

[Bestiary](#) >> [Dragons](#) >> Scythian Dracaena (Drakaina Skythia)

## DRAKAINA SKYTHIA

Greek Name	Transliteration
Δρακαινα Σκυθια	Drakaina Skythia
Latin Spelling	Translation
Dracaena Scythia	Scythian She-Dragon

THE DRAKAINA SKYTHIA (Scythian Dracaena) was the first ruler of the land of Skythia. She was a woman from the waist up with the tail of a serpent in place of legs. When Herakles was travelling through her realm with the cattle of Geryon, she stole some of the herd and insisted the hero mate with her before she would return them. He did so and through her became the ancestor of a line of Skythian kings.

The Skythian Drakaina may have identified with the monster [Ekhidna](#) who was sometimes placed in the Skythian land of Arimoi. The Drakaina's story is undoubtedly a Greek translation of an old Skythian myth. Her serpentine form, the birthing of the first men, and the title "Hora" (Season) all suggest she was an indigenous earth-goddess.

### FAMILY OF THE DRACAENA

#### PARENTS

Perhaps [GAIA](#), though nowhere stated

#### OFFSPRING

[1] SKYTHES, AGATHYRSOS, GELONOS (by Herakles) (*Herodotus 4.9.1*)

[2] KOLAXES (by [Zeus](#)) (*Valerius Flaccus 6.48*)

### ENCYCLOPEDIA

ECHIDNA (Echidna). The Greeks on the Euxine conceived her to have lived in Scythia. When Heracles, they said, carried away the oxen of Geryones, he also visited the country of the Scythians, which was then still a desert. Once while he was asleep there, his horses suddenly disappeared, and when he woke and wandered about in search of them, he came into the country of Hylaea. He there found the monster Echidna in a cave. When he asked whether she knew anything about his horses, she answered, that they were in her own possession, but that she would not give them up, unless he would consent to stay with her for a time. Heracles complied with the request, and became by her the father of Agathyrus, Gelonus, and Scythes. The last of them became king of the Scythians, according to his father's arrangement, because he was the only one among the three brothers that was able to manage the bow which Heracles had left behind, and to use his father's girdle. (Herod. iv. 8-10.)

*Source: Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology.*

## ALTERNATE NAMES

Greek Name	Transliteration
Ὠρα	Hôra
Latin Spelling	Translation
Hora	Season ( <i>hōra</i> )

## CLASSICAL LITERATURE QUOTES

*Herodotus, Histories 4. 9. 1 ff (trans. Godley) (Greek historian C5th B.C.) :*

"[The following story was probably derived by the Greeks from Scythian mythology.]

Herakles (Heracles), driving the cattle of Geryones, came to this land [Skythia (Scythia)], which was then desolate, but is now inhabited by the Skythians . . . Herakles came from there [the home of Geryones] to the country now called Skythia, where, encountering wintry and frosty weather, he drew his lion's skin over him and fell asleep, and while he slept his mares, which were grazing yoked to the chariot, were spirited away by divine fortune.

When Herakles awoke, he searched for them, visiting every part of the country, until at last he came to the land called the Hylaien (Woodland), and there he found in a cave a creature of double form [i.e. the Skythian Drakaina] that was half maiden and half serpent (*ekhidna*); above the buttocks she was a woman, below them a snake. When he saw her he was astonished, and asked her if she had seen his mares straying; she said that she had them, and would not return them to him before he had intercourse with her; Herakles did, in hope of this reward.

But though he was anxious to take the horses and go, she delayed returning them, so that she might have Herakles with her for as long as possible; at last she gave them back, telling him, 'These mares came, and I kept them safe here for you, and you have paid me for keeping them, for I have three sons by you. Now tell me what I am to do when they are grown up : shall I keep them here, since I am queen of this country, or shall I send them away to you?'

Thus she inquired, and then (it is said) Herakles answered : 'When you see the boys are grown up, do as follows and you will do rightly: whichever of them you see bending this bow and wearing this belt so, make him an inhabitant of this land; but whoever falls short of these accomplishments that I require, send him away out of the country. Do so and you shall yourself have comfort, and my will shall be done.'

So he drew one of his bows (for until then Herakles always carried two), and showed her the belt, and gave her the bow and the belt, that had a golden vessel on the end of its clasp; and, having given them, he departed. But when the sons born to her were grown men, she gave them names, calling one of them Agathyrsos and the next Gelonos and the youngest Skythes (Scythes); furthermore, remembering the instructions, she did as she was told. Two of her sons, Agathyrsos and Gelonos, were cast out by their mother and left the country, unable to fulfill the requirements set; but Skythes, the youngest, fulfilled them and so stayed in the land. From Skythes son of Herakles comes the whole line of the kings of Skythia; and it is because of the vessel that the Skythians carry vessels on their belts to this day. This alone his mother did for Skythes. This is what the Greek dwellers in Pontus say."

*Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica 6. 48 ff (trans. Mozley) (Roman epic C1st A.D.) :*

"[Armies gather for a war between King Aeetes of Colchis and his brother Perses of Taurus :] Next came Bislata's legion and Colaxes its chief, himself too of the seed of gods, begotten by Jupiter [Zeus] himself in Scythian land by green Myrace and the mouths of Tibisis, enchanted, if the tale is worthy of belief, by a Nympha's half-human body nor afraid of her twin snakes [i.e. she had two serpent-tails in place of legs]. The whole troop bears Jove's emblem, their targes embossed with the darting fires of the triple thunderbolt . . . Thereon had he himself joined serpents of gold, in likeness of Hora (Season) his mother; from either hand did the snakes' tongues meet, darting wounds upon a shapely gem."

## SOURCES

### GREEK

- *Herodotus, Histories* - Greek History C5th B.C.

## ROMAN

- *Valerius Flaccus, The Argonautica* - Latin Epic C1st A.D.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

[A complete bibliography of the translations quoted on this page.](#)

### DRACAENA SUMMARY

#### THE DRACAENA SCYTHIA

<b>Form</b>	Woman's upper body, serpent's tail
<b>Queen of</b>	Scythia
<b>Home</b>	Scythia
<b>Other Names</b>	Hora