

A. Loma, Looking for the land of the Boudinoi. A toponomastic research in ancient Scythia

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The old Russian town of Kursk, mentioned since 1035 (*Kurьskъ*), seems to be named after a small creek *Kur*, joining there the river Tuskar'. Without a convincing etymology, this name is suspected of Non-Slavic origin. Indeed, Kursk lies in the area of Baltic hydronymic substrate and of the Iron age Yuchnov archaeological culture, attributed to the ancient Balts and, more precisely, to the supposedly baltophone Boudinoi of Herodotus. In view of these facts, the identification of *Kurьskъ* with *Kāriskos* may be proposed, which, according to a fragment from Aristotle, was an inhabited place in the land of the Boudinoi. The *-u-* of Slavic form could be explained by the change of *ā* to *ō* that occurred in most of Baltic dialects early enough to be reflected in the substrate river-names on Russian soil, e.g. *Užepa* ~ Latvian *Āžupe* 'Goat's river'. Consequently **Kurь*, **Kurьskъ* may be traced back to **Kāros*, **Kāriskos* via Baltic **Kōr-(as, -iskas)*, the secondary suffix **-isko-* being a common Indo-European heritage in Baltic, Slavic, Germanic and Celtic. Apart from the ultimate etymology of the stem **Kār-*, the topographical continuity proposed here finds an additional support in reconsidering some problems concerning the historical geography of Scythia. It has already been observed, that the hardly believable extension of Darius' campaign against the Scythians beyond the Don, as reported by Herodotus, must be due to the confusion of *Varu-* 'Dnieper' with Volga; the same may be true of him placing the land of the Boudinoi between Don and Volga, which contradicts his own statement implying that they were eastern neighbours of the Neuroi. With the Boudinoi situated on the territory of the Yuchnov culture in the modern regions of Kursk, Brjansk, Orlov and Chernigov, all pieces fit together: the Neuroi in the west, identified with the bearers of the Milograd culture in southern Belarus and eastern Ukraine, the Dnieper-Scythians, Gr. *Borystheneītai*, Old Iranian **Varu-skula-* (whence the river name *Vorskla*) in the south and the Melanchlainoi, 'Black-cloaks', Old Iranian *Sau-dar-ata-*, in the east. As the borderland to the latter, the region of Kariskos/Kursk was known for breeding only black sheep, which ought to have been somehow connected with the black (wool) clothing characteristic of the Melanchlainoi.