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GREEKS AT PHASIS AND THE RANSOMING
OF SHIPWRECKED SAILORS

(FGrHist. II. 218.18)

A brief extract from a series of studies of city-constitutions (*politeiai*), compiled by a Herakleides, is to be found in Jacoby's collection of fragments of otherwise lost Greek historical writers¹. The Herakleides in question may have been one surnamed Lembos, a native of Kallatis on the Rumanian coast of the Black Sea (Mangalia) rather than the better known Herakleides Pontikos from Herakleia (Eregli) on the present day coast of Turkey². The extract exists in the form of two sentences, not very obviously connected to one another in syntax or logic. It has seemingly been subjected to a process of selection by an epitomator, who did not fully understand the process described or was not aware of the complex geography of the coastal lands east of the Black Sea (the Heniokhoi and the Phasianoi of modern Georgia)³. The original material may have been collected for Aristotle's study of constitutions of Greek cities and of non-Greek communities (*nomima barbarika*), but it has been subjected to a two-fold process of selection, causing obscurity and some lack of internal continuity⁴.

Two opposed interpretations of this passage have been proposed, depending on the translation of the words and the syntax. One is that it provides support for the view that a Greek city called Phasis existed there in the Classical Period (5th and 4th centuries BC)⁵ and the other is that the extract is so disconnected and has gone through so unsatisfactory a double process of epitomisation that no trust can be put in it when attempting to build up a picture of the situation among the

¹ FGrHist. II. 218.18, cf. *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum. II* / Ed. K. Mueller. P., 1878. P. 208–224; *Scythica et Caucasica* / Ed. V.V. Latyshev. 1. 2. St. Petersburg, 1900. P. 447.

² *Heraclidi Lembi Excerpta Politiarum* / Ed. M. Dilts. Durham, 1971. P. 29, fr. 46; *Gottschalk H.B.* *Heraclides of Pontus*. Oxf., 1980. P. 157; *Kaukhchishvili T.S.* *Heraclides and his References to Georgia* // *Восточная филология*. Тбилиси, 1969. P. 27 (in Georgian); *Каухчишвили Т.С.* *Письменные источники по вопросу «колонизации» Восточного Причерноморья* // *Проблемы греческой колонизации Северного и Восточного Причерноморья*. I. Цхалтубо, 1977. Тбилиси, 1979 (далее – Цхалтубо I). С. 294–304. Either of the two Herakleides would have known something of Phasis and the river Phasis, though one came from Kallatis in modern Rumania and the other from Herakleia on the Western half of the Black Sea coast of Turkey.

³ *Доватур А.И.* *Политика и политики Аристотеля*. М.–Л., 1965. С. 116; *Ломоури Н.Ю.* *О «политии фасисцев» Гераклида* // *ВДИ*. 1988. № 3. С. 123–133.

⁴ *Ломоури*. *О «политии фасисцев»*... С. 126–127.

⁵ So most recently: *Lordkipanidze O.D.* *The Phasis: River and City in Colchis*, *Geographia Historica*. Stuttgart, 2000. P. 42–45. Unfortunately the translation given on p. 42, 'and send them off', does not answer to the text given on p. 42 n. 201, which is *apoplein* in the text of *Kaukhchishvili*. He seems to be adopting Braund's *apopempein*.

Phasians⁶. My own approach to the question is less sceptical than the second, but leads to a different conclusion from the first. It arises from a close look at the sentences in the extract and from a translation which differs slightly from the traditional, but more radically from the recently revisionist one. The passage reads as follows:

Φασιανῶν·

Φᾶσιν τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς Ἡνίοχοι κατώκουν, φύλον ἀνθρωποφάγον καὶ ἐκδείρον τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἔπειτα Μιλήσιοι. Φιλόξενοι δαίσιν ὥστε τοὺς ναυαγοὺς ἐφοδιάζειν καὶ τρεῖς μνᾶς διδόντας ἀπολύειν· FGrHist. II. 218 (F. Jacoby).

‘Of the Phasians:

‘In the beginning the Heniokhoi settled Phasis, a cannibal tribe, and one that skinned human bodies; then Milesians, and they are so welcoming of people that they provide those who have been shipwrecked with supplies, freeing them (ransoming them) at the price of three minas’.

The final word ἀπολύειν (‘to arrange the freedom of’) has more recently been read as ἀποπλεῖν (‘to sail away’), a variant which was suggested by Kaukhchishvili and followed by a number of colleagues in Georgia⁷. This produced a translation in the following sense for the final sentence.

‘they are so welcoming of people that they provide those who have been shipwrecked with supplies and they (sc. the shipwrecked) pay them (the Milesians) three minas and sail away’.

This version produces more difficulties than the first and it was already criticised soon after it was proposed⁸. It supposes a change of subject within the last clause from ‘the Milesians’ to ‘the shipwrecked’, and also credits the Milesians with such ‘hospitality’ that the shipwrecked are made to pay three minas for the supplies before being able to sail away. The expression ‘beneficent to strangers’, ‘hospitable’, does not seem appropriate to the action, though it would undoubtedly be an improvement on the behaviors of the barbarian Heniokhoi, ‘flayers of flesh and cannibals’.

A second alternative was attempted, substituting the verb ‘to send them off’ (ἀποπέμπειν), returning to the traditionally accepted structure of the clause and its general sense⁹, but it is hardly an improvement on ἀπολύειν, which is the technical

⁶ Ломоури. О «политии фасисцев»... С. 133. At the time Lomouri’s scepticism was useful in damping down the over-enthusiastic use of the Herakleides fragment as proof that a Greek city existed at Phasis, but it has had the unfortunate consequence of discouraging further study of it and the details given in *Airs, Waters, Places* (Lordkipanidze. The Phasis... P. 42–45).

⁷ Kaukhchishvili. Heraclides. P. 27; Каухчишвили. Письменные источники... Прим. 2; Kaukhchishvili herself was less certain in 1979 (Цхалтубо. I. С. 297–298); Lordkipanidze O.D. Древняя Колхида. Тбилиси, 1979. С. 112; Lordkipanidze O.D. Archäologie in Georgien. Heidelberg, 1991. P. 127–129; Tsetskhladze G.R. On the Numismatics of Colchis // Dialogues d’Histoire ancienne. 1992. 199. 1. P. 241–242; Koshelenko G.A., Kuznetsov V.D. Colchis and Bosphorus: Two Models of Colonisation // New Studies on the Black Sea Littoral. Colloquia Pontica I, 1996 / Ed. G.R. Tsetskhladze. P. 23; Tsetskhladze G.R. Die Griechen in der Kolkhis–Historische–Archäologische Abriss. Amsterdam, 1998. P. 9: Tsetskhladze gives the text as ἀποπλεῖν ‘to sail away’ but wrongly attributes it to Jacoby’s version.

⁸ Браунский И.Б. Дискуссия // Цхалтубо I. С. 370–371; Виноградов Ю.Г. Дискуссия // Там же. С. 379–380.

⁹ Braund D. Georgia in Antiquity // Oxf., 1994. P. 119–121 and esp. P. 96. Tsetskhladze attributes the version ‘and ransom them for three minas’ to Braund but in his only published work on the matter (see above), Braund gives the translation, ‘give them three minas and send them on their way’ (Tsetskhladze G.R. The Silver Phiale Mesomphalos from the Kuban // Oxford Journal of Archaeology. 1994. 13. 2. P. 211).

term for a ‘pay-off’, ‘ransom’, and appropriate to the situation, where money (three minas) is specifically mentioned at a level suited to cash for freedom.

At this point I wish to bring forward a third interpretation of the final clause, which, hopefully, resolves the problems of its continuity of structure and the resultant sense. This can be achieved by making no change to the traditional reading, while understanding the presence of another party to the transaction, not specifically mentioned at that point:

‘the Milesians are so hospitable that they provide those who have been shipwrecked with supplies, paying (sc. ‘their captors’, i.e. the Phasians and/or the Heniokhoi) three minas and securing their freedom’.

The unstated party is ‘the Phasians’, mentioned only in the rubric, the Kolkhoi of the Phasis region and perhaps also pirates from among the Heniokhoi. The latter were by the late 4th century BC and Hellenistic period notorious pirates, shipwreckers and slavers (Arist. Pol. 338b; Strabo. XI. 2. 12)¹⁰. As the extract as a whole is devoted to a ‘constitution’ of the people inhabiting the Phasis (coastal) region, it is reasonable to supply these ‘missing’ people as the recipients of the ransom-money paid by the Milesians. The Heniokhoi are known to have lived on the Caucasus coast some distance north of the Colchians of the Phasis area, but there was nothing to prevent them also appearing in the port of the Phasians to trade their captives for cash, once they had realised that this was more lucrative than skinning and eating them (fig.).

Having provided a translation which has internal logic and adds up to a reasonable social and economic scenario, we may now look at the other writers of 5th and 4th century date (the Classical Greek period) to see whether they confirm this picture of settlement and commerce. In fact they do. Xenophon, who spent some time at Trapezous, and had a mind to lead a colony of his soldiers to Phasis in 400 BC, had heard that the region was ruled by a descendant of Aetes, clearly a member of the non-Greek dynasty of a Kolkhian people (Anab. 5. 6. 36)¹¹. His information came from the citizens of Trapezous and from captains of merchant-ships and traders sailing to and from the Phasis River. He shows no sign of knowing of a Greek city, or that there had ever been one there in the past. Plato too mentions Greeks living at both ends of the known world, the Pillars of Herakles and Phasis, but this does not imply the existence of Greek colonies at either extremity, though Greeks might well live in local coastal communities or among Phoenicians (Phaed. 109b). Earlier, in the first half of the 5th c. BC, Pindar had sung the praises of Xenokrates of Akragas in Sicily, whose commercial activity reached the Phasis in summer and Egypt in winter (Isth. 2. 41–42). Neither region held a Greek colony in the full autonomous sense, though Greeks were in Egypt in several locations as mercenaries and traders. Aristophanes also made reference to a Phasianos in a lost play, *Holkades* (‘Merchant-

¹⁰ Ломоури. О «политии фасисцев»... С. 129–132; Asheri D. The Achaeans and the Heniokhoi // The Greek Colonisation of the Black Sea Area. Historia Einzelschriften 121. 1998. P. 265–285. Also for slaving activity on this coast, Braund D., Tsetschladze G.R. The Export of Slaves from Colchis // Classical Quarterly. 1989. 39. P. 113–125, where the Jacoby version is correctly given as ἀπολύειν (to ransom).

¹¹ Hind J.G.F. The Types on the Earliest Silver Coins of the Phasians (Kolkhidki) // Sur les Traces des Argonautes, L' Université de Franche Comte / Ed. A. Fraysse and E. Gény. 1996. P. 209–213; *idem*. The Types on the Phasian Silver Coins // The Numismatic Chronicle. 2005. P. 13–14.

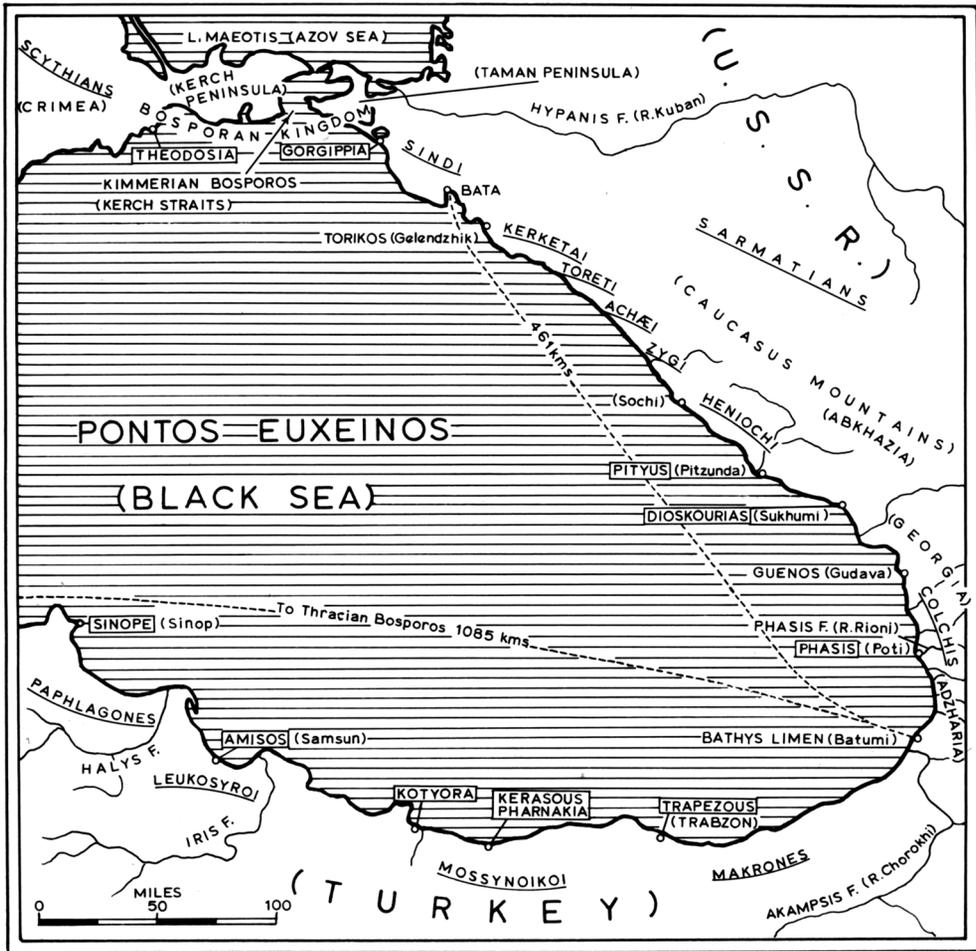


Fig. Greek Cities and Peoples of the Hinterland of the East Coast of the Black Sea

ships'), which suggests the interest of traders in the area, but not necessarily a colony (*apoikia*)¹².

Most striking, however, is the description of the barbarian people, the Phasianoi, in their *polis* ('city') and *emporion* ('port-of-trade') on the river Phasis (Ps. Hippocr. De aer. 15). The medical treatise mentions Phasianoi, who were without doubt a native people of the Kolkhian lowlands, giving their physical characteristics, describing timber houses, log – canoes and canal – routes around the buildings. The mention of the *emporion*, as well as their *polis*, implies the presence of Greek residents (*katoikoi*) and agents of merchants (*emporoi*)¹³. It complements the excerpt from Herakleides in not mentioning the Milesian residents by name, but in giving us our best account of the Phasian native people and the trading area frequented

¹² Poetae Comici Graeci III, 2 / Ed. R. Kassell, C. Austin. B., 1984. P. 239.

¹³ W.H.S. Jones trans. *Hippocrates*. Vol.1. L., 1923. P. 112–114. Minimal attention (two lines) is given to *Airs, Waters, Places* 15 by Koshelenko and Kuznetsov (Colchis.... P. 19). For the Herakleides passage they offer the translation 'and upon their departure give them three minae', which does not translate ἀπολύειν, ἀποπλεῖν or ἀποπέμπτειν.

by *emporoi*; many of these must have been Milesians, especially men from the Milesian colony of Sinope. Both writers from different perspectives present the same general economic and social interaction between Greeks and Phasians, which does not imply the existence of an autonomous Greek colony, but rather residents in a barbarian *polis*.

In conclusion, the fragment of Herakleides, taken from one of Aristotle's *Nomima barbarika*, mentions Heniokhoi as well as Phasians because of their general proximity in the Eastern Black Sea area; Aristotle speaks likewise of the Heniokhoi and their neighbours, the Akhaioi, in his *Politics*. The Heniokhoi had a bad reputation as wreckers, pirates and slavers. The Milesians at Phasis were not colonists with an autonomous *polis*, but *katoikoi* – settlers in a host community, among whom were agents of traders and ship-owner/captains (*emporoi*, *naukleroi*). When the plight of shipwrecked men came to their notice these residents showed their hospitality, contrasting starkly with the barbarian (and barbarous) Heniokhoi, by giving them supplies after paying the ransom. This was paid to the Phasians, and perhaps *via* them, to piratical Heniokhoi, depending into whose hands they had passed. It is for this reason that the two native peoples are in juxtaposed sentences, though not logically connected. The Milesian Greeks at Phasis lived mainly in the coastal *emporion*, but some may have found their way to the presumed Phasian capital at Kutaisi or to other centres such as Vani. The writer of the environmental/medical treatise, *Airs, Waters, Places*, mentions the activities of the Phasians plying the waterways of their *polis* and port-area. The visiting Greek merchants probably came from Miletos itself, but increasingly others arrived from Byzantion and Herakleia on the Black Sea as well as Athens. But traders from Sinope, itself a Milesian colony, will have made up a significant number; that city sat squarely on the coastal route from the entrance to the Black Sea on the farthest route to Phasis, as Xenophon and his army discovered when marching from Trapezous *via* Kerasous and Kotyora towards Sinope, all of which were subordinate (daughter) colonies of Sinope¹⁴.

ГРЕКИ НА ФАСИСЕ И ВЫКУП ПОТЕРПЕВШИХ КОРАБЛЕКРУШЕНИЕ

(FGrHist. II. 218. 18)

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Работа посвящена анализу фрагмента «Политии фасиан» Гераклида (FGrHist. II. 218. 18). Автор приводит аргументы в пользу чтения глагола ἀπολύειν – «выпускать» – в конце заключительной фразы данного отрывка. По его мнению, отрывок сообщает о том, что милетцы платили выкуп фасианам и гениохам за захваченных ими греков, потерпевших кораблекрушение у берегов Колхиды. Эти милетцы вряд ли имели собственную колонию в устье Фасиса, а скорее были эмпорами и катойками, жившими в местных городах.

¹⁴ Брашинский И.Б. Синопа и Колхиды // Вопросы древней истории. Кавказско-ближневосточный сборник. 4. Тбилиси, 1973. С. 182–189; *Hind*. The types on the Earliest Silver Coins... P. 209–211; *idem*. The types on the Phasian Silver Coins... P. 13–14.