

On the question of the likelihood of the subordination of the Bosphorus to the Persians (Herod., III, 97)

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Abstract. In discussions about the subordination of the Bosphorus Persians, new studies. V.P. Yaylenko with small additions repeated his version of the campaign Ariaramnes and subordinate of Bosphorus to the Persians under Darius I. J. Nileling suggested that chapter III, 97 Herodotus might have in mind the possibility of submission of the Bosphorus to the Persians until the time of writing his work. Both point of view supported by G.R. Tsetskhladze. In our opinion, all the arguments do not match the context of the chapter of Herodotus.

Keywords: Achaemenids, Ariaramnes, Bosphorus, Darius I, Persia, Pontus, Scythians.

The problem of the likelihood of submission of the Bosphorus to the Persians has a long history. For the first time, an employee of the Museum of Fine Arts V.K. Shileiko in the publication of the Persian chalcedony seal from the museum collection. In his opinion, the cylindrical seal of Artaxerxes I Dolgoruk (465/4-425 BC) published by him, dating today to the last decades of the V century BC. [Dandamaev, 1976, S. 36; Nikulina, 1994, p. 85], "was" a Persian regalia entrusted to the Cimmerian royal satrap who ruled the Bosphorus" [Shileiko, 1925, p. 18]. This is motivated by her place of discovery "*on the ancient Cimmerian coast*" (italics mine - EM).

However, this opinion was not recognized and already T.V. Blavatsky, assessing the nature of the Bosporan-Persian relations during the reign of Artaxerxes I, noted that the discovery of cylinders with royal seals rather indicates that "Persian diplomacy apparently took some steps to involve the Bosporan tyrants in its orbit" and that "this cylinder could have been entrusted to the tsarist ambassador sent to the Bosporan ruler" [Blavatsky, 1959, p. 81-82]. The circumstances of the discovery of this cylinder (kept in the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts. Inventory № 12v 254) and the second similar, also mentioned by V.K. Shileiko (kept in the Hermitage. Inventory № 19499 - purchased in Kerch) do not give full confidence that they were found precisely in the Bosphorus, and not brought to Kerch for sale from some other region.

A thorough study of Achaemenid imports in the Northern Black Sea region, including cylinder seals, allowed M.Yu. Traister to conclude that this our cylinder-seal is the only one that "is correctly considered as an official seal that belonged to a high-ranking official" [Traister, 2011, p. 117]. In our case, it could be Artaxerxes I himself or his, as they would say now, "extraordinary and plenipotentiary" representative. An interesting remark by M.Yu. Treister, following immediately after his quote: "whoever owned the seals in question, there is practically

no doubt that they "traveled" along with their owners [Treister, 2011, p. 117]. Since there is no reason to speak of Artaxerxes himself traveling to the Bosphorus, it is more logical to think that such was his ambassador, who had very extensive powers, who died during his visit and was buried with his regalia, among which was our cylindrical seal. As a consequence, the conclusion of T.V. Madame Blavatsky about the significance of these seals seems to me much more convincing and probable.

The real discussion about the likelihood of the subordination of the Bosphorus to the Achaemenids began with an analysis by G.A. The purpose of the expression "κατὰ δὲ τὴν Ἀσίαν" of Diodorus in his first message about the Bosphorus (XII, 31.1) and confirmation of the fact of the subordination of the Bosphorus to the Persians by other, mainly narrative sources. Proceeding from the fact that Diodorus under the term "Asia" usually means Persia, Gennady Andreevich, with the help of a number of indirect arguments, comes to the conclusion that the Cimmerian Bosphorus was an integral part of the Achaemenid state [Koshelenko, 1999, p. 135, etc.].

This version was actively supported by N.F. Fedoseev [Fedoseev, 1997, S. 309—319.], Who previously expressed similar views, publishing a number of finds from the Bosphorus [Fedoseev N.F., Golenko V.K., 1995, c/ 51-52]. I have already had to consider the arguments given by the authors in favor of this version [Molev, 2001, p. 29-33; 2001a, p. 58-66; 2006, p. 275-285; 2008, p. 110-115] and my conclusion was directly opposite to the conclusions of my colleagues. Recently, however, a number of other works have been published in which this topic is raised again and my conclusions are also questioned. Without setting myself the task of covering the whole range of problems associated with the Bosphorus-Persian relations, I will only consider the idea of the possibility of the Bosphorus entering the Persian possessions.

So, in 2004 V.P. Yaylenko, considering the campaigns of Darius I in his report on the "Bosphorus phenomenon", came to the conclusion that his first campaign against the Scythians was actually a campaign against the Bosphorus [Yaylenko, 2004, p. 55-60]. However, the arguments of V.P. Yaylenko in favor of his version is not at all as convincing as it seems to the author. And that's why. Referring to the Behistun inscription, where Darius writes (I deliberately quote V.P. Yaylenko's translation) [Yaylenko, 2010, p. nine].: "Then with an army I went to the Scythians. Then - - the sharp ones - - against, the sea I reached - - I crossed the whole - - smashed, took some of them captive - - to me - - the leader, Skunkh his name, captured and brought to me. Then I appointed another leader as I wished. After that, the country became mine", the author notes that the key words here are "Scythians wearing pointed hats", living overseas... mentioned among the Central Asian tributaries and possessions of Persia. Therefore, this message cannot be directly correlated with the conquest of the Bosphorus. On the relief with

prisoners on the Behistun inscription, the relief image of the Scythian king in a pointed cap directly says "sakā", which is also well known to V.P. Yailenko [Yailenko, 2010b p. 11]. And the Persians, as you know, called the Saks the Central Asian Scythians (Her., I, 201), who were really subjugated by Darius, who paid him tribute and were part of the 15th district of his possessions (Her., III, 93). Moreover, they participated in the Battle of Marathon (Her., VI, 113) and subsequent battles in Greece (Her., VIII, 113; IX, 31, 71). Consequently, the Greeks knew them well enough not to be confused with the Black Sea Scythians.

Realizing this, the author cites as a parallel to the text of the Behistun inscription the message of Ctesias of Cnidus about the expedition of the satrap of Cappadocia Ariaramnus against the Scythians. However, concurrency is highly questionable here. First, in the inscription, Darius writes that he subdued the Scythians, and with Ctesias, the result of his campaign was the retreat of the Persian king. Secondly, in the message of Ctesias it is also about the Scythians and there is not a word about the Cimmerian Bosphorus. And, thirdly, from the description by Ctesias of the campaign of Ariaramnus does not follow in any way that it was aimed at conquering or suppressing the fallen province, which suggests V.P. Yailenko. It was just a raid, during which Ariaramnus "took hostages - ἡγχαλώτισε" and nothing more (Ctes., F13, 20).

S.A. Yatsenko suggests that the Scythians of Skifarb are the very saka paradraya that are depicted on the relief on the tomb of Darius I in Naqsh-e Rostam and that were conquered by Ariaramn [Yatsenko, 2011, p. 11-112]. So this argument confirms the information of narrative sources about the campaign against the Scythians, but by no means against the Bosphorians. Moreover, the monuments of the Scythians in the Bosphorus of that time are rare [Yakovenko, 1985, p. 17]. An attempt by A.A. Maslennikov to substantiate the more or less permanent habitation of some group of Scythians by the fact of Ariaramn's campaign is very unlikely, and the author himself notes that Ariaramn's campaign could have been directed to any point from the Danube delta to the Cimmerian Bosphorus [Maslennikov, 1999, p. 175-176].

And further. Cappadocia was part of the third satrapy in Asia Minor, which in Persian sources was most often called "Cappadocia" [Briant, 2002, p. 63-69]. The Persian satraps under Darius I, according to Herodotus (Her., III, 128), had only a detachment of bodyguards and did not have their own troops and, moreover, a fleet. Of course, the requirement for a clear separation of civil and military functions was not strictly observed [Dandamaev, Lukonin, 1980, p. 113] and the king could well have ordered the satrap to go on a campaign and give him some part of his army for this purpose. But the Persians did not have their own fleet. On whose ships was Ariaramnus supposed to make the voyage? The answer to this question lies in the name of the type of these ships. Ctesias calls them penteconters (ὁ δὲ διαβάς πεντηκοντόροις λ' - he also

went on 30 fifty-oar ships. Ctes., F13.20). The Penteconters were the most common military transport ship among the ancient Greeks, and the ships named by Ctesias most likely belonged to the southern Pontic Greek cities that were part of the Darius empire. And the South Pontic Greeks knew exactly where Scythia was and could not confuse it with the Bosphorus. And even if Ariaramnus fought with the Crimean Scythians, which B.A. Rybakov [Rybakov, 1979, p. 170] and today considers it probable V.N. Zinko [Zinko, 2013, p. 191], it is still not the Bosphorus. All this makes the version of V.P. Yaylenko is nothing more than an assumption, and not very convincing.

And finally, another argument of the author - the Greek chronicle of 15 AD. Tabula Capitolina (IG, XIV, 1297), where under 514 BC it is said that "Darius, having built a bridge, crossed the Cimmerian Bosphorus." The author, referring to the fact that Herodotus says nothing about the stay of Darius on the Bosphorus, considers it possible to combine this crossing with the description of the campaign of Ariaramnus and attributes it to 519 BC. However, the replacement of both the participant of the events and the dates in the chronicle are unlikely. It seems more likely that the Cimmerian Bosphorus is simply confused with the Thracian Bosphorus, through which Darius really crossed, but in 514 BC. [Zavoikin, 2015, p. 243]

Considering one of my main arguments in favor of the fact that the Bosphorus never belonged to Persia - the message of Herodotus (Herod., III, 97), the Danish researcher Jens Nieling proposed a different understanding of it. Let us cite this message and immediately note that it follows *immediately after the enumeration of the satrapies* (italics mine - E.M.) created by Darius, which, in my opinion, is not at all accidental:

"These were the districts and the size of the taxes. Only one Persian land I did not mention among the lands levied with tribute, because the Persians live in a country free of taxes. But there are also nationalities that, however, do not pay tribute, but deliver gifts. These are Ethiopians... then the inhabitants of the region near the sacred Nisa... even the Colchians and their neighbors **up to** the Caucasian ridge (until then the Persian state stretches, the regions to the north of the Caucasus are no longer subordinate to the Persians), impose taxes on themselves in the form of voluntary gifts"(trans. G.A. Stratanovsky). The introductory phrase of Herodotus is especially important for us: "ἔς τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ ὄρος ὑπὸ Πέρσησι ἄρχεται, τὰ δὲ πρὸς βορρῆν ἄνεμον τοῦ Καυκάσιος Περσέων οὐδὲν ἔτι φροντίζει", in which the author, **judging by the context of the chapter**, specifically emphasizes precisely the limit of the spread of the power of the Persians in the north. Until recently, no one argued with this understanding of this message of Herodotus. However, Jens Nieling notes that in this phrase of Herodotus the expression "οὐδὲν ἔτι" - should be understood in a temporal sense and not from geographical or gradual

aspects [Nielsing, 2010, p. 132]. And one could agree with this, if not a single "but". By itself, this expression in an exact translation from the ancient Greek (and from its English translation, which was used by J. Neeling¹) means only "nobody else (still; even; already; more; and henceforth ever in the future; immediately after ; from time; even more)". J. Niling chooses the translation "no one already", from which for some reason he concludes that those living to the north of the Caucasus Mountains *no longer* obeyed the Persians at the time Herodotus wrote his work, i.e. during the time from 447 to 425 BC, which means that once, these peoples were subordinated to the Persians. And since this message about the Colchians is placed at the end of the description of the satrapies created by Darius, the subjugation of the peoples north of the Caucasus, according to J. Niling, should have taken place during the reign of this king. And then the author directly and without any argumentation suggests that "perhaps already in the VI century BC tyrants, closely associated with Miletus and the Persian rulers of Anatolia, had power in Panticapaeum" [Nielsing, 2010, p. 127].

But, firstly, Herodotus does not say anywhere about the time of submission to one or another satrapy and the time from which and for what period the peoples who did not enter the satrapy paid voluntary gifts. According to the context of his work, it is only obvious that this entire system existed precisely at the time of his writing of his History. And specifically in our case, the time factor here is emphasized not by the expression "οὐδὲν ἔτι", but by the verb φροντίζω, standing in the present tense.

Secondly, in chapter III, 97, as in the previous ones, Herodotus precisely lists the peoples who became part of the Persian state and who voluntarily paid her gifts. And in this case, according to the general context, "οὐδὲν ἔτι" can **only** mean the sequence and geographical location of such peoples. It is no coincidence, apparently, our introductory phrase in brackets follows exactly the words "Κόλχοι δὲ τὰ ἐτάξαντο ἐς τὴν δωρεὴν καὶ οἱ προσερχέες **μέχρι Καυκάσιος ὄρους** – even the Colchians and their neighbors as far as the **Caucasus Mountains** impose taxes on themselves in the form of voluntary gifts (translation by GA Stratanovsky)". It directly says that we are talking about the peoples living **up to the Caucasus Mountains**, and the text in brackets further explains why we are talking about these peoples - because the degree of their dependence on the Persians was not so great and at the same time they clearly retained their political independence. In any case, all Georgian authors think that way. Specially considered this issue back in 1979, A.I. Boltunova believes that the Kolkhs were dependent on

¹ Translation of the above message of Herodotus into English, which was used by J. Niling – "For the Persian rule extends as far as these mountains, but those who dwell in the parts beyond Caucasus toward the North Wind regard the Persian no longer (Macaulay, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hh3090.htm>).

the Persians, of course, but they still retained their statehood [Boltunova, 1979, p. 51-55].

The latter circumstance is well confirmed by archaeological data testifying to the Achaemenid presence in the Transcaucasus. Thus, there is an assumption that some architectural structures in southern Georgia (Gumbati, Samadlo), Armenia (Beniamin, Erebuni) and Azerbaijan (Sary-Tepe, Karajamirli), built using adobe bricks, may be palaces (or at least, residence) of the Iranian rulers of these regions [Knauss, 2001, p. 125-143]. Moreover, for their construction, according to the author, experts and artisans from Phrygia and Persia could have been invited. At the same time, the author himself, Florian Knaus, notes that "the region which the Russians call Cis-Caucasia... all still belong to Russia, have been beyond the Persian sphere of influence in antiquity" [Knauss, 2006, p. 79]. The traces of finds of Achaemenid and their imitated local products in southern Georgia, cited by him, are very few and they came here, in his opinion, as objects of trade and diplomatic gifts - "they may have found their way to Georgia through trade or as diplomatic gifts" [Knauss, 2006, p. 86]. On the territory of Colchis proper, except for the Vani region, there are none at all. It is curious that while agreeing with these assumptions, the Georgian archaeologist V. Licheli immediately notes that in the city he investigated in southeastern Georgia Atskuri "despite the influence of Iran... local traditions are firmly preserved in Atskuri" [Licheli, 2015, p. 258].

Earlier, O.D. Lordkipanidze noted that culturally Colchis is divided into two parts: the coastal strip oriented towards the Greek centers, and the inner one, oriented to the East [Lordkipanidze, 2002, p. 206-209]. In the opinion of David Braund, archaeological material from excavations of Colchis settlements and necropolises generally indicates that the subordination of the Colchians to the Persians was purely nominal, and even that concerned only the eastern part of Colchis [Braund, 1994, p. 122ff].

Thus, even Colchis, we cannot reliably refer to the possessions of Persia. And therefore, J. Niling's understanding of the text of Herodotus is only **his** interpretation of what Herodotus could understand in this case. And nothing more.

J. Niling's idea was also captured by G.R. Tsetskhladze, who connects the destruction on the Bosphorus in the last quarter of the VI century BC with the coming to power of the Achaemenids and their intention to include the Cimmerian Bosphorus in their state. This, in his opinion, is evidenced by the message of Ctesias of Cnidus about the conquests of King Nina of Assyria, which, as we have already noted, he considers it possible to ascribe to Darius I, and the message of Herodotus (IV. 120-122) about the passage of the Persians through the territories of Greek cities [Tsetskhladze, 2014, p. 215-216,218]. However, neither Ctesias himself, nor Diodorus, who retells his information, does not at all connect Nina's campaigns with Darius, and

anything can be assumed. There is, for example, the assumption that part of the Persian army during the campaign of Darius moved through Georgia [Jacobs, 2000, S. 93-101], although there is no direct evidence in favor of this.

In addition, if we were to involve Ctesias's information as proof of his version of the course of events, then it would be worth paying attention to the fact that, according to his information, Darius went deep into Scythia not by 30 like Herodotus, but by 15 days of travel. And for such a period of time, he could not have reached not only the Bosphorus, but even to Olbia. In any case, according to E.V. Chernenko, who thoroughly studied Darius's campaign, his route did not fit the Greek cities in any way [Chernenko, 1984, p. 67]

Thus, new attempts to prove the subordination of the Bosphorus to the Persian state cannot yet be considered successful. The arguments given by the authors are not compelling, and most importantly, direct and accurate evidence in favor of their version. But one cannot but agree with the opinion of Yu.A. Vinogradov, that "the greatest monarchy of Asia could not but influence the historical development of both Scythia and the Bosphorus (and other Greek states of the region!) By the mere fact of its existence. The Spartokids, who created the territorial state, seem to have tried to copy the Persian state in some way, to use some elements of its vast experience in the field of state structure" [Vinogradov, 2014, p. 521]. And the new dating of the Persian cylinder-seal of Artaxerxes I suggests that not only the Bosporan rulers could not ignore the powerful Persian state in their political activities, but also the Persian rulers, especially interested in expanding the circle of their supporters after the defeat of Xerxes in Greece, could not help but try to establish good relations with the growing Bosphorus state. N.F. is now inclined to this point of view. Fedoseev [Fedoseev, 2014, p. 154-158].

In conclusion, I would like to note that considering the Bosphorus-Persian relations in a broader sense, A.A. Zavoikin [Zavoikin, 2015, p. 257].

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BP – Bosporan phenomenon.

OS – The oldest states of Eastern Europe.

PHPC – Problems of history, philosophy and culture.

IG – Inscriptiones Graecae.