Authoring : *Dipla Anthi*
Translation : *Κούτρας Νικόλαος*
For citation : *Dipla Anthi , "Thargelia", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Asia Minor*
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Summary :

Hetaera from Miletus and later queen. She lived in the time of the Persian Wars. She was renowned for her beauty and political shrewdness and her links to a host of powerful men. She travelled to Thessaly where she married the tagos Antiochus and retained her influence for many years after his husband's death all over Thessaly, probably as queen of Pharsalus. She followed a pro-Persian policy.

Other Names

Date and Place of Birth

6th c. BC. - Miletus

Date and Place of Death

5th c. BC - Thessaly (?)

Main Role

Queen

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1. Biography -Activity

Thargelia was blessed with exceptional beauty, grace and nimble wits. She lived with many men, while, according to one version, she got married fourteen times.[1] Her manner of connecting with famous and powerful men is thought to have influenced Aspasia, the other renowned Milesian hetaera and Pericles' courtesan. Furthermore, Thargelia is thought to have promoted medism in the Greek city-states, trying to make her lovers adopt a sympathetic stance toward the Persian king.[2] Through her personal radiance and political shrewdness she managed to control rulers and determine the fate of entire cities.[3] A later source informs us that Thargelia, like Aspasia, studied philosophy.[4]

During the reign of Antiochus she travelled to Thessaly. Antiochus was king of Pharsalus, but it appears that by the arrival of Thargelia he had already been proclaimed tagos of the entire area of Thessaly. Thargelia married Antiochus, thus expanding her fame and influence, and probably acted as his co-ruler; she finally succeeded him in the throne after his death.[5] Some sources explicitly designate Thargelia as queen of Thessaly. Although she probably succeeded Antiochus in the throne of Pharsalus, we should not suppose that she also assumed the responsibilities of a tagos. In all likelihood her 'reign' in Thessaly did not constitute a monarchy; Thargelia simply maintained the venerable and powerful position she had before her husband's death as queen consort even during the reign of the Alevades.

There are reports that Thargelia remained in power for thirty years after Antiochus' death.[6] This figure may, however, be fictitious as in other narrations concerning queens as well we can discern a tendency towards attributing long periods of rule to queens. The precise dates of Antiochus' life and reign are uncertain.[7] Most scholars tend to agree on placing his death around 520-510 BC.

During her reign Thargelia seems to have followed a pro-Persian policy. This policy should be understood in the context of the generalized tendency towards medism which characterized the Thessalian tagoi during this period. We should note that when Xerxes campaigned in Greece, Thargelia welcomed him and thus secured that no harm was to befall on her kingdom.[8] The date of Xerxes' reception by Thargelia, 480 BC, is the only certain date concerning her life. If indeed she was in Thessaly many years before the turn of the century and succeeded Antiochus in around 510 BC, the reported 30 years of her reign bring us exactly to 480 BC. It is said that Thargelia found violent death at the hands of an Argive, whom she had once incarcerated.[9]

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1. Ath. 608-9. draws on Hippias' *Synagoge* (5th c. BC); Diels, H., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Zürich 1985), pp. 331-4.

2. Plut., *Per.*24.2. His sources seems to have been Aeschines Socraticus' *Aspasia*; Dittmar, H., *Aischines von Sphettos.Studien zur Literaturgeschichte der Sokratiker. Untersuchungen und Fragmente* (Philologische Untersuchungen 21, Berlin 1912), p. 26, n. 101. There is also the view that these are the cities of Thessaly where Thargelia was active politically, see Ehlers, B., *Eine vorplatonische Deutung des sokratischen Eros: der Dialog Aspasia des Sokratikers Aischines* (München 1966), pp. 54-5.

3. Hesychius, see Θαργηλία.

4. Lucian, *Dialogues of the Sea-Gods 1.*

5. Philostratus, *Epistolae*73 and Anonymus, *de mulieribus* 11 (Westermann). Both draw (as does Plutarch) on Aeschines Socraticus' *Aspasia*, see Krauss, H., *Aeschinis Socratici Reliquiae* (Leipzig 1911), pp. 44-5; Dittmar, H., *Aischines von Sphettos. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte der Sokratiker. Untersuchungen und Fragmente* (Philologische Untersuchungen 21, Berlin 1912), p. 27.

6. Anonymus, *de mulieribus* 11 (Westermann). His source is Aeschines Socraticus.

7. Ehlers, B., *Eine vorplatonische Deutung des sokratischen Eros: der Dialog Aspasia des Sokratikers Aischines* (München 1966), p. 53, note 66.

8. Anonymus, *de mulieribus* 11 (Westermann). His source is Aeschines Socraticus.

9. Souda, see Θαργηλία.

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Glossary :

- tagos, the

From the ancient Greek verb "τάσσω" (= to order, to rule): superior political or military leader of ancient Thessaly. He was elected from all the

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Thessalians.

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