynnae with Iranian (Median) origin and clothing as described by Herodotos (V. 9.) partly due to the fact that they had excellent draught horses, and were also connected with the Adriatic Veneti [15, 107]. And, as it was widely known, the best racehorses had indeed come from the Veneti. Therefore he thought that the Spartan vessel must have come to the Körös region via the Sigynnae's horse trade route with the involvement of the Veneti. In his opinion the various types of information mutually enhancing each other pointed to the fact that the southern population of the Carpathian Basin in the Scythian era had connections with the North Iranian territories. Contrary to the forced Celtic origin of the name of the river Danube, he thought it to be an additional argument that some geographical names of Iranian origin could have already existed in the Middle Danube Basin prior to the arrival of the lazig Sarmatians also speaking Northern Iranian, e. g. the word Danuvius used for the upper and middle sections of the Danube (cf. Danaster=Dniester, Danaper=Dnieper,

Tanais=Don<danu in ancient Iranian, respectively don in Ossetian having the meaning «water» or «river») [15, 107].

From the early Iron Age (9th century BC), the researchers essentially drew a diving line across the Carpathian Basin along the Danube, separating the European Hallstatt Culture on the west and the steppe peoples on the east side of the river. Therefore, the clarification of the Celtic versus Iranian origin of the name of the Danube is an important issue in terms of the ancient history of the whole of Europe — if it is a question at all. V.I. Abayev thought it absolutely obvious that the name of the river Don (in Greek: Τάνακς) is but the Ossetian word «don» which means «water» or «river», and the same element is identifiable in the names of the Dnieper, the Dniester and the Danube as well [2, 39], [2, 196].

Herodotos's remarks on the Sigynnae's origin pointing toward Asia Minor were previously thought to be exaggerated by most European researchers (The other remark by Herodotos concerning the city of Pyrene had been much debated too, arguing its relationship with the Heuneburg excavation site by the Upper Danube for several decades. Today the German researchers treat this matter as a fact [17].) However, the interpretation of this ancient source was brought to a completely different light by the archaeological findings of the burial mound excavated in the Strupka-Magyar estate in Regöly, a settlement in Hungary's South Transdanubia region situated west of the river Danube and south of Lake Balaton, at the confluence of the rivers Kapos and Koppány. The findings of the tumulus excavated there in 2010-2011 could be clearly dated to the second half or the last third of the 7th century BC, but would not fit in with the findings of the Scythian or the Hallstatt culture [18; 19]. The materials excavated from the mound suggesting close ties with the Hallstatt findings revealed certain objects and phenomena indicating a type and a level of technological development formerly unknown in the region, pointing toward Asia Minor [20]. The mound structure made of compressed rammed clay has parallel features in the Phrygian Gordion. The mound's interior revealed a timber wall structure of grid-like pattern supported by 54 columns in total. A similar structure was excavated for example in Urartu, Altintepe. Moreover, the archaeometric analysis indicated a rare and unique mineral (Cr-spinell) unknown in Europe, but identifiable in the control sample taken from Gordion as well [21; 22]. At the same time, the triple-feathered bronze arrowheads, the horse fittings pointing to Central Asia, and the ceramic fragments and pot decorations evoking the former Andronovo culture indicated a population with a lifestyle similar to the Scythian, although bypassing the Black Sea from the south, i. e. Asia Minor, instead of the north [23; 24; 25]. According to our current knowledge there was only one such tribe during the examined period: the Cimmerians, some of whom escaped from the Scythians bypassing the Black Sea in the north, while another branch in the south, crossing the Caucasus, was waging wars already from the 8th century BC in

Urartu, Phrygia, and later on in Lydia [20; 26]. Moreover, based on the available sources they left traces in Media as well, the same region where, according to Herodotos (V. 9.), the Sigynnae settling down in Istros beyond the river Danube also claimed to have originated from, as was noticed by Miller as well [1]. The archaeological findings discovered in the Regöly-Strupka estate clearly reflect the dual relationship pointing toward Central Asia and Asia Minor also mentioned by the written sources. Based on the geographical situation of the Regöly site, the discovered archaeological findings, their parallel features and the relevant historical data, as well as the already referred source by Herodotos (V. 9.), the encampment of the Sigynnae in the Carpathian Basin, contrary to former beliefs, could be placed on the western side of the river Danube already from the last third of the 7th century BC [27]. Returning to the proposition of Ottó Trogmayer concerning the forced Celtic origin of the name of the river Danube, the above mentioned facts indicate that in the Middle Danube Basin not only the 1st century appearance of the lazig Sarmatians with their Northern Iranian language, but also the existence of other peoples of Iranian origin long before the Celts could have contributed to some of the geographical names still used today.

Alongside Mária Fekete I also drew attention to the fact that Herodotos's remark is in line with the archaeological observation, i. e. that in the southwest of present-day Hungary, and in Croatia and Slovenia, the territory between the Danube and the Adriatic Sea some archaeological groups of eastern origin with related material culture already existed from the late 7th century BC (Regöly, Kaptol, Martijanec). Based on Herodotos's remark they can be identified as various Sigynna tribes of Median origin speaking Iranian language, called Illyrian and Pannonian by subsequent sources. These Iranian peoples continued to live in the southwestern part of the Carpathian Basin and the Western Balkan and shaped the region significantly in the Roman Era as well. It is because of the ancient Iranian religion of these peoples partially with Median roots that the cults related to Mithras became particularly popular in this region during the Roman Era, proved by the numerous lead Danubian Rider plaques (Sol invictus Illyricus) and the marble and stone statues depicting Mithras the bull-slayer as well [28; 29; 30]. This is how the conclusion made by István Tóth finally becomes understandable, i. e. that the cult of Mithras represented by numerous unique forms in Pannonia is of local origin [31] – and now proved to have Pannonian roots as well. Therefore, it is particularly significant that the various portrayals are somehow focused on a characteristic item, a three-legged round table identifiable in the territories concerned with Iranian peoples from the early Iron Age, represented at royal burials [32; 33], but also in modern-day Ossetian ceremonies. The two round pieces of flatbread and fish on top of the sacrificial table generally featured on Danubian lead plaques during the Roman Era, identified as an element of a death cult based on parallel ethnographical features typical for the Iranian Ossetians, clearly indicate

the common root of these customs varying in space and time, as well as their continued persistent survival. In the light of the findings discovered in the Carpathian Basin, Miller's remark on the Sigynnae and the Median-Sarmatian-Ossetian kinship clarified by V.I. Abayev raise further interesting questions in relation to the Iron and the Digor dialects as well. A cornerstone of current research is still provided by Abayev's view that compared to the Iron, the Digor dialect preserved the archaic features of the common ancestral language to a greater extent, at the same time however, these dialects belong to two subsequent phases in the development of the same language. Nevertheless, the various differences in the archaeological findings and customs increasingly raise the possibility of two related groups that must have followed two different paths, rather than reaching subsequent development phases of the same language. For example, the findings discovered in Regöly are equally linked to the regions of both Iranian language blocks distinguished by V.I. Abayev. Based on the parallel archaeological features of the Transdanubian findings pointing toward the steppelands and Central Asia the territories of the Cimmerians, and later on the Sarmatians are also relevant. At the same time, the objects linked to Asia Minor, and Herodotos's source itself point to the region of the other language block south of the Caucasus Mountains, occupied by the Medes. Perhaps this distinction is also reflected by the fact that based on the experiences gathered to date the parallel features pointing toward the Iranian cultures in the interpretation of the Roman Age Transdanubian portrayals seem to be more common in the Digor customs. A further investigation of the issue would be important because it could help us learn more not only about the ancient Iranian speaking population of the Roman Age Pannonia, but it could contribute to a much more accurate assessment of the archaeological findings discovered in Central and Eastern Europe as well.

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V. F. MILLER AND THE IRANIAN PEOPLES OF THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

Keywords: V. F. Miller, the Iranian peoples of the Carpathians, the Sigins of the Danube region, Digor and Iron dialect of the Ossetian language.

Broad-mindedness and erudition allowed Vsevolod Fedorovich Miller, taking into account the history of the Iranian peoples living in the west, paid attention to the Sigins of the Danube region, mentioned in chapter 9 of Book V written by Herodotus. Miller's attention was drawn primarily to this Iranian ethnic group, because, according to relevant sources, they came from the Medes and even dressed similarly to the Medes. In light of the discoveries made in the Carpathian basin, Miller's remark about the Sigins and Middle Sarmatian-Ossetian kinship, clarified by V. I. Abaev, also raises other interesting questions regarding the Ironian and Digorian dialects of the Ossetian language. The point of view of V. I. Abaeva, according to which the Digor dialect of the Ossetian language, in comparison with the Iron one, to a greater extent preserved archaic features of the common language of their ancestors remains today the starting point of research areas. In this sense, the mentioned dialects are the stages of development of the same language, representing the last phases of its evolution. Nevertheless, the numerous differences observed in the monuments of material culture discovered by archaeologists, as well as in the customs of the carriers of these dialects, increasingly give reason to speak of these dialects not as different stages of development of the same language, but as a means of communication of the two groups, interconnected, but following, different ways of their development. This, apparently, is the reason for such a significant difference in the languages. These and some issues related to the disclosure of the topic will be discussed in this article.

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