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Ares: A Greek God of Turkic Origin

Ares: Türk Kökenli Bir Yunan Tanrısı

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The naming Ares, which is the god of war in Greek Mythology and seems to be of the Scythian, occurs in the work of Homeros before the Scythians arrived in the Eastern Europe. This fact confirms that the mentioned word belongs to the language of an indigeneous Scythian community. In this paper, the present-day remnants and equivalents of the Scythian word in Turkic and Slavic languages will be shown.

Key Words: Ares, Herodotos, Scythians, Homeros, Turkic, Slavic.

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Introduction

Herodotus, the Father of History, landed in the territory of present-day Ukraine in the 5th century BC and wrote down some words of the Saka language. Some of these words are the names of their spiritual world.

When speaking of the names of gods belonging to the spiritual world of the Sakas, our author gives both the names of the gods in the Scythian and their Greek equivalents: *Api* (Ἀπί) in Saka for the Greek god Gaia, *Papaios* (Παπαῖος) for Zeus, *Argimpasa* (Ἀργίμπασα) for Aphrodite, *Thagimasada* (Θαγιμασάδας) for Poseidon, *Oitosyr* (Οἰτόσυρος) for Apollo, *Tabiti* (Ταβιτί) for Hestia and *Ares* (Ἀρης) for Ares (Herodotus, 2004: IV-62).

The most striking point in terms of the names of the gods mentioned above is that both the Greeks and the Sakas used a common term called *Ares*. Then the following conclusion will emerge. The existence of a common name in the language of the Sakas and the Greeks is the result of a cultural contact and either Scythians lent this word to the Greeks or the Sakas borrowed the same word from the Greeks and used it in their own language.

We find the name *Ares*, known in Greek mythology as ‘the god of fighting and war’, in the works of Hesiodos and Homer long before Herodotus (Hesiodos, 1977: 136-137; Homer, 2004: 45). Based on this, an argument can be made that *Ares* is a word that has been transferred from Greek to Scythian. And on the basis of the fact that Homer had already left this world before the time when the Sakas left their homeland in Central Asia and came to Eastern Europe and they appeared in the territory of present-day Ukraine, based on Herodotus' narrative, it can be argued that this word is of Greek origin and that it passed from Greek to the language of the Scythians who inhabited the steppes north of the Black Sea.

Such a view seems plausible at first glance, but the Northern Black Sea region was inhabited by a Scythian tribe called the Farmer Scythians, a Scythian tribe mentioned by Herodotus long before the later arrival of the Sakas. As a matter of fact, the existence of this community has been discussed in detail in the light of archaeological data and the information provided by Herodotus (Şengül, 2020: 31-62) Therefore, *Ares* seems to be a word that most likely belongs to the language of the Farmer Scythians. In my opinion, community called Hippemolgos mentioned by Homeros is identical with the Farmer Scythians mentioned by Herodotos.

In the section where Herodotus mentions the names of gods of Saka origin, he makes the most detailed statements for the god named *Ares* among the Scythian gods.

He mentions that the Scythians built temples only for Ares, and while giving a detailed account of the sacrifices offered to Ares, he provides an interesting detail about the god in question.

The Father of History says that an iron sword was erected at the top of the temples built for Ares and that this sword was essentially the symbol of Ares. On the other hand, the Byzantine author Priscus, who visited Attila in his palace 1000 years after Herodotus, says that Ares was a sword and that this sword, which had been lost long ago, was found and presented to Attila (Blockley, 1983: 281). Jordanes, on the other hand, narrates the same event with reference to Priscus, but uses the name Mars instead of Ares (Goffart, 1988: 95; Jordan, 2001: 68-69). This small detail shows that the name Ares means both the god of war and an instrument of war.

The origin of the word Ares has always been linked with the word ἀρή meaning 'bane and ruin' (Millington, 2013: 544). But Beeks does not accept such an explanation and is of the view that the connection between the words ἀρή and Ἄρης is improbable and Indo-European origin of such a name is not to be expected (Beekes, 2010:130).

It should be noted that we have not come across any scientific study that proves or shows that this word has an equivalent in a living Indo-European language today. As will now be seen, this word has been perfectly preserved in the Turkic dialects.

The word Ares, which means 'god of war' in the Scythian language, is also directly translated into Greek. This Scythian word is exactly the same with the words *Vuruş* in Turkish, *Vírś* in Chuvash and *Uruş* in many other Turkic dialects with the meanings 'fight and war'. However, the Scythian word is preserved in the most perfect form in the words *İreş* 'battle, fight' (Özşahin, 2017: 256) in Bashkir dialect and *Araz* 'to be in a fight' (Yudahin, 1998:41) and *Araz* 'fight and battle' (Çankaya, 2014: 56) in Kyrgyz dialect. In Greek, the god of war is called Ares, while the god of fight is called *Ερις* (Eris). This word is clearly a borrowing from the Scythian language to Greek. The word Araz in Kyrgyz dialect of Turkic is the exact equivalent of the Scythian Ares.

We have seen above that Herodotus uses this Scythian word both as the name of a god and as an instrument of war, a sword. This word in the sense of weapon of war is best preserved in Slavic languages.

Croatian *oružje*, Serbian *oružje*, Bosnian *oružje*, Slovak *oróžje*, Polish *oręż*, Bulgarian *оръжие*, Czech *oruží*, Slovenian *orožje*, Russian *оружие*, Belarussian *ружжэ*, Ukrainian *оружся*, Old Church Slavonic *оръжие* (Auty, 1965: 127; Kamensky, 1991: 25).

I have no doubt that the Slavic namings above is identical with the Scythian Ares. Especially the phonetic resemblance between Bashkir *ireş* and Polish *oręż* is striking.

The verbs *or* ~ *ur-* means ‘to hit, to beat’ in Turkic (Bayat & Aliyeva, 2008: 165, 224) and the word *uruş* ‘war’ is derived from this verb. One of Hunnic words which is dated 3rd century BC is 𐰆𐰺𐰽 *Ou-t’o’* (Ssuma Ch’ien, 2011: 259) and one of its meanings is army (Dybo, 2007: 91). Hunnic word is identical with Turkish *ordu* meaning ‘army’. The origin of the word *ordu* seems to be the verb *or-* ‘to hit’. The origin of the Slavic naming should be Turkic *or*.

Conclusion

Friedrich Hirth identified the word *kinglu* 徑路 (Taskina, 1973: 46, 142), which means a kind of dagger in the language of the Huns, with the Turkic *kingirak* ~ *kingrak* with the same meaning (Hirth, 1908: 67). Hirth dated this word to the 11th century BC and considered it the oldest Turkic word recorded in Chinese sources (1908: 67).

The *goryt(os)* is the Greek name given to the distinctive bow-case/quiver combination used by the Scythian archers (Loades, 2019: 219). This Scythian word is preserved in the word *korti* ‘gunpowder casing made from horn and carried on the neck while hunting’ (Naskali & Duranlı, 1999: 118) in Altai dialect of Turkic (Şengül, 2013: 270). The origin of the Scythian word stands as *kor/koru*, the root of the verb *korumak* ‘to preserve, to protect’ in Turkic. Again, the word *korota* preserved as ‘charged gun, matchlock’ (DS/IV: 2928) in Turkish is one of the remnants of the Scythian word (Şengül, 2013: 270).

If we exclude the words *goryt*, the word *Ares* is the oldest military term known to have passed from Turkic into Western languages, as it is mentioned in Homer’s work, and it is still perfectly preserved in Turkic dialects and Kyrgyz. The same word is perhaps the oldest Turkic borrowing into Slavic. The naming *Ares* has been the most perfectly preserved in Kyrgyz.

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