

Scythia and the lost historians

Son of Democharis or of Kaystrobios, from Proikonessos, epic poet. (Works:) The epic called the Arimaspeia – it is an account of the Hyperborean Arimaspians, in 3 books. They say this man's soul, whenever he wanted, left his body and came back again. He lived in the time of Croesus and Cyrus, in Olympiad <5>8 (548-545 BC). He also wrote a prose Theogony I of 1000 lines. Aristeas – BNJ 35 T1

As for the really old writers, known only from their names, I cannot guess what sort of style they practised ... Most of their writings have not survived to our time and indeed those that have survived do not command universal confidence in their authenticity, e.g. those of Kadmos of Miletos (BNJ 489 T 5) and Aristaios of Prokonnesos and people like them. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, On Thucydides, 23.4-6

9 We have observed that there are tribes of Scythians, indeed a good number of them, that feed on human bodies ... 10 But next to those (Scythians) who are to the north, not far from the actual origin of the North Wind and the cave that is said to be his, a place which they call the Earth's Lock, arise the Arimaspians that we have mentioned (HN 4.88, 6.50), notable for their one eye in the middle of the forehead. They continually are at war over the metal sources with the griffins, a winged kind of wild animal, as envisaged in popular tradition, who heave gold out of its seams, and it is with amazing eagerness that the animals guard it and the Arimaspians try to take it. Many people write of this, but the most celebrated are Herodotos Herodotus and Aristeas of Proconnesus.

11 Beyond further Cannibal (Anthropophagi) Scythians, there is in a particular large valley of Mt Imavus a region that is called Abarimon. Here live wood folk of exceptional speed whose feet point backwards and who roam at will with the wild beasts. These cannot live in a different environment or, for this reason, be brought to neighbouring kings, and were not brought to Alexander the Great, as Baiton, the surveyor of his routes, has reported (BNJ 119 F5). 12 The previous Cannibals, the ones we said were to the north, at a distance of 10 days beyond the river Borysthenes, drink from the crania of human heads and use their skins with the hair as towels, instead of wool, according to Isigonos of Nicaea (FHG 4.435 F1). Also, in Albania there are born certain people with blue-grey eyes, grey-haired straightaway from childhood, who see better at night than during the day. Also, at a distance of 13 days beyond the Borysthenes, there are the Sauromatai who habitually take food on alternate days. Pliny, Natural History, 7.9-12

Hyperboreoi: a people. Protarchos (FHG 4, 485) affirms that the Alps received the name of Rhipaian Mountains, and those living beyond the Alpine mountains are all named Hyperboreoi. Antimachos (fr. 103 Wyss = 141 Matthews) says that they are identical with the Arimaspoi. But Damastes in the essay On Nations writes that the Issedones live beyond the Scythians and the Arimaspoi beyond them, and beyond the Arimaspoi there are the Rhipaian mountains, from which the wind of Boreas blows; and snow never abandons them. Beyond these mountains live the Hyperboreoi, until the other sea. Others report differently. Hellanikos (FGrH 4 F187) writes Hyperboreioi, with the diphthong. Stephanus Byzantius, Ethnica, -Ῑπερβόρειοι