

Excerpt from Kyriakos Htjiioannou  
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Two Stories of Sisyphos the Coan Cited  
By Ioannis Malalas about Teukros and the Building of Salamis in Cyprus

In this communication I shall bring evidence to support the legend that Salamis was colonized by Teukros, the son of Telamon from the island of Salamis in Greece, soon after the fall of Troy, with Greeks and Trojan captives, and that Teukros came to Cyprus attracted by its wealth and not because of his banishment from his island.

But before I put forward my points I have to clear up the paths leading to them. Because there are very different views on this matter expressed by the distinguished archaeologist Prof. Einar Gjerstad in his monograph "The Colonisation of Cyprus in Greek legend".

Prof Gjerstad makes the hypothesis that the great Aias of Homer is a fictitious figure, a "product of Homeric poetry" and that in the Homeric epic "he is a hero without father and country: Τελαμώνιος is no patronymicum and Salamis appears as the native land of Aias only in those parts of the Iliad he has no home", he writes. With regard now to Teukros, Gjerstad thinks that Teukros was a "Troian and was made (later) a brother of this fictitious (Aias), but in the epic poetry more prominent hero".

To corroborate his views Gjerstad accepts a spurious passage of Homer in which Teukros is called νόθος, bastard, and thinks that this version of legend that Teukros was an illegitimate son of Telamon and the Hesione, the daughter of Laomedon, contains a «memory» of his Asiatic origin.

The Greek legend that Teukros was expelled by his father Telamon and came to Cyprus and founded Salamis was, in Gjerstad's view, fabricated by the Athenian political propaganda "soon after the Persian war" and "the first Greek attack on Cyprus"; and he ends his conclusion as follows: "We thus see that the foundation legend of Cypriote Salamis contains mythological elements of two different categories. Elements of an historical tradition has been preserved telling us about an emigration of Teucrians from Asia Minor in Cyprus and his tradition is supported by archaeological evidence as is proved by the fact that Cyprus was colonized by Anatolian tribes mixed with Achaeans in Late Cypriote IIIA i.e. c. 1200 – 1100 B.C. the period when the Teucrians according to tradition arrived in Cyprus. That Achaean groups of people were associated with the Teucrians is easily understood in view of the fact that the Achaeans were represented on many sites along the Anatolian coast, also in Cilicia". And he continues:

"On the other hand, we have seen that political mythology serving Athenian interests has changed the original tradition and made use of the Homeric

Teukros, the brother of the great Aias, by attaching him to Salamis, brother's island".

Let us put now this theory of Gjerstad to a test: the Asiatic origin of Teukros is leaned upon the Homeric passage in which Teukros was called νόθος by Agamemnon when he tried to exhort Teukros to shoot on bravely, and on Sophocles' play the "Ajax".

But the above mentioned passage of Homer, as the Scholia remark, was not in Zenodotos edition of Homer, and, as is well known, Zenodotos was the earliest scholarly editor of Homer' and the Scholia go on to add: "but it was rejected as spurious also by Aristophanes" . We know that Aristophanes of Byzantium was famous for his critical work on Homer. He very rightly rejected the passage with this remark: "It was ot a proper time for the genealogy to be mentioned and it contained no exhortation; on the contrary it had a reproach and a dissuasion".

So the passage which Gjerstad brought as an early evidence for his view is an interpolation of later times, probably of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the age of Sophocles, who has inserted it in his play.

In another passage, Homer calls Teukros a legitimate brother of Aias, his κασίγνητος και όπατρος, i.e. of the same mother and the same father.

With regard now to the great Aias, whom Gjerstad thinks is a "fictitious figure of Homeric poetry" no evidence is presented. His remarks that "the great Aias is a hero without father and country" and that "Τελαμώνιος» is no patronymicum are not supported by the facts.

On a Pylos tablet An 654, lines 8-9, there is the name Αλεκτρυών Ετεφοκλήφειος i.e. Alektryon the son of Etewokles, just like Aias Telamonios, an adjective as patronymic, and, as Prof. Webster has pointed out, the type of calling the Counts of Pylos by proper name and family name is commoner on the tablets, while the much commoner form in Homer of patronymic in -ides or -ades is not found on the tablets.

Apart from Τελαμώνιος Αίας we have in Homer Αντίλοχος Νηλήϊος and Σθέναλος Καπανήϊος υιός, both patronymics in adjectival form.

Webster also, although he dates Aias by his body – shield and his kind of fighting to the sixteenth century, he believes that he really existed as a hero of the early Mycenaean period and that "his brother, Telamonian Teucer, as a great archer, is also Mycenaean".

These remarks I trust that have pointed out that Gjerstad's views cannot weigh down the legend of Teukros' Greek origin.

Now I come to the stories of Malalas who refers them to Sisyphos the Coan, if ever lived such a person, is unknown. Malalas writes that Sisyphos was with Teukros at the Trojan war and that he wrote a work, which was found by

Homer, who exposed the Iliad and Virgil the rest and that these deeds are mentioned also in the books of Dictys.

It is believed that the writings of Dictys Cretensis are Pseudepigrapha of at least the first century A.D. Dictys Cretensis is mentioned by the Byzantine authors, Suidas, Arethas, Malalas and Ioannis Tzetzes. Moreover a substantial fragment of the original Greek work was found at Tebtunis in Egypt on the back of a papyrus dating from the year 206 E.D.

Sisyphos the Coan is mentioned also by Ioannis Tzetzes, who says the following about him: "It is said that Sisyphos the Coan was a scribe of Teukros and that he went with him to the expedition and having seen all the events wrote down for Teukros an Iliad even before Homer". He, however, refers the above information to Ioannis Melelis the Chronicler that is to Malalas. Patzig, writing in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (XII, p. 257), considers Sisyphos of Cypriote origin. Anyhow, it seems that his Pseudepigrapha belong to the same age as those of Dictys Cretensis.

The first story of Sisyphos is this: The Greeks at the Trojan war derided Achilles for having hidden Briseis and at an assembly of theirs they prevented him from overrunning and sacking countries, setting up others in his stead, Teukros, the brother of Aias the Telamonian, and Idomeneus, and that they conquered, pillaged and devastated Cyprus, Isauria, and Lykia.

This event should be placed between the years 1218 and 1209, the years of the Trojan War. I follow the dates of the Marmor Parium as more exact on this matter. But from the Hittite records we have the information that the Ahhiyawans impinged on the Hittite empire at four points: the Lukka Lands, the Land of the Seha River, the Land of Zippasla and Alasiya. These events happened in the reign of the Hittite King Arnuwandas III, from 1220 to 1190 B.C.

Among the lands mentioned by the Hittite records, the Lukka Lands are usually identified with Lykia, and Alasiya with Cyprus. So, the information given by Sisyphos and the Hittite records as regards the raids of Ἀχαιῶν coincide in two points (a) the date, and (b) the lands, and I think the agreement is too striking to be merely casual.

On the other hand the excavations of Prof. Schaffer at Enkomi revealed that this city of Cyprus was destroyed by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century from the raids of the so called "Peoples of the Sea", among whom as is generally agreed there were Achaeans. This is evidence corroborating the information of Sisyphos with regards to the raids of the Achaean Teukros and Idomeneus on Cyprus and their destruction inflicted on its towns.

The other story of Sisyphos is as follows: After the sack of Troy most of the Achaean leaders, took their assigned booty and set sail for their countries but some others remained in Troy because the Telamonian Aias and Odysseus contended for the Palladium. Agamemnon and Diomedes backed Odysseus, and Aias, greatly disappointed, retired to his tent and during the night

committed suicide. This excited the army of Aias and that of his relative Pyrrhus, and Odysseus, in order to escape murder, was forced to set sail for Euxine Pontus.

Teukros at the time of the quarrel was at Salamis of Cyprus and came back to Troy to help his brother; but it was too late. He only took with him Tecmessa, the wife of Aias and the two sons of his and returned to Salamis of Cyprus. Nothing is said in this version about his return to the island of Salamis and his banishment by his father Telamon. Sophocles makes Aias ask for Teukros hopelessly in his distress: "I call Teucer. Where is Teucer? Will he ever put an end to his sacking?" Teukros came, as the messenger announced "back from the Mysian highlands". In this version, Teukros, as Sophocles put it, spent most of his time at sacking countries, and there is an agreement in this point with Sisyphos, but they disagree with regard to the countries overrun.

In Sisyphos' account nothing is said about the return of Teukros to the island of Salamis and his expulsion by his father Telamon. So, if we connect this information with that given by Pausanias, who writes that he saw Telamon's tomb in Elis near the river Aroanios, killed in the expedition of Heracles against the Eleians before the Trojan War, we reach the conclusion that Sisyphos is right.

In that spurious passage of Homer where Teukros was made νόθος, Telamon was mentioned as living far away, at Salami, but, as I said before, this was an interpolation of a later time.

With regard now to the object of the quarrel between Aias and Odysseus the ordinary tradition speaks, since the Nekyia of Homer, against Sisyphos' version that it was about the Palladium. But the problem is not the object about which was the quarrel but the place where Teukros was, when his brother killed himself.

Sisyphos, whom I believe to be a Cypriote, seems to draw information on sources of Cypriote provenance. In the Epitome of his Bibliotheca Apollodorus given an information that the Homeric hero Pheidippos, a Coan, was driven with his contingent of Coans, to Cyprus, where he settled. This legend of the settlement of Coans in Cyprus inspired probably the idea to the author in question, of ascribing his work to a certain Sisyphos the Coan, who was supposed to have escorted Teukros to Troy as his scribe.

Another Cypriote, Clearchos of Soli, gives also a very interesting information about Teukros and the people with whom he colonised Salamis. I give the passage as it is in Athenaeus: "One of the Gergini was a descendant of those Trojans, who Teukros received as his share of the captives and with whom he colonized Cyprus". This information sheds light on the problem which puzzled Gjerstad and made him hold the view that there was "and emigration of Teucrians from Asia minor to Cyprus". It reveals the truth that Salamis was colonized by the Achaeans, who brought with them Trojan captives at the beginning of the twelfth century, and not by Teucrians with some Achaeans. The Teucrians are identical in Herodotos, Virgil and other classical authors

with the Trojans. The place-name itself of Salamis contradicts Gjerstad. If the Teucrians were the founders of Salamis why did they not call it Gergina, or Gergitha, after their tribe and called it Salamis? And how the Trojans who were fighting at that time to release their town from a fatal danger were able to reach Cyprus and colonize it? And if we accept that Cyprus was colonized by Trojan refugees how could they reach Cyprus and how could they be allowed to install there themselves without conquering the natives? All these questions remain unanswered if we accept that the Teucrians had built Salamis.

That Enkomi – Alasia was captured at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century by a hostile force is the conclusion drawn by Prof Schaeffer, who writes: *Le fait que les habitants avaient en le temps d' enfouir, sous le sol de leurs habitations et sanctuaries, leur possessions precieuses..... et d' autre part le fait que les habitants ne purent retirer leurs objets de valeur de cachettes... sont en feveur de l' hypothese d' une prise de la ville par une force hostile don't l' occupation avaient empeche les survivants parmi les anciens habitants de revenir dans cette partie de l' ile".*

With regard now to the etymology of the name of Teukros the proposed derivations are not in agreement; some scholars consider it Pelasgic, some others related the name to τόξον or to «τεύχος. Αδελφός νόθος» etc. It seems that the ancients connected the name with the Teukroi i.e. the Teucrians, the Trojans and this connexion gave rise to the aetiological myth of the descent of Teukros from the captive Hesione, the daughter of Laomedon, and concubine of Telamon.

Now if we combine the information provided by Sisyphos the Coan and that of Clearchos of Soli we have the following legend, which reconciles the archaeological evidence with the traditional building of Salamis by Teukros.

Teukros during the Trojan War invaded Cyprus and destroyed Enkomi – Alasia and in a few years, at the end of the War, returned to this rich country with his contingent together with his share of Trojan captives and colonized a city which he called Salamis, after the name of his previous country island. So, the wealth of Cyprus and particularly the riches of its eastern part attracted Teukros to it; the version of the legend that his father Telamon banished him and so he was wandering in Egypt to find the prophetess Theonoe and ask her where was Cyprus to set sail to it and settle there, was a favourite myth to the Athenian tragedians, because it contained tragic elements. Isocrates who has dealt in length with the story of Teukros and his descendants does not mention Telamon's wrath and Teukros banishment. So, through the Greek tragedy this version of the legend prevailed over all others and this is perhaps the crime of the Athenians; but I do not think that they forged a story and sacrificed history to their political interests as it was suggested.

Discussion following Dr. Hadjioannou paper

Prof. I. Perlman: Perhaps you or Dr. Karageorghis could answer this: what are the dates on the Royal Tombs at Salamis?

Dr. V. Karageorghis: They range from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. I may add though, that the earliest tomb to be discovered at Salamis is dated to the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and this was excavated and published by the French expedition of the University of Lyon.

Mr. J. C. Courtois: Just to ask Prof. Iakovidis if there is no earlier evidence in Salamis – Greece, this time – earlier than Sub Mycenaean, which is 11<sup>th</sup> century too. (Iakovidis: Oh yes.)

Prof. Sp. Iakovidis: This is purely a philological matter, and since I am no philologist, its, very likely that what I am going to say will be nonsense. But there are two questions; first are all those people real historical persons? Secondly, I understand that the philological analysis of the Homeric poems, as done by Milman Parry, has shown that the parts of the Iliad which refer to Ajax are much older than the others, and from the archaeological point of view, all the attributes of Ajax, such as his shield, put him at least two centuries before the Trojan War. It seems that Ajax and his brother were the heroes of much older sagas, which have been incorporated into the Iliad much later. There is also another fact, that “Salamis” is not a Greek word – it’s not a Greek toponym. It must be older than that. So I wonder whether we could attribute the founding of Salamis in Cyprus to Teucer, if Teucer has ever existed, because if so, he must have existed about two centuries before the town was founded, according to the combined archaeological evidence and the state of philological research, as I understand it, at least.

Dr. F. Stubbings: I am inclined to believe in general terms that there is history in Greek legend, but I think we must not expect so particular dating as perhaps Prof. Iakovidis suggested we should see in dealing with it. It seems to me more important to consider the sequence of events given in the legends. I think most of us would take the Trojan War as an historical event nowadays, even archaeologists, and if the legends speak of events happening after the Trojan War, I don’t think we should date them in a position chronologically that would place them before, even if we can’t find any precise chronological coincidence between the legends and the events that we trace in archaeology. I wonder too whether the classical Greeks in speaking of the foundation of Salamis, did distinguish, as we do, between Salamis and Enkomi – Alasia. I would suppose not.

Dr. K. Hadjioannou: I would like to ask the archaeologists – that’s why I presented the paper before this eminent group of archaeologists – just to tell us how they see, from the archaeological point of view, all these matters. Prof. Gerstad is an archaeologist, yet he has dealt with these legends at length, and he has leaned his monograph, “The Colonisation of Cyprus in Greek Legend” on exactly philological points of view. What I mean is that archaeology, except from a descriptive point of view, can make nothing but conjectural history, as we do – the philologists – make conjectural history. Nobody can take an oath on the Gospel that this is true; but the archaeological objects, the finds, are there, and they can be described. The archaeologists can draw conclusions from them, but the conclusions are more or less conjectural.

Dr. S. Hood: it pleased me very much to hear the Greek foundation legend maintained. The earliest occupation at Salamis appears to date from the time when in my opinion the Greeks first began to settle in Cyprus. It is difficult to argue that Enkomi was ever called Salamis, especially if it is accepted that it was Alasia. The character of Alasia as it appears in the story of Wenamon is quite un-Greek: he finds it ruled by a queen with a non-Greek name. This is in the eleventh century.

Dr. V. Karageorghis: The archaeological facts that we have about early Salamis are these: the earliest habitation of Salamis dates to about the middle of the eleventh century, at a time when this city coexisted with the town of Enkomi. There was an overlap of about twenty-five years between the complete abandonment of Enkomi and the final growth of the city of Salamis around its natural harbour. It was already in the middle of the eleventh century a sizable city, and from the evidence of one tomb which has been discovered – and I referred to this earlier – it seems that it was quite a prosperous town. I don't think we have any earlier evidence for habitation of Salamis, and I don't think archaeology can tell us more. Whether this new town which succeeded Enkomi was what the Greek legends refer to as Salamis, or whether the Greek legends refer also to Enkomi, that I don't think archaeology can help us to find out.

Dr. K. Hadjioannou: Well, if you dig deeper, perhaps you can discover some old layers of older habitation.

Dr. V. Karagiorghis: In that case, we have to suppose that there were two major cities, the one at a distance of two miles from the other, which existed before the middle of the eleventh century, which is rather unlikely.

Dr. K. Hatjioannou: But there are at least two such phenomena known to me: (a) Athens and Piraeus, two towns the one very near the other in ancient Greece, and (b) the old city of Famagusta in the walls, the Turkish town, and Varosha, the Greek town, two towns side by side in modern Cyprus.

Prof. F. G. Mair: But ten years ago, people would have said it was rather unlikely that there was an eleventh – century town at Salamis.

Prof. G.F. A. Schaffer: The question of the two towns coexisting at the end of the post-Mycenaean period of the twelfth or eleventh century is a difficult one.

We have no definite indications, because our chronological possibilities are not precise enough. It could have been twenty-five years, ten years, or five years. But I would say the fact that the people from Enkomi – from the old Alasia – went to settle nearer to the sea is, of course, a quite normal phenomenon. The old harbour had silted up over the years. So as the town, in any case, was destroyed by a heavy earthquake, which was observed in the ruins by me, by Dikaios and my assistants, it was a good moment to displace the town, as it happened in similar modern earthquake destructions, and to settle nearer to the coast. Now the fact that the inhabitants left their gods behind in well-organised hiding places, as we have observed it, shows

that they were not entirely deserting their old city. As a matter of fact, at the present time, the lands of Enkomi village, to which belongs our Alasia grounds, as well as the Salamis site where Prof. Pouilloux discovered the tomb of the eleventh century lately published by Madame Yon, are within the same boundaries. The Alasia people simply transferred their destroyed town nearer toward the sea within their own boundaries. Of course, there could have been a certain amount of people who preferred to remain in the old town after having reconstructed their houses, but the main population has certainly left the old town to settle at Salamis.