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(RE-)LOCATING GREEK AND ROMAN CITIES
ALONG THE NORTHERN COAST OF KOLCHIS
Part I. IDENTIFYING DIOSKOURIAS IN THE RECESS
OF THE BLACK SEA

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The reconstruction of the Kolchian land- and riverscapes faces several difficulties, most of all changing riverbeds and coastlines. In the first part of my study, presented here, I offer arguments for the new location of Dioskourias at Ochamchire Harbour. The city of Phasis is yet unlocated, but rightly expected somewhere near the mouth of the Phasis / Rioni River by Paleostomi Lake. Common opinion identifies Greek Dioskourias and Roman Sebastopolis with modern Sukhumi, although this lacks sufficient support in the material evidence. My revision of the ancient literary tradition, mainly drawing on Strabo (with Eratosthenes) and Pliny (with Timosthenes of Rhodes), besides Claudius Ptolemy and Pomponius Mela, has led me instead to the Hippos / Tskhenistsqali and Moches / Mokvi Rivers in the bay of Ochamchire. This is consistent with the tradition that it was located ‘in the recess of the Black Sea’ and gains further support through the Argonautic themes in its toponomastic context. For Gyenos, which scholars previously situated at Ochamchire, we should rather look somewhere along the lower course of the Kyaneos / Okumi River, for Roman Sebastopolis at the Kodori Delta south-east of the Sukhumi Airport, for Graeco-Roman Pityous at the estuary of the Khipsta River, and only for its Byzantine refoundation at Pitsunda by the Korax / Bzipi River. The traditional location of Caucasian Herakleion on Cape Adler conforms with the results of our study.

Keywords: Black Sea, Kolchis, ancient Greek geography, Strabo, Pliny the Elder, Dioskourias, Sebastopolis, Aia, Gyenos, Pityous, Phasis, Kyaneos, Herakleion, Hippos, Korax, Moches

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В ПОИСКАХ ГРЕКО-РИМСКИХ ГОРОДОВ НА СЕВЕРНОМ ПОБЕРЕЖЬЕ КОЛХИДЫ

Часть I. ДИОСКУРИЯ ВО ВПАДИНЕ ЕВКСИНСКОГО ПОНТА

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Реконструкция топографии древней Колхиды сталкивается с серьезными трудностями, прежде всего из-за изменения очертаний речных русел и береговой линии. В представленной здесь первой части нашего исследования выдвигаются аргументы в пользу новой локализации древней Диоскурии в Очамчирской бухте. Город Фасис до сих пор не обнаружен, хотя его местонахождение справедливо предполагается по соседству с устьем р. Фасис (совр. Риони), неподалеку от озера Палеостомы. Общепринятая гипотеза отождествляет греческий город Диоскурию и римский город Себастополь с современным Сухум(и), но эта точка зрения не находит достаточной поддержки в археологических данных. На основании пересмотра данных античной литературной традиции (в первую очередь Страбона, опирающегося на Эратосфена, и Плиния, опирающегося на Тимосфена Родосского, а также Клавдия Птолемея и Помпония Мелы) в статье выдвигается гипотеза о местоположении Диоскурии в Очамчирской бухте около рек Гипп (Цхенискали / Цхенцкар) и Мохес (Мокви / Мыку). Это предположение согласуется с античной традицией, помещавшей Диоскурию во «впадине Евксинского Понта», и находит дополнительное подтверждение в следах мифа об аргонавтах в местной топонимической и ономастической традиции. Гиенос, ранее идентифицировавшийся исследователями в Очамчирской бухте, следует искать в нижнем течении р. Кианей (Окуми / Окум), римский Себастополь — в дельте р. Кодори к юго-востоку от сухумского аэропорта, а греко-римский Питиунт — в устье р. Хыпста. Только новооснованный византийский город того же имени можно идентифицировать в Пицунде около р. Коракс (Бзипи / Бзыбь). Традиционная локализация кавказского Гераклея на мысе Адлер подтверждается результатами нашего исследования.

Ключевые слова: Черное море, Колхида, античная география, Страбон, Плиний Старший, Диоскурия, Себастополь, Эя, Гиенос, Питиунт, Фасис, Кианей, Гераклея, Гипп, Коракс, Мохес

Dioskourias, the Milesian colony located 'in the recess of the Black Sea' outshone all other Greek cities on the eastern-Pontic coast, at least for some generations in the Classical and Hellenistic periods. By the end of the first millennium BC, its glamour was over, but its erstwhile fame continued to be reflected in a broad geographical tradition, which has hitherto remained underexplored. The present study will scrutinize these literary accounts, question the prevailing location of Dioskourias in the Sukhumi area and suggest looking for this yet undiscovered city around Ochamchire Harbour instead.

1. DIOSKOURIAS / AIA / SEBASTOPOLIS – AN INTRODUCTION

Strabo of Amaseia conveys the impression that Dioskourias was a thriving city when he was writing in the Augustan period (with a few random additions dating early under Tiberius). He praises this *polis* as the urban centre of northern Kolchis, as the economic hub for about 70 tribes in-between the Kolchian plain and the Main Caucasus, although

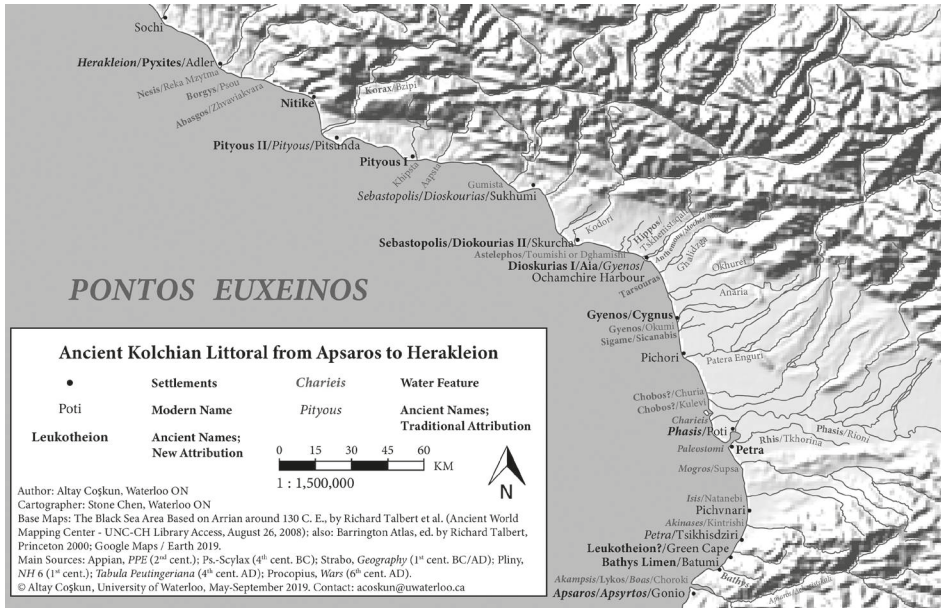


Fig. Ancient Kolchian Littoral from Apsaros to Herakleion

the geographer rejects the number of 300 as exaggerated. Strabo is not aware of any major changes in the recent past, so the information he is drawing on may be somewhat dated, as is so often the case in his *Geography*¹. Pliny seems to be exploiting at least one of the same sources on the eastern Black Sea littoral for his *Naturalis Historia*, when attributing to Dioskourias ‘300 nations with different languages’ (*CCC nationes dissimilibus linguis*). He ascribes this piece of information explicitly to the third-century scholar Timosthenes of Rhodes². The greatness of Dioskourias was, however, history for Pliny, since he regarded it as abandoned (*nunc deserta*), whether based on hearsay or following one of his younger written sources. Timosthenes cannot have been Pliny’s source for the city’s abandonment, since it still served Mithradates VI Eupator as a residence in the winter of 66/65 BC³. Its history in the subsequent two centuries is obscure, until Arrian of Nikomedeia talks of it again in his *Periplus Maris Euxini* (around AD 132). By this time, the name had changed from Dioskourias to Sebastopolis, as he explains. The identity of the two communities is further confirmed by the geographer Claudius Ptolemy

¹ Strab. 11.2.16 (497–498C), quoted below, n. 37. For general scholarship on Strabo, see, e.g., Engels 1999; Dueck 2017; Roller 2018.

² Plin. *NH*. 6.5.15; cf. Lordkipanidze 1996, 240; Radt 2008, 253. Pace Liddle 2003, 103: ‘by Strabo’s time [Dioskourias] was a flourishing emporium’. Strabo probably used Timosthenes’ work *On Harbours* through Eratosthenes, see Geus, Guckelsberger 2017, 168. For comparison, Anon. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 9v9 (ed. Diller 1952) speaks of 60 different languages for the trade hub of Phasis.

³ App. *Mithr.* 101.467. Cf. Strab. 11.2.13–19 (496–499C), who mentions Dioskourias in the context of the king’s flight, though not his stay there, but Strabo’s information on the city at least in part draws on the historians of the Mithradatic Wars.

a generation later⁴. Another witness is the ethnographer Stephanos of Byzantion (sixth century AD), who is the only ‘ancient’ source to attest that Dioskourias had claimed to be (the successor of) mythical Aia, the capital of King Aïetes⁵.

That Dioskourias / Sebastopolis was in or near the modern city of Sukhumi is the common opinion today. This identification, however, needs reconsideration, as I shall try to demonstrate in the present study. After pointing to the shortcomings of current scholarship (§ 2 below), I shall revisit the shape of the Kolchian coastline, since the consensus of the ancient tradition locates Dioskourias in the ‘recess’ of the Black Sea. This recommends the area of Ochamchire Harbour, although this is most often identified with the Greek *polis* Gyenos (§ 3). The remarkable concentration of Argonautic toponymy point to the same area as the site of Dioskourias / Aia (§ 4). More information on Sebastopolis, Pityous and Herakleion will be relegated to three appendices. In part II, I shall argue that the re-attribution of the Ochamchire Harbour area to Dioskourias / Aia also allows us to make better sense of the ancient *periplus* literature. After introducing our main source, Arrian’s *Periplus* (§ 5), and explaining the pragmatic approach to his use of the stade as measure of distance (§ 6), we shall follow up the coastline first from Phasis to Sebastopolis (§ 7), then, after some methodological reflection and adjustments (§ 8), further to Caucasian Herakleion (§ 9), before summing up the conclusions of the individual sections (§ 10).

My research owes much to the standard reconstruction of the region by David Braund and T. Sinclair, which is to be found in Richard Talbert’s *Barrington Atlas*⁶ and has also informed the map produced by Talbert and others for the *Ancient World Mapping Center* (2008). I gratefully acknowledge the use of these tools, based on which my cartographer Stone Chen prepared several maps of the (eastern) Black Sea littoral to reflect my new conclusions. The one included in the present article contrasts the traditional attributions of the main Greek and Roman cities with my own suggestions (fig.)⁷. It is designed to navigate the reader as much through a contested landscape as through my complex argument.

2. SEBASTOPOLIS / DIOSKOURIAS = SUKHUMI?

Scholars largely agree that the material, numismatic or epigraphic evidence for the equation of Dioskourias with Sukhumi is very slim. Early pottery from the bay of Sukhumi is overwhelmingly indigenous and the urban grid of a Greek *polis* yet to be uncovered,

⁴ Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 10.4; see part II.5 for the date. And Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.10.2; 8 map 3 (Stückelberger, Graßhoff 2006, II, 854).

⁵ Steph. Byz. s.v. Διοσκουριάς (Δ 93 edd. Billerbeck, Zubler 2011): Διοσκουριάς, μία τῶν ἐν Λιβύῃ Λευκῶν νήσων. ὁ νησιώτης Διοσκουρίτης. ἔστι καὶ ἑτέρα περὶ τὸν Πόντον, ἣ τις Σεβαστόπολις καλεῖται. καὶ πρότερον δὲ Αἶα ἐκικλήσκετο, ὡς Νικάνωρ. ὁ πολίτης Διοσκουριεύς. ἔστι καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἐρυθρᾷ θαλάσῃ νῆσος Διοσκουρίδου. Nikanor is a third-century-BC author, see Müller, *FHG* III, 632–633 *praefatio* and no. 4 (cf. *DFHG* s.v. Nicanor). I shall revisit the evidence for multiple *Aiai* in ancient Kolchis elsewhere.

⁶ Braund, Sinclair 1997/2000, 1226–1242; map 87.

⁷ Talbert *et al.* 2008 quote, besides Braund, Sinclair 1997/2000, Silberman 1995 and Liddle 2003 as their sources. More maps are accessible at <http://www.altaycoskun.com/materials-2>.

so that most scholars assume that Dioskourias has been submerged by the sea⁸. The army camp of Sebastopolis mentioned by Arrian is also claimed for Sukhumi, although all we have are mere hints at some Roman military presence probably as early as the second century AD⁹. More noteworthy are some third-century-BC amphorae stamped with the abbreviated name ΔΙΟΣ / KOY, especially since some examples have been found in a kiln at Gvandra somewhat north of Sukhumi and west of Eshera. These inscriptions have been adduced to confirm the toponymy only occasionally, perhaps because such stamps normally denote the entrepreneur or his workshop rather than his hometown. In this specific case, however, the view has gained currency that the city of Dioskourias exerted ‘state control’ over the production process – a very difficult-to-prove hypothesis. But, even if it should be granted to take these stamps as evidence for economic activity controlled or run by the *polis* of Dioskourias, this alone would not yet be sufficient to prove that the site of Gvandra was located in the *chora* of the *polis* also contiguous with the *asty*¹⁰.

⁸ E.g., Tomaschek 1905, 1125; Oberhummer 1921; Bryer, Winfield 1985, I, 387; Ehrhardt 1988, 84; Brodersen 1996, 18, 168: ‘die Unterscheidung, die Plinius hier trifft, ist irrig’; Braund, Sinclair 1997/2000, 1231 and Map 87; Tsetskhladze 1998, 15–21 (Dioskouria); 2013, 294; 2018a, 37; Bäßler Nesselrath 1999, 1058; Gabelia 2003, 1218–1219, 1222, 1223 (tracing the identification back to the 17th century), 1225 (discussing an onomastic argument that links Dioskourias with Sukhumi), 1227 etc. as well as 2015, 101–103 (Gabelia is heavily drawing on the publications of Voronov, esp. Voronov 1980 (*non vidi*)); Avram, Hind, Tsetskhladze 2004, 952–953 (Dioskouris); Counillon 2004, 57; von Bredow 2006 (under or beneath Sukhumi); Radt 2008, 253; Belfiore 2009, 176 n. 94 (but see below, n. 27, for a distinction between Sebastopolis / Sukhumi and Dioskourias); Roller 2010, 229; 2018, 640. Silberman 1995, 32–33 assumes that the city was ‘déjà immergée à l’époque d’Arrien’, but admits his *aporia* in the face of the inconsistent literary evidence. Part of his problem is artificial albeit, since Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.10.2 (not 5.9.2) does not locate Sebastopolis at the mouth of the Korax, but *before* this, and the same river equals the modern Bzipi, not the Kodori. Lordkipanidze 1996, 235–239 and Sens 2009, 57–99 (S. 62 Anm. 222 with a survey going back to the nineteenth century) also accept the identity, despite some hesitation due to the scarcity of material evidence. Further references are given below.

⁹ See, e.g., Braund 1994, 193–198, who surveys older scholarship, mentioning an obscure epigraphic fragment (which seems to have attested either the presence of a legion or the activity of a *legatus Augusti pro praetore*, cf. *AE* 1905, 175) and structures of a Roman fort from the late second and fourth century AD. As far as I can see, older layers have not yet been uncovered, cf., e.g., Liddle 2003, 103; Belfiore 2009, 176–177; Sens 2009, 61 Anm. 215: ‘Aus den Funden ragt eine leider bereits seit langem verschollene Inschrift heraus, die auf die Präsenz römischen Militärs hindeutet.’

¹⁰ See Tsetskhladze 1991, esp. 362–363 (on the kiln); 370; 374–375 and Tsetskhladze, Vnukov 1992, 372–374, who attribute 9 examples to the ‘the production complex at Gvandra’ and the rest to Eshera (1), Pantikapaion (3) and Nymphaion (2), sometime in the third century. They conclude (p. 373): ‘Study of these stamps and of marks on the locally produced amphorae suggests that state workshops existed in the cities of the east coast of the Black Sea (in Dioskouria, for example, since the stamps from the city incorporate an *ethnikon*). Some privately owned workshops may also have existed, however.’ Cf. Braund 1994, 143: ‘the city involved itself in the production of these amphorae’; Gabelia 2003, 1240: ‘branding of amphorae in the Greek world served as the guarantee of standard stipulated by the state control of the earthenware industry’; Sens 2009, 99 with Anm. 561, who draws on them as an additional argument for the late foundation of Dioskourias around the mid-fourth century. But, as far as I understand the descriptions of the evidence, it has not yet been demonstrated that the amphorae were really produced in the aforementioned kiln, whose final usage seems to have been that of a garbage pit. I am not aware

At all events, scholars seem to have decided for Sukhumi most of all for their belief that the combined literary evidence seems to be pointing to this city¹¹. Take, as an example, the aforementioned maps from the *Barrington Atlas* or the Ancient World Mapping Center (whose interpretation is indicated in fig. in italics). They locate Dioskourias / Sebastopolis on the thin shore along the south-eastern slopes of the Main Caucasus, neighbouring the Abasgoi to the north-west and the Apsilai to the east. These connections appear to follow at least in part Pliny's account, since the Roman scholar mentions *Sebastopolis castellum* side by side with the Apsilai, at a distance of 100 miles from the Phasis. The distance between Poti and Sukhumi is indeed around 150 km on land¹². Arrian's account is also recognizable here, since he renders the Apsilai neighbours of the Abaskoi, although without specifying their territories¹³.

This said, Pliny is at odds with the common opinion, because he shows no awareness of Dioskourias and Sebastopolis belonging together, let alone being one and the same settlement. He qualifies Sebastopolis as a *castellum* somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Apsilai (*NH.* 6.4.14) and Dioskourias as an abandoned city on the bank of the Anthe-mous River in the territory of the Koraxoi (6.5.15). In addition, he mentions *Heracleum oppidum* (in the context of the Caucasian Heniochoi) at a distance of 100 miles from

of any stamps among the findings, nor do the above-quoted reports state that some of the stamped amphorae had been unfinished or unused. But even if we concede the local production of those amphorae, the standard practice seems to have been that names or symbols on the amphorae denoted the workshop or its owner, as Tsetskhladze, Vnukov 1992, 373–374, admit for all other Kolchian examples that they address. The closest parallel for the claimed state-controlled production process is provided by the tile stamps from Vani reading Βασιλική (κεραμίδς), but royal ownership of estates or factories is quite a different category, as is a cooperative of independent entrepreneurs or producers (as hypothetically described by Tsetskhladze 1991, 374). Alternatives are of course possible. Most famous are the names of the eponymous magistrates on Rhodian amphorae; see Finkielsztejn 2001. But as long as there is no firm evidence that Dioskourias was located in the bay of Sukhumi and that its territory extended beyond the Gumista River, we should refrain from any firm conclusion and at least consider the possibility that the production center was located on a territory not contiguous with the *asty* or *chora* of Dioskourias. There is the further possibility that those amphora stamps referred to a producer called Dioskourides or the like.

¹¹ E.g., Sens 2009, 62: 'Die Kenntnisse bleiben insgesamt also spärlich, doch erscheint eine Lokalisierung der griechischen Kolonie Dioskurias und der späteren römischen Garnisonsstadt Sebastopolis im Bereich der Bucht von Suchumi, wie gesehen, anhand der schriftlichen Quellen durchaus als wahrscheinlich.' See also the references below.

¹² The modern road from Poti to Sukhumi is calculated at 159 km by *Google Maps*. More on distances below.

¹³ Braund, Sinclair 1997/2000, Map 87, without mentioning Plin. *NH.* 6.4.14–15. and Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 10.4 (Sebastopolis = Dioskourias); 11.3 (Apsilai, Abaskoi, Sanigai). Arrian actually locates Dioskourias within the territory of the Sanigai, who have been pushed a bit too far to the north-west, to yield space for the Heniochoi, a concession to Pomp. Mela 1.100 (111) ed. Frick 1967 (*in Heniochorum finibus Dioscurias*), although this may have been a more generic term for the north-Caucasian peoples (*cf.* Plin. *NH.* 6.4.14: *multis nominibus Heniochorum gentes*). The boundary between the Sanigai and the Zilchoi is located 920 stades north-west of Sebastopolis / Dioskourias in Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 18.3. Miller 1916, 633, 650 locates the Apsilai around Apsaros, possibly due to a subconscious conflation of Pliny's and Ptolemy's Sebastopolis; likewise, he relates the Abaskoi to the Akinases river just north of the Akampsis / Apsaros (col. 651).

Dioskourias and 70 miles from Sebastopolis (now without the complement *castellum*: 6.5.16)¹⁴. Admittedly, the indication of the distances from Herakleion has suffered some textual corruption, but the emendation has been gentle, and is, as far as I can see, both widely accepted and so far without plausible alternative¹⁵. An isolated reference in the rash compilation of the *Naturalis Historia* would have had little weight in the face of the other (seemingly) consistent evidence, but the pieces of information Pliny provides seem to be coherent. At the same time, they contrast with the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, which sets the distance between Phasis and Sebastopolis at 58 Roman miles. Arrian's *Periplus* and the late Roman anonymous *Periplus* specify the same distance as 810 stades, whereas Eratosthenes and Strabo limit the journey from Phasis to Dioskourias to 600 stades. An argument based on distance should therefore address the entire evidence¹⁶. Its discussion will be relegated to part II, whereas the present part will focus on qualitative features in the ancient literary tradition that may lead us to the location of Dioskourias.

Without considering the distances, Alek Gabelia offers the following reconstruction: Dioskourias was still thriving early in the first century AD (when Strabo wrote), but 'desolated' probably as the result of a 'revolt *en masse*'. This is meant to refer to an uprising that a certain Aniketos stirred up in AD 69. Gabelia thinks that the recent urban development and the stationing of a Roman garrison under Nero was much resented¹⁷. But this is an accumulation of improbabilities: both Strabo and Pliny are supposed to have drawn on very recent information without mentioning any specific events; Tacitus' account of Aniketos seems to imply that the insurgent was a partisan of Vitellius and that he cooperated with some local kings against Vespasian. There is no mention of intensive conscriptions among the Greek city dwellers or of devastation on the Kolchian coast; Vespasian's commander Viridius Geminus is said to have persecuted Aniketos (probably coming from Trapezus or Apsaros) into the Delta of

¹⁴ On the *Korax*, see below, n. 45.

¹⁵ Plin. *NH*. 6.5.16, with the correction of Mayhoff, reads: *C a Dioscuriade oppidum Heracleum, a Sebastopoli LXX*. The manuscripts have *ca Diosc.* and *cla Diosc.*, see Kießling 1912, 501; Rackham 1961, 348; Brodersen 1996, 18, 266–267. Braund 1994, 47; 178; 192–193 does not address the distances.

¹⁶ *Tab. Peut.* 11.1–2; Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 10.1–4; Anon. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 9v19–23; Strab. 2.1.39 (92C) = Eratosth. F 52 Roller. Conversion rates were highly volatile, so that the problem is not to find rates that work with a certain assumption, but to base them in a sound methodological framework. E.g., Sens 2009, 61 with Anm. 209 and 211 draws on the traditional conversion rates of the stade (177.42 m or 185 m) to show that Eratosthenes' distance of 600 stades (hence 106.5 or 111 km) is compatible with Sukhumi, from which the most direct line to Poti is ca. 107 km. But this approach fails to consider 1) that we have to add some 5–10 km for the distance from Poti to Phasis (see part II.5); 2) that ancient navigation did not follow 'Luftlinie' (as the crow flies), but the coast line, so that 120 km is much more realistic; 3) that the divergent distances of the other sources also need to be accounted for; and 4) that others have calculated Eratosthenes' stade as closer to 158 m (Arnaud 2005, 85) or 150 (see part II.6).

¹⁷ Gabelia 2003, 1247, without source reference for Aniketos (but see Tac. *Hist.* 3.47–46). Sens 2009, 61–62 regards Pliny's distance between Dioskourias and Sebastopolis as erroneous, but points out that 70 miles between Phasis and Sebastopolis are close to the 'Luftlinie', which might work on water, but not on land. But even if granted, the same method would not take as far as Herakleion / Adler, which Pliny also sets at a distance of 70 miles from Sebastopolis. See part II for further discussion.

the Chobos, where he was able to bribe a local king to extradite Aniketos. According to Arrian, the mouth of the Chobos was at 450 stades from Dioskourias, so that there is no reason to believe that the war affected the city. Finally, it would be quite surprising for Vespasian to name a new garrison Sebastopolis rather than Flaviopolis. There is thus nothing to commend Gabelia's explanations¹⁸.

Braund has suggested a different solution:

The considerable extent of the city of Dioscurias probably explains the apparent confusion. Dioscurias seems to have stretched from the site of modern Sukhumi west along the coastal strip at least as far as Eshera, where its acropolis and administrative centre seems to have been located, at least down to the first century BC. The abandonment of Eshera would account for Pliny's assertion that Dioscurias was deserted in his day... the change of the name from Dioscurias to Sebastopolis was accompanied by a realignment of the city, whereby the administrative centre was relocated from Eshera to what is now Sukhumi... Archaeology at Sebastopolis has been obstructed by the growth of the modern city of Sukhumi directly above it¹⁹.

Braund's explanation may seem to have various advantages over previous scholarship, which tended to reject Pliny's testimony too easily, or to ignore it altogether. The inclusion of Eshera into the equation has the potential of alleviating the *aporia* that the little material evidence from Sukhumi itself is insufficient to endorse the assumption of a pre-Roman city, let alone the largest Greek city on the eastern Black Sea coast. It has been commonplace to posit that the Greek and Hellenistic layers either sunk into the water or lie buried under the modern city²⁰. This might well be true, but the scarce and highly uncertain numismatic evidence from the Sukhumi area contrasts with Vani and does all but confirm Eshera's role as an economic hub²¹.

¹⁸ See part II on Arrian's *Periplus*. Also note that Gabelia's reconstruction is distorted by the assumption of anti-Roman resentments as a driving factor. On the impact of modern ideology on Soviet and post-Soviet scholarship, see, e.g., Coşkun 2016.

¹⁹ Braund 1994, 193–194.

²⁰ E.g., Ehrhardt 1988, 84; Lordkipanidze 1996, 237–239; Tsetskhladze 1998, 17; 2018b, 479: 'Archaic and Classical Dioscurias is probably under the waters of the Black Sea. This is borne out by the discovery of a Greek tombstone, dated to the end of the fifth century BC, with depictions of a seated woman, who presumably represents the deceased, embracing a small boy at her knees'; Bähler Nesselrath 1999, 1058: 'größtenteils unter dem modernen Suchumi bzw. im Meer'; Avram, Hind, Tsetskhladze 2004, 953: 'Part of the city site is under water and the remainder is covered by the modern city' (for a survey of this theory, see Gabelia 2003, 1223–1224.); von Bredow 2006. Note, however, the caution of Sens 2009, 63: 'Die genaue Lage ist allerdings bis heute umstritten. Die bereits früh formulierte These, dass ein Großteil des antiken Dioskourias auf dem Grund der Bucht von Suchumi liege, konnte durch unterwasserarchäologische Forschungen bisher nicht bestätigt werden. Aber auch bei den Grabungen auf dem Festlandsgürtel sind abgesehen von einigen Holzhäusern vermutlich indigener Siedlungen keinerlei architektonische Strukturen archaischer oder klassischer Zeit erfasst worden.' See also p. 54–56 on his methodological concerns regarding Greek city typologies. I further emphasize that the argumentative weight that has been put on a dislocated unepigraphic Greek-looking tomb stone is excessive: it may or may not attest a fifth-century Greek settlement near Sukhumi, but is entirely insufficient for naming the place (also Sens 2009, 97 downplays the implication of the stele).

²¹ There is a modern view that Mithradates VI Eupator granted Dioskourias the right to issue coinage, and that the city issued a bronze type that displayed the two stars and caps of the

And it is by no means clear that Eshera hosted a Greek *apoikia* or *emporion*. Its archaeological site is normally regarded as an indigenous settlement (perhaps the residence of a king or kinglet) that began importing Ionian products in the late-sixth century BC, partly because local ceramics prevailed and partly because Pseudo-Skylax (in the fourth century BC, but drawing on sixth-to-fourth-century materials)²² calls Dioskouris (sic) only a *polis* and not a *polis Hellenis*, in contrast to Phasis and Gyenos²³.

This said, Arrian claims Dioskourias as a Milesian settlement. One possible explanation is that (Pseudo-) Skylax did not yet know about a Greek settlement, perhaps an *emporion* established by Sinope, itself a daughter of Miletos²⁴. Gocha Tsetsckhladze is

Dioskouroi on the obverse and the legend ΔΙ/ΟΣ/ΚΟΥ/ΡΙΑ/Δ/ΟΣ surrounding a thyrsus on the reverse; see Golenko 1977 (*non vidi*); Tsetsckhladze 1989 (*non vidi*); 1993, 241–244 with photos on p. 256; cf. Lordkipanidze 1996, 235; Gabelia 2003, 1244–1245; von Bredow 2006; Tsetsckhladze 2018b, 480. This is also accepted by Braund 1994, 158–159, although he admits that the only evidence for this is one coin hoard from Sukhumi, whereas no other specimen of this type has been found anywhere else in Kolchis so far. De Callataj 1997, 254–255 questions that its iconography is in line with Mithradatic coinage, and further points out that the known evidence nearly exclusively comes from the Bosphoros and Asia Minor; he therefore strongly doubts that we can rely on nineteenth-century sources that ascribe the aforementioned hoard (of which by now no more than a single coin from Tbilisi is known) to Sukhumi. Contrast this with Vani: see Dundua, Lordkipanidze 1979 for the numismatic evidence (cf. Tsetsckhladze 1993 for a broader survey of coins from ancient Kolchis); Tsetsckhladze 1998 for the archaeological evidence and Lordkipanidze 1991 (cf. 1996) for a historical synthesis, which, however, is inclined to overstate its importance.

²² According to Dan 2009, vol. 2, who provides a bilingual critical text plus a commentary on Ps.-Skylax (701–788, esp. 768–776 on § 80–88), the author's interest in the hydrography of the region may be explained with the 'intensification des relations athéniennes et sinopéennes avec cette région au cours du V^e siècle' (776). Counillon 2004, 21–22 suggests a time around the mid-fourth century based on one *terminus post* (Kallatis, ca. 360/357) and one *ante* (Gorgippia, before 349), but admits a heterogeneous nature of the sources; he considers in particular that the significance of Milesian or Athenian *emporion* seems to imply a date before the fall of these cities (24–26); cf. Arnaud 2005, 67–69 for further references, besides the observation that Ps.-Skylax mixes different ways of indicating distances. Less cautious is Gabelia 2003, 1221, who conflates Skylax and Pseudo-Skylax. Now also see Coşkun 2019a, 19–20 for the suggestion that Limne in Ps.-Skylax, *Peripl.* 83 may be the predecessor of Pontic Athenai in the sixth/fifth centuries BC.

²³ Thus, e.g., Lordkipanidze 1996, 233 (with Ps.-Skylax, *Peripl.* 81) and 238 (Esheri). Counillon 2004, 59 regards the transmitted reading Dioskouris as 'faute d'abréviation'. Tsetsckhladze 1994a, 83–90 suggests that Miletos founded Dioskouria(s), Gyenos and Phasis as *poleis* in the sixth century, but lost its grip on them with the rise of Achaemenid influence in the area under Darius. 'The Greek settlements which emerged in Colchis did not possess an independent economic foundation and neither did they enjoy political sovereignty' (p. 89). Ehrhardt 1988, 84 is perhaps too quick to decide for a Greek *polis* due to a single Greek tomb relief of the fifth century BC (on which also see above, n. 20). More recently, Sens 2009, 54–56 etc. questions the typology of *apoikia* versus *emporion* for the eastern Black Sea coast altogether, perhaps rightly so. For the most recent typological discussion, see Tsetsckhladze 2019, 13–24 (on Pistiros). For a survey of mainly Georgian scholarship on the origin of Dioskourias, also see Gabelia 2003 and 2015.

²⁴ Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 10.4. Cf. Silberman 1995, 32, with further references to scholarship.

inclined to admit the foundation of various Greek *apoikiai* on the eastern Black Sea coast in the sixth century and their downgrading to *emporía* in the Kolchian kingdom during the late-fifth century. In the specific case of Eshera, however, he is particularly skeptical given its in-land location: this seems to disqualify it for an early-Greek settlement. At all events, the literary and material evidence from Eshera converges towards an indigenous population that began importing Greek products in the sixth century and perhaps admitted some Greek settlers at an unknown time. The latter view is also shared by Ulrich Sens, who, in turn, interprets the increase of Greek artefacts in the bay of Sukhumi only in the later course of the fourth century as pointing to a foundation date of the Greek *polis* of Dioskourias around the same time²⁵.

Braund's argument is problematic also in other regards. It seems to imply the assumption that Pliny visited the area and drew his conclusions from autopsy, unless one wants to identify another contemporary travel report. But the normal pattern of his geographic treatment is that he drew on diverse, often antiquated or even contradictory written sources²⁶. Moreover, Braund still takes it for granted that Pliny conceived of Sebastopolis and Dioskourias as a unity, which is simply not the case. The distance of 10 km between Eshera and Sukhumi is insufficient to account for the 30 miles (45 km) that Pliny surmised between Dioskourias and Sebastopolis, and they further reverse the order implied in the *Naturalis Historia*, namely that Sebastopolis was closer to Herakleion than to Dioskourias. Only few scholars have been prepared to draw the necessary conclusion, namely, that, if Sebastopolis is to be found at Sukhumi, Dioskourias must have been some 30 miles / 45 km further to the south-east²⁷. This might, after all, explain the scarcity of the material evidence for the pre-Roman periods in Sukhumi. However, as we shall see further below, not even the identity of Sebastopolis and Sukhumi is warranted.

²⁵ See Tsetskhladze 2013, 293–296 on the limitations of the 'Greek' material evidence in Kolchis in general and p. 295 on Eshera in particular; further p. 304: 'Eshera was the abode of local chieftains, called 'septuchi' according to Strabo (11.2.13)'; cf. Tsetskhladze 2018b, 481–485. Partly different is the argument of Tsetskhladze 1998: being undecided between *polis* and *emporion* for Dioskouria(s), he claims that the Greek presence attracted merchants and settlers from among the Caucasian peoples (p. 15–20), although he generally argues that Greek *apoikiai* were reduced to *emporía* in the fifth century (p. 7–9; 44–47; 50–55, 191); he regards Eshera as a *chorion* of Dioskouria(s), and Pityous as its colony, founded in the third century (p. 21–22). For yet a different view, see Sens 2009, 57–99, according to whom the known material evidence until the mid-fourth century BC is mainly local, admitting, however, that the *asty* has not yet been uncovered. He dates the city foundation likewise late, also adducing the legend that names the Dioskouroi rather than a Milesian as *ktistai* and the city's first mention by Ps.-Skylax.

²⁶ A good example is the duplication of the Akampsis and Apsaros in *NH*. 6.4.12. See Coşkun (forthcoming).

²⁷ Thus, e.g., Kießling 1913, 1916; Liddle 2003, 103; Belfiore 2009, 176–178, who only locates Sebastopolis at Sukhumi with certainty; he assumes that Dioskourias was submerged after 66 BC and that its population moved to Sebastopolis, without specifying the former's location. For an explicit rejection of Pliny's account, see Sens 2009, 61–62, but his argument is based on the flawed claim that the remaining literary evidence largely confirmed the equation of Dioskourias with Sukhumi.

3. DIOSKOURIAS AND GYENOS

If we dissociate the sites of Sebastopolis / Sukhumi and Dioskourias and move the latter by about 30 miles towards the Phasis, we get close to Ochamchire, the town that is now mostly regarded as the successor to Gyenos²⁸. A Greek *polis* of (exactly) this name is only mentioned by Pseudo-Skylax, who situates it between Phasis and Dioskourias by the river Gyenos. It is generally assumed to be the same as Pomponius Mela's Cynus, somewhere in Kolchis, probably also between the Phasis River and Dioskourias, and Pliny's Cygnus in the Caucasian area of Kolchis, not far from *Sebastopolis castellum*. While we do not find it in Stephanos' *Ethnika*, the lemmata for the Kolchian cities Pyenis and Tyenis seem to represent two deteriorated traditions for the same *polis*, though unfortunately without offering any further relevant information²⁹. The identification of Gyenos with the predecessor of Ochamchire is based on similar modern toponyms (such as Tguanas and D[g]uana) that have been attested in the area, though the documentation (at least in West-European scholarship) is still insufficient to assess their historical implications effectively. But even if onomastic continuity from antiquity to the present time is admitted, there is a significant geographic scope within which the names may have

²⁸ E.g., Tsatskheladze 1994a, 83–84; 90 (loss of significance in the fourth century; climate change, rise of sea level; much swamp land between Phanagoreia and Pichvnari; the latter and Gyenos ceased to exist by the second century BC); 1998, 12–15; 2019, 25; Braund 1994, 103–106; cf. 88; Lordkipanidze 1996, 194; 233; Braund, Sinclair 1997/2000, 1232 and Map 87; Bähler Nesselrath 1999, 1058; Gabelia 2003, 1221: 'Gyenos is known by archaeological facts'; 2015, 102 and 103 (estimates of sea-level changes of up to 10 m); Avram, Hind, Tsatskheladze 2004, 953; Sens 2009, 100–122; Dan 2009, vol. 2, 769–770. Note, however, that Tsatskheladze 2018a, 37 is more cautious: 'Gyenos has been located, but not firmly. The archaeological material from the site resembles more that of a local settlement, the base of a local chief-man and elite in receipt of Greek pottery and amphorae – just as was the case with the local settlements (...) of Batumis Tsikhe, Simagre (?), Vani, Chognari and Eshera.' But, contrary to this view, Tsatskheladze 2018b, 478 writes: 'Whether the Ochamchira settlement is in fact Gyenos has been doubted (among others, by me), but we cannot expect Greek colonies in Colchis to have the archetypical grand features and stone architecture found elsewhere. ... absence of stonework is not a valid reason for challenging the identification of this site.' Kvirkvelia 2003 (with detailed survey of Georgian, Abkhazian and Russian scholarship, dating the foundation prior to the mid-fifth century, following Shamba 1988, 63–64 – *non vidi*) also concludes by pointing out the 'hitherto very doubtful identity' of the ancient site of Ochamchire. Likewise uncertain is Counillon 2004, 59–60. There is no entry on Gyenos in *RE* or *BNP*.

²⁹ Ps.-Skylax, *Peripl.* 81; Pomp. Mela 1.99 (110) on Cynus (also § 97 on Phasis and § 100 on Dioskourias); Plin. *NH.* 6.5.15. Steph. Byz. s.v. Πυῆνις and Τυῆνις (Π 273 and T 214, edd. Billerbeck *et al.* 2016, 105 with n. 367 and 351 with n. 352). Billerbeck *et al.* state that neither *polis* is known otherwise and that they may be identical with each other, though without taking Gyenis / Gyenos into account. That all three names seem to be variants of the same Gyenis is further suggested by the fact that Tyenis is said to be named after a homonymous river. Cf. Kvirkvelia 2003, 1267, who considers linguistic rather than paleographical reasons for the variation. See, however, also Tsatskheladze 2018b, 476, who identifies Kulevi (located on the right bank of the Khobi estuary) with Pliny's Cygnus. For further dispute, see the references in Kvirkvelia 2003, 1268.

migrated³⁰. That the ancient city is normally located on the north-western side of the bay, opposite the modern town, is largely based on material evidence, despite the poor state of excavation and preservation. In the *Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, we read:

According to the survey carried out on the site of the supposed ancient city, its area measured 65 ha³¹. It is difficult to accept this because of doubts as to the actual location and the very poor preservation of the site itself. The settlement ranged across three artificial hills and the surrounding plain on the left bank of the river Dzhikimur where it joins the sea. Only the edge of one hill (C) has been partly excavated; the other two hills have been completely destroyed by modern construction work³².

The situation is even more complicated by ancient and modern polyonymy of the rivers in the area, not to speak of additional confusions³³. The Dzhikimur is probably the same as the Mokvi River, which is called Moches in the anonymous *Periplus of the Black Sea*³⁴. At any rate, the three excavated hills brought forth Ionian pottery beginning in the mid-sixth century BC; other finds reflect both Greek and indigenous material culture, whereas inscriptions and coins are practically absent. One peculiarity is that hill C was

³⁰ Without specifying her sources, Dan 2009, vol. 2, 770 with n. 2546 adduces the toponyms Tguanas (from a seventeenth-century map, by Archangelo Lamberti, see Kvirkvelia 2003, 1267) and D(g)uana ('toponyme moderne') to identify the Mokvi with the Gyenos / Kyaneos / Moche(s) / Tarsouras (on which also see below, with n. 31). Sens 2009, 101 Anm. 574 refers to various Russian and Georgian works and speaks of Tguanas as a settlement near the old harbour. Kvirkvelia 2003, 1267 relates all of these toponyms (just as Tyenis, on which see the previous n.) to the modern village of Duana (without location, but with reference to Gulia 1925, 162–163 – *non vidi*). To assess the full potential meaning of the evidence, one would need to know not only the exact locations, but also all available name forms ideally with a linguistic analysis. Even if the claim of onomastic continuity should be sound, it would need to be paired with physical evidence for persistent settlement to rule out my suggestion of locating Gyenos at the Okumi River (see below).

³¹ Shamba 1988, 7.

³² Avram, Hind, Tsetschladze 2004, 953. Shamba 1988 is still followed by Kvirkvelia 2003, 1274 (also cf. 1268, 1286–1287).

³³ Braund 1994, 88 (map) locates the city between the Mokvi and Ghalidzga Rivers, close to the estuary of the latter, although the Ghalidzga figures west instead of east of the cape (now the harbour). However, on p. 103, he specifies: 'The settlement at Gyenos ranged across three artificial hills (A, B, C) and the surrounding plain on the left bank of the River Dzhikimur (a tributary of the River Mokvi) where it joins the sea.' The last tributary of the Mokvi is called Duabi on *Google Maps* and merges some 12 km inland into the Mokvi. And the Ghalidzga empties into the Black Sea just south of Ochamchire. At its mouth, it is joined by the little stream Anaria, which comes from the south. Braund, Sinclair 1997/2000 call the river which empties into the sea south-west of Gyenos in two arms, Moches / Tarsouras? / Thersas? / Kyaneos / Gyenos; in *Directory*, p. 1234, they identify the Moches with the Mokvi. But *Google Maps* shows that the two arms belong to two separate rivers, the one to the west is called Tskhenistsqali / 'Horse River' (just as the tributary to the Rioni / Phasis, which is normally identified as Hippos). Tsetschladze 1998, 13 calls the river of Gyenos 'Dshikimur' (Dzhikimur); Avram, Hind, Tsetschladze 2004, 953 specify the same river's left bank. Most scholars confine themselves to vague indications such as Lordkipanidze 1996, 194: 'in der Umgebung des heutigen Otschamtschire' (Gyenos is missing on all of his maps).

³⁴ Anon. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 9v21. The sequence of the rivers is described in part II.7, with further discussion in II.8.

converted to a necropolis around 400 BC – which, however, need not be interpreted as decline. The excavated parts of this settlement seem to have ceased to be inhabited by 100 BC. Tsetskhladze explains this with the pressure against Greek cities in the north and east of the Black Sea in the late-second century BC. It is indeed possible that such ‘barbarian’ raids resulted in the destruction of the aforementioned Caucasian Herakleion, which is not known to have recovered again, or of the ‘great’ city of Pityous, which Pliny says was sacked by the Heniochoi, but whose civic life did not end for good³⁵.

A date around 100 BC for the abandonment of Dioskourias would be too early, however, since it hosted Mithradates VI Eupator in winter 66/65 BC. The ensuing period was full of turmoil, beginning with the Kolchian campaign of Pompey in 65 BC, continued by the expansionist politics of Pharnakes II (63–47 BC), the revolt of Asandros in the Bosporos (48/47–20/19 BC) and the invasion of Mithradates of Pergamon (46 BC). The conquests of Polemon I (ca. 15 – ca. 8 BC) would provide further possible scenarios, as might the fraternal war between Mithradates VIII and Kotys I in the 40s AD. At any rate, Eupator’s visit to Dioskourias is the last datable reference that Strabo provides for the city, while Arrian is our earliest witness for Sebastopolis as its successor³⁶. Admitting uncertainty, I would tentatively put forward the suggestion that *Sebastopolis castellum* was founded under Polemon I or his widow Pythodoris, when Dioskourias still existed, and that the fortress later served as a refuge for those citizens who survived its destruction or simple abandonment, whether due to a natural or man-made cause. Since Roman emperors might have taken the refoundation as an opportunity to impose their own name on the new settlement, I would prefer a time prior to the deposition of Polemon II under Nero in the 60s AD.

If Dioskourias should indeed have been the ancient Greek city at the Mokvi River, Strabo’s claim regarding its topography would finally make much more sense:

Be this as it may, since Dioskourias is situated in such a gulf and occupies the most easterly point of the whole sea, it is called not only the recess of the Euxine, but also the “farthermost” voyage. And the proverbial verse, “To Phasis, where for ships is the farthermost run”, must be interpreted thus, not as though the author of the iambic verse meant the river, much less the city of the same name situated on the river, but as meaning by a part of Kolchis the whole of it, since from the river and the city of that name there is left a straight voyage into the recess of not less than six hundred stadia. The same Dioskourias is the beginning of the isthmus between the Caspian Sea and the Euxine, and also the common emporion of the tribes who are situated above it and in its vicinity; at any rate, seventy tribes come together in it, though others, who care nothing for the facts, actually say three hundred. All speak different languages because of the fact that, by reason of their obstinacy and ferocity, they live in scattered groups and without intercourse with one another. The greater part of them are Sarmatians, but they are all Caucasians. So much, then, for the region of Dioskourias³⁷.

³⁵ See appendices 2 and 3 on these two cities.

³⁶ von Bredow 2006 assumes that, after 66 BC, ‘the town presumably fell into ruin and was flooded. Under Augustus, Sebastopolis was founded nearby’.

³⁷ Strab. 11.2.16 (497–498C): ἡ δ’ οὖν Διοσκουριάς ἐν κόλπῳ τοιοῦτῳ κειμένη καὶ τὸ ἐωθινώτατον σημεῖον ἐπέχουσα τοῦ σύμπαντος πελάγους, μυχὸς τε τοῦ Εὐξείνου λέγεται καὶ ἔσχατος πλοῦς: τό τε παροιμιακῶς λεχθὲν οὕτω δεῖ δέξασθαι “εἰς Φάσιν ἔνθα ναυσὶν ἔσχατος δρόμος”, οὐχ ὥς τὸν ποταμὸν λέγοντος τοῦ ποιήσαντος τὸ ἱαμβεῖον, οὐδὲ δὴ ὥς τὴν ὁμώνυμον αὐτῇ πόλιν κειμένην ἐπὶ τῷ ποταμῷ, ἀλλ’ ὥς τὴν Κολχίδα ἀπὸ μέρους, ἐπεὶ ἀπὸ γε τοῦ ποταμοῦ καὶ τῆς πόλεως οὐκ ἐλάττων ἑξακοσίων σταδίων λείπεται πλοῦς ἐπ’ εὐθείας

Duane Roller explains these lines as follows:

The primary interest of Dioskourias to geographers was that it was considered to be the most remote place on the Black Sea, something that led to the belief that it was also its easternmost point (1.3.2), which was not the case (the mouth of the Phasis is actually farther east), as Strabo knew, but this idea may reflect the length of the shipping routes³⁸.

To my mind, this comment is conflicting with what Strabo says. A different matter is that the estuary of the Phasis in the Paleostomi (Palyastomi) Lake was indeed further east than Dioskourias, but this is not the point, nor that actually Pitchvni is located on the eastern-most edge of the Black Sea. Modern maps allow us to see this with ease. But we should rather apply a *periplus* perspective³⁹, to better appreciate Strabo's words: from Apsaros via Phasis to Dioskourias was (nearly) a straight line of 600 stades, extending to the north along the eastern Euxine coast. Only after that the littoral made a sharp turn to the west. This is what caused the impression of Dioskourias lying in a 'recess' and also being closest to the Caspian Sea. Such a perception should not simply be dismissed as an error⁴⁰, but reflects a literary tradition that we can follow up to Eratosthenes of Kyrene⁴¹. But we may, in fact, go further and regard this topographical feature as an adaptation of the location of Aia, which the oldest sources envisaged on the edge of the Ocean. As the next section will demonstrate, Dioskourias appears to be the first and most obvious city in the Black Sea region for a reconceptualization of the mythical kingdom of Aietes⁴².

εἰς τὸν μυχόν. ἡ δ' αὐτὴ Διοσκουριάς ἐστι καὶ ἀρχὴ τοῦ ἰσθμοῦ τοῦ μεταξύ τῆς Κασπίας καὶ τοῦ Πόντου καὶ ἐμπόριον τῶν ὑπερκειμένων καὶ σύνεγγυς ἔθνων κοινόν: συνέρχεσθαι γοῦν εἰς αὐτὴν ἑβδομήκοντα, οἱ δὲ καὶ τριακόσια ἔθνη φασίν, οἷς οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων μέλει, πάντα δὲ ἐπερόγλωττα διὰ τὸ σποράδην καὶ ἀμίκτως οἰκεῖν ὑπὸ αὐθαδείας καὶ ἀγριότητος: Σαρμάται δ' εἰσὶν οἱ πλείους, πάντες δὲ Καυκάσιοι. ταῦτα μὲν δὴ τὰ περὶ τὴν Διοσκουριάδα. Transl. here and elsewhere based on Hamilton, Falconer 1903 and Jones 1924 (with occasional adaptations); cf. Roller 2014.

³⁸ Roller 2018, 640.

³⁹ Cf. Arnaud 2006, 66: 'Il (sc. Jean Rouge, 1963 (non vidi). — A.C.) avait alors pressenti ce que P. Janni (1984) a pu théoriser sous le nom d'espace «hodologique», c'est-à-dire une approche de l'espace plus linéaire que cartographique, essentiellement fondée sur la séquence des éléments topographiques le long d'un parcours, réel ou fictif... À ce titre, tous les ouvrages de géographie de l'Antiquité sont, à des degrés divers, des Périples, et tout périple de la Mer Intérieure devient à sa façon un ouvrage de géographie générale.'

⁴⁰ Pace Sens 2009, 58, who is, however, right to point out that Strabo mentions Dioskourias frequently for its location, without ever describing the *asty*.

⁴¹ Strab. 1.3.2 (47C) = Eratosth. F 13 Roller on the recess of Dioskourias, and Strab. 2.1.39 (92C) = Eratosth. F 52 Roller on the distance of 600 stades between Phasis and Dioskourias. See also next note.

⁴² Strab. 1.2.10 (21C) and 1.2.40 (46C) on Homeric Aia 'in the recess of the Pontos'; further Strab. 1.2.40 (46–47C) = Mimnermos F 11 + 11a = Skepsios (? Demetrios of Skepsis) F 50, locating Aia on the edge (*cheilos*) of the *Okeanos*; cf. Tsetskhlade 1994b (arguing for a fictional place, though first located somewhere to the north-east); Dräger 1996, 30–45; Roller 2018, 39; further Strab. 11.2.16 (497–498C, as quoted above, n. 37) for the recess of Dioskourias and Phasis. For the mouth of the Phasis, we can go back to Hdt. 4.86 and Apollon. 2.399, 1261 (with Gleit and Natzel-Gleit 1996, 1, 162, concluding the poet used a map) and Procop. *Bell. Goth.* 4.2.4.21, 26, 32 on the Phasis, perhaps with a view to the location of Kytaia (up the Phasis / Rheon / Rioni)? Also see the coordinates and map of Ptolemy 5.10.2

4. ARGONAUTIC LAND- AND RIVERSCAPES IN AND AROUND DIOSKOURIAS AND GYENOS

That Argonautic themes played important roles in the conceptualization of this colony from early on is revealed by the name Dioskourias, which points to Kastor and Polydeukes as the companions of Jason. Perhaps, initially, Dioskourias was only an *emporion* or a *polis* with a very small *chora*, adjacent to a large indigenous city which the Greeks baptized Aia? If so, then the two initially distinct political entities would have been amalgamated over time, which would not only explain the equation of the two by Stephanos, but also the confusion regarding its settlement type or ethnic identity.

Likewise, the names of the neighbouring barbarian tribes were related to the Argonautic myth: the Achaioi were seen as settled by those Greek explorers in general, and the Heniochoi were considered to be the descendants of (those settled by) the ‘Charioteers’ of the Dioskouroi. This obvious conclusion is also drawn by Strabo:

Next to Sindika, and Gorgippia upon the sea, is the sea-coast inhabited by the *Achaioi*, *Zygoi*, and *Heniochoi*. It is for the most part without harbours and mountainous, being a portion of the Caucasus. These people subsist by piracy. Their boats are slender, narrow, light, and capable of holding about five and twenty men, and rarely thirty. The Greeks call them *camaræ*. They say that at the time of the expedition of *Jason* the *Achaioi* from Phthia founded the Achaia there, and the Lakedaimonians, *Heniochia*. Their leaders were Rhekas, and Amphistratos, the *Charioteers* of the *Dioskouroi*; it is probable that the *Heniochoi* had their name from these persons⁴³.

The same tradition of the Charioteers is also found in the Latin tradition represented by Pomponius Mela and Pliny, with only some minor variation⁴⁴. It had thus gained wide currency in the Graeco-Roman world, and by far outlived the settlement of Dioskourias itself. While the vicinity of the Achaioi and Heniochoi appear to be specific elements of the surroundings of Dioskourias, there are further topographic features or toponyms which it shared with other cities rivaling the fame of legendary Aia. Another toponomastic element of the environs of Dioskourias that became part of the Argonautic landscape was the neighbourhood of the Koraxoi, which Pliny reports. I cannot decide whether this (otherwise unknown) ethnic directly gave its name to or drew it from the Korax / Bzipi River, which Ptolemy names as the northermost boundary of Kolchis. Alternatively, it is a later (Greek) redefinition of the territory of Kolchis in light of the

and 8.19.3 (Stückelberger, Graßhoff 2006, II, 540 and 854), which locate Aia (72° / 45° 30') in the corner of a bay, but then create an additional recess for the mouth (72° 30' / 45°) and the city (72° 30' / 44° 45') of Phasis.

⁴³ Strab. 11.2.12 (495–496C): μετὰ δὲ τὴν Σινδικὴν καὶ τὴν Γοργιπίαν ἐπὶ τῇ θαλάττῃ ἡ τῶν Ἀχαιοῶν καὶ Ζυγῶν καὶ Ἠνιόχων παραλία τὸ πλεόν ἀλίμενος καὶ ὀρεινὴ, τοῦ Καυκάσου μέρος οὖσα. ζῶσι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν κατὰ θάλατταν λησστηρίων, ἀκάτια ἔχοντες λεπτὰ στενὰ καὶ κοῦφα, ὅσον ἀνθρώπους πέντε καὶ εἴκοσι δεχόμενα, σπάνιον δὲ τριάκοντα δέξασθαι τοὺς πάντας δυνάμενα: καλοῦσι δ' αὐτὰ οἱ Ἕλληνες καμάραι. φασὶ δ' ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰάσονος στρατιᾶς τοὺς μὲν Φθιώτας Ἀχαιοὺς τὴν ἐνθάδε Ἀχαΐαν οἰκίσαι, Λάκωνας δὲ τὴν Ἠνιοχίαν, ὧν ἦρχον Ῥέκας καὶ Ἀμφίστρατος οἱ τῶν Διοσκούρων ἡνίοχοι, καὶ τοὺς Ἠνιόχους ἀπὸ τούτων εἰκὸς ὠνομάσθαι.

⁴⁴ Cf. Pomp. Mela 1.100 (111): *In Heniochorum finibus Dioscorias a Castore et Polluce Pontum cum Iasone ingressis, Sindos in Sindonum ab ipsis terrarum cultoribus condita est. Plin. NH. 6.5.16: sunt qui conditam eam ab Amphito et Telchio Castoris ac Pollucis aurigis putent, a quibus ortam Heniochorum gentem fere constat. C (milia passuum) a Dioscuriade oppidum Hercleum distat, a Sebastopoli LXX (milia passuum). Achaei, Mardi, Cercetae, post eos Serri, Cephalotomi. in intimo eo tractu Pityus oppidum opulentissimum ab Heniochis direptum est. Cf. Gabelia 2003, 1231; Roller 2018, 637–638.*

Argonautic myth that may have induced the renaming of the northern limit. At any rate, it is barely coincidental that the promontory at the entry into the Black Sea (on the west-ern side of the Thracian Bosporos) is later attested as Korakion⁴⁵.

Most impressive are the recurring hydronyms, especially the ‘Horse River’ Hippos (Tskenisstqali), which flows parallel to the Moches / Mokvi (Anthemus?), but also re-occurs in our sources for cities on the Phasis called Aia. The Hippos is often paired with the Kyaneos River. The Greek name is identical with the adjective for ‘dark blue’ and thus seems to be an ideal generic name for a river⁴⁶. Some traditions opted for a rein-terpretation, induced by the homonymy with the adjective derived from the noun κύων ‘dog’. This resulted in the conception of the clashing, dog-headed cliffs, the Symplegadai or Kyaneai, a playful adaptation of Homer’s Skylla and Charybdis off Sicily, which the Argonautic tradition relocated to the Thracian Bosporos⁴⁷. Yet another variation seems to be the river name Glaukos, which repeats the theme of blue-coloured water. A fur-ther alternative was the rendering Kygnos ‘Swan’, as the coastal city Gyenos is called in Pomponius Mela’s account, whereas Pliny attests an unspecified copy-cat on the Phasis⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Plin. *NH.* 6.5.15 and Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.10.1f. For *Korakion*, see Dionysios of Byzantium, *Anaplois Bosporou* 90: *post Cyaneas esse promontorium Coracium* (cf. Belfiore 2009, 315 n. 184–185; Fil Burnu), to be distinguished from its namesake west of Kolophon (Strab. 14.1.29; Roller 2018, 798–799). Also see Ps.-Skylax, *Peripl.* 77–79, who locates the Koraxoi and the Κωρικὴ ἔθνος in-between the Heniochoi and the Melanchlainoi. Counillon 2004, 56–57 ac-cepts them as two different peoples, although I would not like to exclude the possibility that Ps.-Skylax found two variants of the same ethnic. Also see n. 8, 14, and part II.9).

⁴⁶ Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.10 mentions Dioskourias / Sebastopolis before the Hippos and the Kya-neos, somewhat further down, he attests an additional Αἰάπολις, which may be a confusion with Dioskourias / Aia, unless there was another candidate on the Euxine coast inbetween Phasis and Dioskourias. Plin. *NH.* 6.4.13 locates Aia only 15 miles up the Phasis River, in the neighbourhood of the Hippos and Kyaneos Rivers. Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Αἶα (A 86) mentions the Hippos and Kyaneos, though not the Phasis, locating the city 300 stades = ca. 45 or 53 km in-land. Strab. 1.2.39 (45C) merely locates Aia on the Phasis; later, in 11.2.17 (497C), he names the Hippos and Glaukos as the major tributaries of the Phasis. These two might appear as surrounding Kytaia / Kotais / Kutaisi, which is located a few km north of the confluence of the Phasis / Kvirila and Rheon / Rioni, and which Apollon. 2.399–407 (also 2.415, 1093–1095, 1266–1267; 3.228; 4.511) and Procop. *Bell.* 8.14.6.47–48 regard as the royal city of the former kingdom of Aia. Lordkipanidze 1996, 243–246 and Dan 2016, 256, 259, 261 claim that Kutaisi was the only Aia and that all sources mentioning this mythical city or kingdom, including Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Διοσκουριάς (Δ 93, edd. Billerbeck, Zubler 2011), meant to refer to the same place. But see Kießling 1913, 1915–1916 for some variation and Tsetschladze 2018b, 501 for a note of caution. The historical reality seems to be more complex: e.g., Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.6.7 also attests the pair Glaukos and Lykos, see Coşkun 2019b.

⁴⁷ Kyaneai: Apollon. 1.3; Strab. 1.2.10 (21C); Anon. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 16r20–25; cf. Gantz 1993, 356–358; Roller 2018, 80–81. For Skylla, Glaukos and Kirke, see Gantz 1993, 731–733 with further references, though not for the connection with the Argonautic myth. For the multiple meanings of κύων and the adjective κύανεος, see *LSJ s.v.*

⁴⁸ Pomp. Mela 1.99 (110): *At in primo flexu iam curvi litoris oppidum est quod Graeci mercatores constituisse, et quia cum caeca tempestate agerentur, ignaris qua terra esset cycni vox notam dederat, Cycnum adpellasse dicuntur*; compare Plin. *NH.* 6.4.13, who also attests a certain Tyndaris somewhere on the bank of the Phasis, probably a far echo of Dioskourias. Tyndareus was the human father of the heroic twins.

The most plausible explanation of such a spread of Argonautic landscape elements is that Dioskourias took pride of place in this creative mytho-geographical development, as soon as Milesian settlers claimed to have discovered Aia on the eastern coast of the Black Sea in the second half of the sixth century BC. Particularly telling is the river name Gyenos in its environs: its origin is almost certainly Caucasian, although its meaning escapes us⁴⁹. The river gave its name to the Greek colony at its mouth, which may have been as old as Dioskourias or even older. When its economic importance was eclipsed by the trade hub on the Mokvi, Kyaneos or Kygnos were reconceptualised as defining a boundary of Aia. Many of its specific topographic and toponomastic features, such as its location in a recess, its immediate proximity to a Hippos River as well its delimitation by the Korax / Koraxoi and Kyaneos / Kygnos, were absorbed into the Greek mythical tradition by around 500 BC. Not much later, this affected the spatial conceptualization of the Phasis and the various cities on its banks which were vying for the glory of continuing the mythical kingdom of Aia. Some of these new attributions further enriched the mytho-geographical traditions, especially by adding the hydronyms Phasis, Glaukos and Lykos to the literary tradition as of the fifth century BC. It is telling, however, that these later features never intruded the land- and riverscapes of Dioskourias and Gyenos⁵⁰.

Having drawn on diverse and independent evidence, I have corroborated the expectation to find Dioskourias / Aia on the banks of the Hippos / Tskhenistsqali and Moches / Mokvi Rivers by Ochamchire, south-east to the Korax / Bzipi River and north-west to the Gyenos / Kyaneos / Okumi River. The next part of my argument will put this claim to a test: I shall systematically revisit ancient *periplus* literature for the north-eastern stretch of the eastern-Euxine coastline from Phasis to Herakleion, to show that my location of Dioskourias is consistent with the Greek cities in its neighbourhood, especially with the literary tradition of the distances in-between them.

Appendix 1

SEBASTOPOLIS AND THE KODORI DELTA

The Kodori is by far the broadest river in the area, outdoing the Gumista River (which merges into the Black Sea between Sukhumi and Eshera), the Aapasta and Khipsta Rivers (whose estuaries flank the city of Gudauta), the Korax / Bzipi north of Cape Pitsunda or – beyond the boundaries of Georgia – the Psou and Reka Mzytma Rivers (whose lower courses enclose Cape Adler). Among all the rivers coming down from the Main and Lesser Caucasus that empty into the Black Sea, the Kodori is only second to the Phasis / Rioni. The area is defined by the cape to its south, most of which is alluvial and thus reveals that the easternmost delta had been at least 3 km further east at some point in the past. It is at this cape that the coastline, after having extended westwards from Dioskourias / Ochamchire, bends to the north again. It now encloses Lake Skurcha, which seems to have been a bay with open access to the sea in antiquity. The modern estuary itself dominates a large and fertile plain to its north-west, where the current Sukhumi

⁴⁹ Similarly, though without connecting the name with the broader Greek tradition, Dan 2009, vol. 2, 770 with n. 2546.

⁵⁰ See above, n. 46–48, for references.

Airport is located close by. The terrain narrows down into a straight passage further up between the sea and the mountains, which leads into the plain of Sukhumi City.

Although no ancient name of the Kodori has come down to us, its delta must have been of high strategic importance (not only) in antiquity, and I shall argue (part II.7) that *Sebastopolis castellum* mentioned by Pliny was probably located on the lake's (or lagoon's) northern bank. Most likely, King Polemon I chose this place to relocate a previous *Sebastopolis castellum*. As the King of Pontos, he had established a first garrison of this name in Kolchis to serve as a bridgehead just opposite Fort Apsaros north of the Akampsis / Tchorokhi perhaps in the 20s BC. When he was also assigned Kolchis itself and set his eyes on conquering the Bosporos (ca. 15 BC) and the city of Tanais (ca. 10 BC), he seems to have moved his major fortified harbour in-between Pontos and the Bosporos to Cape Kodori. It later served the Romans well until they had to cede it to the Persians in the 540s AD. When the Byzantine emperor decided to re-establish a fortress and city of the same name in the area, he certainly chose a safe distance from the Persian territory. There is hence the possibility that he chose a location 20 to 25 km further to the north, the site of modern Sukhumi City⁵¹.

Appendix 2

PITYOUS / PITSUNDA

Strabo talks of the 'Great Pityous', located somewhere between the Heniochoi to the west and Dioskourias to the east, on the foothills of the Main Caucasus along the Euxine coast. We are not told what its greatness consisted of. Did this refer to its affluence, as Pliny's *oppidum opulentissimum* seems to imply, or was it rather to denote a new, larger or more prosperous refoundation of a 'Lesser Pityous'? Pliny actually leaves open if its prosperity continued or ended when the city was sacked by the Heniochoi⁵². In Arrian's *Periplus*, it figures as one of the harbours in the north that do not deserve special attention. Whether this was due to its insignificance or because it was outside of his province Cappadocia (or rather its extended maritime district, the Pontus Polemoniacus, which ended at Sebastopolis / Dioskourias)⁵³, cannot be said with certainty.

It is obvious, however, that Pityous did not yet host a Roman garrison in AD 132, in contrast to Apsaros, the Phasis estuary (Petra?) and Sebastopolis / Dioskourias⁵⁴. But,

⁵¹ On the history of *Sebastopolis castellum*, see Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.6.7, alongside Plin. *NH.* 6.4.14 and 6.5.16. Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 10.3–11.5 (also 17.2–18.1) is the most important source for the High Imperial period, whereas Procop. *Bell.* 2.29.3.18; 8.4.1.4–6 and *De aed.* 3.7 for the sixth century AD. Many scholars confuse Kolchian *Sebastopolis (castellum)* past the Akampsis (Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.6.7) with Pontic Sebastopolis / Karana / Sulusaray (Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.6.9: Σεβαστόπολις ἑτέρα): see, for instance, Brodersen 1996, 161; Stückelberger, Graßhoff 2006, vol. 2, 516–517 with n. 99. See Coşkun (forthcoming) for further discussion. Note that Polemon was also responsible for renaming Pantikapaion (Kaisareia) and Phanagoreia (Agrippea), see Heinen 2011.

⁵² Strab. 11.2.14 (496C) and Plin. *NH.* 6.5.16. Cf. Diehl 1950, 1884 and Radt 2008, 251–252, considering refoundation. There is no entry on Pityous in Avram, Hind, Tsetschladze 2004. Sens 2009, 53–54, Anm. 145 doubts that it was a Greek colony.

⁵³ Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 10–12 on Sebastopolis and 18.1 on the passing mention of *Pityous*.

⁵⁴ Plin. *NH.* 6.5.16; Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 10.3–4; 17.1–18.1; also Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.6.6, which I shall discuss further in part II.9. See also Coşkun (forthcoming) on Petra.

in analogy to these Roman forts, Pityous is generally assumed to have received a garrison in the middle of the second century. Roman military presence is, however, only attested for the mid-third century by Zosimos (who wrote in the fifth century)⁵⁵. It remained the farthest outpost of the early Byzantine Empire in the Black Sea region. The emperor Justinian still mentions Sebastopolis and Pityous as Roman fortresses in AD 535, but when Chosroes was gaining the upper hand in Kolchis, they had to be abandoned in the 540s, as we know from Prokopios⁵⁶.

Pityous is commonly identified with Pitsunda (also Pitzunda, Bitchvinta), mainly due to the near-homophony with the modern name⁵⁷. Regardless of this large consensus, I am hesitant to accept that the sites of the Greek *polis* and the Roman fortress were identical and continuously settled until the present day. The material evidence of Pitsunda is very inconclusive, and the distances specified in our literary sources do not add up. Arrian details the (direct) distance from Sebastopolis to Pityous as 350 stades. A straight line from the north bank of the Kodori estuary to the cape of Pitsunda measures about 70 km, and about 5 km more would have to be added, if Sebastopolis bordered on Lake Skurcha. I have therefore suggested that Pityous was located on one of the banks of the Khipsta River. In the days of Arrian, it probably merged into the Black Sea further to the east in the area of modern Gudauta, some perhaps 58 or 59 km away from the mouth of the Kodori.

It is a plausible assumption that the Byzantines re-established a garrison on the north-eastern coast of the Black Sea, at a strategic distance from the territory then controlled by the Persian king Chosroes. I suggest that they reused the name Pityous, which had formerly been their farthest stronghold to the north-east. This would then have been the place mentioned in the Suda (tenth century) as follows: ‘A minor city on the coast of the Black Sea, lying on the right; it was also the endpoint of the Roman Empire, abutting onto barbarian and cruel peoples’⁵⁸. This younger settlement may have developed into modern Pitsunda.

Appendix 3

CAUCASIAN HERAKLEION

Caucasian Herakleion is among the least known cities of this popular name. Pliny is our only witness for a *Heracleum oppidum*, which he situates among the Heniochoi at

⁵⁵ Zosimos 1.32–33 names it as a fortified town, first successfully defended, but later sacked by the ‘Scythians’ (in the mid-3rd century AD). Also see *Not. Dign. Or.* 38.35 ed. Seeck 1876, attesting an *ala prima felix Theodosiana* in *Pithia*; cf. Belfiore 2009, 177 n. 99. *Pityous* is further mentioned by Anon. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 9v41; cf. Belfiore 2009, 208–209, n. 228.

⁵⁶ Just. *Nov.* 28 *pr.* (transl. Braund 1994, 290–291); Procop. *Bell.* 8.4.1.4–6; also *De aed.* 3.7.8–9, which mentions the evacuation of Sebastopolis and Pityous and the later resettlement of Sebastopolis. Cf. Diehl 1950, 1884, with further late Roman sources.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Diehl 1950, 1883; Ehrhardt 1988, 84; Braund 1994, 198–200; Silberman 1995, 50 n. 184; Lordkipanidze 1996, 241–243; Brodersen 1996, 18, 169; Liddle 2003, 120; Belfiore 2009, 208 n. 228 (admitting, however, that the civilian settlement may have been in Ldzaa, 5 km to the east); Roller 2018, 639.

⁵⁸ Suda s.v. Πιτυοῦς (Π 1670 ed. Adler 1928–1935): πολίχνιον ἐν πέρατι μὲν θαλάττης τῆς Ποντικῆς κατὰ δεξιὰν κείμενον, τέλος δὲ καὶ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς γινόμενον, βαρβάρους καὶ ὁμοῖς ἔθνεσι συνάπτον. Counillon 2004/14, 58–59 speculates that the first name of Pityous may have been Gelon (called after the ‘barbarian’ Gelones mentioned by Ps.-Skylax, *Peripl.* 80).

a distance of 100 miles from Dioskourias and 70 miles from Sebastopolis respectively⁵⁹. Arrian and Ptolemy no longer knew this city, but the former mentions Herakleion and Ἡράκλεια ἄκρα, specifying in the latter case that it was 770 stades away from Sebastopolis / Dioskourias. This equals nearly 129 km at the conversion rate of 167 m / stade⁶⁰. The author of the article in the *Realencyclopædie*, Emil Kießling, read Arrian as attesting two Herakleian promontories, one at the beginning and the other 150 stades farther at the end of a bay which hosted the city of Herakleion mentioned by Pliny⁶¹. Recent commentators of Arrian have followed this view, identifying the first with Cape Adler, south of Sotchi. Regarding the second, Alain Silberman does not commit himself, but quotes previous scholars who argued for either the town of Golovinka north-west of Sochi and 57 km away from Adler or for the village Volonka another 15 km towards Lazarevskoje. The former location has been followed, with hesitation, in Talbert's map (see fig.). Aidan Liddle, in turn, suggests Mys Kodosh at a distance of some 500 stades⁶².

More convincingly, though without further explanation, Braund and Sinclair seem to collapse the information as pointing only to a single Herakleian cape, equating Ἡράκλεια ἄκρα with Cape Adler⁶³. This decision not only has the advantage of avoiding an awkward homonymy, which would have led to endless confusion in antiquity, but it is also recommended by the flow of information in Arrian's *Periplus*. The distance of 150 stades from the Achaioi does not seem to be a continuation of the itinerary past the Achaian territory (this would need to be expressed differently), but to summarize the two stages from the Nesis to Masaïtike (90 stades) and from the latter to the Achaioi (60 stades). I feel uncertain as to the distinction between Herakleion and Ἡράκλεια ἄκρα. If this goes back to Arrian, he might have wanted to introduce stylistic variation, thus using the noun with its nominal apposition in the first place and its adjective to define the generic *akra* in the second place. But since he is not concerned with literal repetitions of toponyms otherwise, I would rather suspect that a scribe felt similarly as Kießling and tried to enhance clarity by introducing an orthographic disambiguation.

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⁵⁹ Plin. *NH*. 6.5.16. See above, § 1.

⁶⁰ Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 18.2–1. Stähelin *et al.* 1912 does not list a Euxine-Caucasian Herakleion or Herakleia. I shall discuss the conversion rate in part II.6 and 9.

⁶¹ Kießling 1912.

⁶² Silberman 1995, 16 n. 188; 51 n. 192. Liddle 2003, 64–65, 121–122 and Belfiore 2009, 209 n. 234 agree on Adler for Herakleion, but Liddle and Belfiore 2009, 210 n. 239 identify Mys Kodosh as the second *akra*; Belfiore further equates the latter place with τὰ Ἐρημα mentioned by Anon. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 10r4. Sens 2009, 61 states that the location of Herakleion is unknown.

⁶³ Braund, Sinclair 1997/2000, 1232. Cf. Brodersen 1996, 166, without discussion; Belfiore 2009, 178 n. 101 and 209 n. 234, although he also presupposes that Arrian is speaking of two homonymous capes.

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