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**COLCHIAN-SCYTHIAN WAR  
IN VALERIUS FLACCUS' ARGONAUTICA**

Despite the fact that Valerius Flaccus refers to well-known theme of Argonautica developed many times before, it can be said that from the viewpoint of the interpretation of the Argonauts myth he creates a new phase. It is natural that Homer, Apollonius of Rhodes, Diodorus of Sicily, Vergil, Statius, Lucanus, etc. had an influence on him. The first thing that draws attention while reading the Latin Argonautica, is Flaccus' great interest towards the theme of war, unlike his Greek prototype, Apollonius of Rhodes, who purposely avoids that theme and the description of battle scenes.<sup>1</sup> The roman epic poet, on the contrary, increases the importance of battle episodes. He sets out three battles. Each of them is different with both its importance and scope: 1. the battle against Cyzicus covers 200 lines (3. 43-249); 2. The war between Aeetes and Perses, the prehistory of which is set out as early as in the fifth chapter; while the sixth book is totally dedicated to its detailed exposition, is quite extensive (from the fifth book 478 line (5. 217-695) and the sixth book 760 line 1238); 3. Yoking the flame-emitting bulls constitutes 114 lines (7. 539-653). The first and second battles are studied quite well in special literature<sup>2</sup> as far as it is possible to compare these episodes with their parallels set out by Apollonius of Rhodes, while as for the war between Perses and Aeetes, the issue has not been properly studied yet<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For volume and importance of war topic in the text by Apollonius of Rhodes cf.: Fränkel, 1961, 1-20; Fränkel, 1968, 510-512; Hunter, 1988, 436-453; Hutchinson, 1988, 115f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf.: Manuwald, 1999; Burck, 1975, 11-43.

<sup>3</sup> For review see: Wetzel names war as the main topic of Argonauts voyage, points out heroic deeds of Iason and Argonauts and via this aspect relate it with the war of Scy-

The purpose of my article is to study what is the function and role of the war between Colchians and Scythians in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*<sup>4</sup>, what was the reason that it occupies such a vast place in this heroic epos. One episode from the Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* could serve as a source for Flaccus' inspiration. There is a story set out in only few lines, which, presumably, must have stimulated Flaccus: Jason, who has arrived in Colchis, proposes Aeetes, that he will help him in subduing neighboring Sauromates or some other people in return for Golden Fleece (Apoll. Rhod., *Arg.*, 3. 392-395). This proposal does not bear any functional meaning with Apollonius, because the action does not develop in this line. Aeetes thinks whether he should do away with the insolent Argonauts immediately or first test their strength (3. 397-398). In addition to the hint of Apollonius of Rhodes, there is information in the Greek literature, in particular with Apollodorus (I.IX.28.6) that Medea helped Aeetes, who had been overthrown by Perses, and restored him to power. The similar information is found with Diodorus (IV. 55), who says that Medea returns to Colchis again with his son Medos after abandoning Athenian Aegeus. In Colchis Medos kills Perses and returns the throne to Aeetes. The same motivation is encountered in Roman literature with Hyginus (*Fab.*, XXVI) and Tacitus (*An.*, VI.34). It is clear that Flaccus substantially changes the key moments of the episode less known even before: 1. the conflict between Aeetes and Perses occurs before Medea leaves Colchis; 2. the victor is Aeetes and not Perses, so Aeetes does not need the help of Medea and her son; 3. scenes reflecting the war that happened in Colchis are described only by this author.

Prehistory of the war: Flaccus prepares the basis for the fraternal war from the very first book (1. 22ff.). The program of this war is presented in Jupiter's order of things (1. 531-560). According to the three-phase order of things (*ordo rerum*) invented by the roman epic poet, power is transmitted from the East to Greece by means of the Golden Fleece<sup>5</sup> (the abduction of

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thians (3.492) [Wetzel, 12f.]; Adamietz underlines formal aspects and indicates following episodes: battle with Dolionians (Apoll. Rhod. 3.43-256), Juno's Speech (3.492ff.) condemn of Jupiter (4.9-12), prophecy of Phineus (4.617-619) apply towards Muses (5.271ff.) [Adamietz, 1976, 79]; Venini observes that war of Scythians plays the leading role in actions of Colchis [Venini, 1971, 611f.]; Ferenczi sees conceptual connection of battles of Jason with *virtus* of Hero [Ferenczi, 1995, 154-156].

<sup>4</sup> Cf.: Baier, 1998; Schenk, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Her. I. 1: Io is kidnapped by the Phoenicians; I. 2: Cretans abducted Europe at Tyre of the Phoenician coast, while the Greeks sailed to Aea and kidnapped Medea; I. 3: Alexander kidnapped Helena.

Medea and the theft of the Golden Fleece<sup>6</sup>/abduction of Helena by Paris) and after weakening Greece, the power is taken by Roman peoples (Aeneas takes penates to Rome). Homer, Apollonius and Vergil are presented together in Flaccus' *ordo rerum*.

In the work, the war is proceeding in two dimensions simultaneously, so attention is to be paid to the motivations of gods from the one hand and those of humans from the other.

Gods: Jupiter knows about *fata*, which is predetermined: *vetera haec nobis et condita pergunt/ordine cuncta suo rerumque a principe cursu/fixa manet* (1. 531-533) and that it is impossible to change the predetermined fate<sup>7</sup>. In Jupiter's order the first phase we are interested in is artistically set out in the following way: I will unfold the decrees that I made in my providence./The region that stretches down from the measureless East to the sea of the virgin Helle as far as the Tanais/has long been rich in horses and famed for its men, and none has dared to rise against her in valorous chivalry and to win renown in war:/so did I myself cherish the land and its destinies./But now her last day is hastening on and we are leaving Asia tottering to her fall,/while the Greeks now claim of me their time of prosperity./Therefore have my oak trees, the tripods and the spirits of their ancestors sent forth/this band upon the sea. Has a path fashioned through the billows and through storms/for thee, Bellona. Nor is it the fleece alone/that is fated to rouse resentment and the still closer pang that comes from a ravished maid... (5. 536-548). As for the other gods, so called *ministra deorum* support the campaign: *una omnes gaudent superi* (1. 501). Juno and Pallas know that justice is on the side of Perses in this war. Juno sends Pallas to Colchis, because she wants Argonauts to support Perses: *sponde adfore reges/dis gentos, quis arma volens, quis agmina iungat* (3. 504). However they change their decision later. *Quibus addimur armis* – Pallas asks Juno. If the Argonauts support Perses who is strong as it is, the war will soon be

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<sup>6</sup> An old Caucasian love legend, depicted on the walls of the Temple of Sol in Colchis also indicates kidnap of Medea and Golden Fleece by Jason: river god Phasis mad from passion towards the Colchian Nymph Aea is trying to surrender her, while confused nymph is escaping in native hills. At last frightened and exhausted Aea lay down her arrows and Phasis overcomes her and binds her fast beneath his rapid waves (5.425-428). Medea's attempts to prevent Jason's love were in vain too (7.1-20, 127-152, 292-322), and at last with the interference of Gods Medea has to compromise and Jason achieves his will towards the Aetes' daughter (6.439-479, 590-591, 7.153-186, 323-324).

<sup>7</sup> Colaxes' story shows evidently that he is unable to overcome his destiny; Jupiter cannot avoid the approaching death even from his son (6.621-630).

completed and this opposes Jupiter's plan. Therefore the goddesses make the Argonauts support Aeetes, who is *iniquus tyrannus*. They decide in this way, although they know that this alliance will not be good for the Argonauts. Only Sol and Mars think that returning the Golden Fleece to the Greece is against their interests: Mars is anxious about losing his function, because the fleece is preserved in his grove and therefore exposed to danger (1. 529), Sol is anxious because, the fleece is at his son's, Aeetes', disposal and provides his unlimited power. Therefore he asks Jupiter to prevent the vessel from departing.

Humans: the war in Colchis was preceded by two prophecies and ominous signs. Phrixus' ghost appears to Aeetes at night (5. 233-240). His prophecy is divided into three parts: the formula of greeting, prophecy itself and warning. In the greeting Phrixus' ghost describes the merit of Aeetes, how the latter sheltered the fugitive prince and married his daughter off to him. The voice of Phrixus predicts Aeetes that he will lose his power and become wretched, when the Golden Fleece is taken from the grove of Mars; that prophecy is followed by a warning: Medea should marry someone, who is desirable for her, because the virgin should not stay in her father's country; as it is clear from the prophecy, Aeetes will inevitably lose his power (*cum temporale and not conditionale*). It is only the warning about Medea that requires a decision from Aeetes, which he takes spontaneously: he decides to marry Medea off to the Albanian prince (5. 256-258); the prophecy is followed by a visual image: as if Phrixus gives Aeetes the fatal fleece *fatalia visus* (5.241). The prophecy of Phrixus is quite opposite to that of the Colchian priest, which is preceded by ominous signs and events (*auguria monstraque*). The priest warns the king, that the inauspicious fleece *exitiale ... vellus ... infaustum* (5. 261-2) will bring misfortune to the city, therefore it must be returned to the Haemonian land (5. 261-262).

From the prophecy of Phrixus, Aeetes concluded what was profitable for him: in order to retain his power, he should hold the Golden Fleece. Therefore he disregards the Colchian priest's warning (5. 264). His half-brother Perses tries to persuade Aeetes to protect the interests of the country and yield the Golden Fleece. The brothers cannot agree with him. The war is inevitable. Aeetes cannot compare with Perses in military power, but through establishing relationship with Argonauts he tries to use them for achieving his goals.

Having concealed the true reasons for the war Aeetes persuades the Argonauts that Perses has decided to take his throne away. He promises

them Golden Fleece if they help him (5. 534-541); in reality, however, he is not going to yield the Golden Fleece. Prior to starting the battle, Perses tries to persuade Jason into the perfidy of Aeetes, but Mars interferes before the messenger reaches Jason (6. 14-30). Perses is the first who foresees the absurdity of Aeetes' effort (6. 733) and takes the extreme measure for protecting the interests of the country. However a passage of the third book also shows that there was the hostile attitude between brothers even before. Even with Apollonius of Rhodes, one can see that Aeetes has strained relationship with Sauromates or other people (AR 3. 392-395). As for Jason, despite the fact that he foresees the perfidy of Aeetes, supports him anyway: 'ergo nec hic nostris deerat labor arduus actis' (5. 542); even here we cannot avoid difficult tasks, veniant super haec quoque fato/bella meo' (5. 544-5): the war is my destiny. I think that the following phrase shortly assesses his action: *sine honores labores* (6.733) [Ferenczi, 1995, 155]. What is the country's commander like? Flaccus criticizes Aeetes: 'ante dolos, ante infidi, tamen exequar astus/Soligenae falli meriti meritique relinqu' (5. 222-223). Aeetes is characterized by perfidy, treachery, guile, according to Flaccus he deserves to be deceived and abandoned. His response to the nocturnal appearance is hurried and thoughtless: 'membra toris rapit ille tremens' (5. 244). His prayer offered up to Sol, shows that he feels himself as a refugee and is exposed to danger: 'haec tibi fatorum, genioitor, tutela meorum,/omnituens tua nunc terris, tua lumina toto/sparge mari. seu nostra dolos molitur opertos/sive externa manus, primus mihi nuntius esto' (5. 246-249). One can see his egocentric nature, when Aeetes disregarded the Colchian prophet's warning and preferred his own power to people's well-being: 'nec vulgi cura tyranno/dum sua sit modo tuta salus' (5. 264-265). The fact that Aeetes wants to keep his status of king is natural and human, but the ways, through which he tries to perform that, is inhuman. He does not trust anyone surrounding him and thinks that anti-people power is possible. He is afraid of both internal and external enemies and suffers from that, (cmp. *De clementia* (1, 11, 4-1. 12, 5)). After receiving the prophecy, when Aeetes is praying to Mars, he asks the god to protect the fleece: 'tu quoque, sacrata rutilant cui vellera quercu,/excubias, Gradive, tene. praesentia luco/arma tubaeque sonent, vox et tua noctibus extet' (5. 250-252) and to arise fear in the enemy with his battle cry. Sabre-rattling is the only protection for tyrant. Aeetes does not act deliberately, but he takes decisions spontaneously, including the decision about marrying Medea off to Styry, disregarding the prophecy and ominous signs. He is resentful and easily flies into a temper. When Perses tried to criticize him, he assailed him furiously and harmed him:

'ille fures ira solio se proripit alto/praecipitatque patres ipsumque... ense petis' (5. 268-271). He is overcome with *furor* and *ira*. According to Seneca *ira* is the most terrible and dangerous affect. *furor*, *ira*, *impietas* to gods, disregarding of prophecy and the characteristic signs of tyrant absolutely oppose the image of a just ruler. All his personality is oriented on war and violence. Through the carelessness and thoughtlessness, through his refusal to yield the fleece, he defies his brother to start a war.

The supporters of Aetes and Perses: Now let's look at the supporters of both Aetes and Perses. Colchians themselves, Albanians, Amazons and commanders, whose origins are not specified by Flaccus, are fighting on the side of Aetes. Perses' supporters are Scythians, Cimmerians, Hyrcanians, Iberians, Getae and innumerable tribes from the Northern Caucasus.

Note that there are some 100 new personages with Flaccus in addition to those well-known in mythological tradition, who are found first with Flaccus and 79 of which are involved and shown<sup>8</sup> in the war waged between Aetes and Perses. On the side of Aetes 32 warriors<sup>9</sup> are named, including 2 Albanians, 5 Amazons, 7 allies, whose origin is unknown, 1 Parthian and 17 Colchians. Perses' army is more impressive. 47 warriors are presented on his side, including 1 Cimmerian, 1 Iazygian, 1 Getes, 2 Iberians, 4 Hyrcanians and 38 Scythians. 18 of them are introduced in the beginning of the war and they are included in so called 'Scythian Catalogue', the army coming to help Perses. The catalogue has two themes in common: the Golden Fleece and Medea. Important heroes, some of whom are represented in the battle scenes as well, numerous Northern Caucasian tribes and occasionally their customs are listed there; it is important that the majority of those customs, which are encountered in the sources with

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<sup>8</sup> Separate group is set from personages which do not participate in the war, but are connected with the heroes involved in battles. Some of those personages are named while some of them stay nameless: Gesander's father Iazygian Voraptus (6.288); Scythian Tages' father Taulas (6.221) and half-divine mother (6.223), whose name is unknown; Colaxes' mother, Scythian goddess Hora (6.58); Father of Hyrcanian brothers Medores and Gelas (6.204); Father of Scythian Helix (6.569); Colchian Thydrus' mother (6.643); Scythian Peucon's mother – water nymph (6.564); Colchian Caicus' young wife (6.688); Armour-bearer of Carmeius (5.579); Armour-bearer of Parthian ambassador Myraces (6.694).

There is also a separate group with personages, which are not connected to the war for example: Colchian nymph Aea (5.424); Medea's nurse Henioche (5.357); nymphs: Sinope (5.109) and Peuce (8.256) and etc.

<sup>9</sup> In this case we are interested in Caucasian personages and do not implicate Argonauts, who naturally struggle on the side of Aetes.

respect to other tribes, are fitted to Scythians, while some of them as well as many separate personage are invented by Flaccus.

Here we should concern the soldiers arrived to help Aeetes<sup>10</sup>, who are mentioned while describing the king's court<sup>11</sup> and are presented at Aeetes' feast (5. 567-614), which reminds us Homer's Teichoscopy<sup>12</sup>. Among the allies<sup>13</sup> of Aeetes, 7 unknown commanders *amici reges* are named: Carmeius, Aron, Campesus, Odrussa, Iaxartes, Latagus, Choaspes<sup>14</sup>. Note that Flaccus does not specify the origin of any of them. He presents each of them according to their external signs and personal qualities. It is clear that they have arrived for fighting against Perses, therefore their common warlike attitude is noticeable: Carmeius<sup>15</sup> always thinks about heroic deeds and is always ready for war. He is impatiently waiting for the war (5. 578-580; 582-584). Iaxartes<sup>16</sup> is so confident in his power, that he has no fear even before gods. Aeetes justifies him, because 'nor by day or by night rests he from assiduous warfare'. He strikes terror into the hearts of Getae, Medes, Iberes (5.596-604). As for Aron<sup>17</sup>, Flaccus underlines his wealth, and his quality of caring about himself: Aron is rich and draws foreign attention with the cloak embroidered with variegated pictures. His war-

<sup>10</sup> Cf.: Adamietz, 1967, 79-80; Lüthje, 1971, 231-232; Shelton, 1971, 320-322; Shreeves, 1979, 162f.

<sup>11</sup> At the arrival of Argonauts at Colchis all members of King Palace had gathered in the Temple of Sol, it is described by Flaccus as follow (5. 456-464): when the Sun's offspring makes entry into his father's shrine, beside him is his young son Absyrtus, then Styryus who had come from Albania to be his son-in-law, then descendants of Aeolus, sons of Phrixus: Phrontis, Argus, Melas and Cytisorus, *honores patres* and *reges amici* who have come to help Aeetes.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hom. *Il.*, 3.161ff. The difference is that Aeetes and invited Jason are looking at their friendly allies and not enemies.

<sup>13</sup> Flaccus presents Aeetes' side with following order: first are listed Argonauts (Jason, sons of Aeacus: Peleus and Telamon and the great nurslings of Calydon: Tydeus and Meleagros), then assistant commanders and at last Amazons (Commander Euryale).

<sup>14</sup> In a recent paper Taylor points out that the Asian chieftains Carmeius, Aron, Campesus, Odrussa, Iaxartes (in the order with 584/586 transposed), have initial letters forming the acrostic *cacoi* or *κακοί* [Taylor, 1994, 212-235].

<sup>15</sup> The origin of the name is unknown. One of the name with an oriental association; Carmei are only known from (Plin. *Nat.* 6. 157 (on Arabia) *Minaei ... quorum Carmei*). Pliny may in fact have been a source for Flaccus.

<sup>16</sup> Presumably the name is composed from Hydronym Ἰαξάρτης river in Kazakhstan (Sogdiane), ending in Caspian sea and was often dismissed with Tanais (Strab., 11.6.1. Plin., *Nat.*, 6.49). According to Arrian (*Anab.*, 3. 30. 7) the river is considered to be in Caucasus (in actual fact the Hindu Kush); whence a people Iaxartae.

<sup>17</sup> Aron is widespread name in ancient sources. Different personages originated from various regions are known with the same name.

rriors emit the scent of saffron and are noticeable for their tidy hairstyle (5. 590-592). They have curled hair. Besides, Aron is an incomparable warrior, he fights side to side with Absyrtus and he is not inferior to him in valour (6. 524). Campesus<sup>18</sup> is clad in tiger's skin (5. 593), which presumably indicates the fact that he is probably an incomparable hunter. Odrussa<sup>19</sup> is noticeable among other allies for his hairy chest and thick beard; also he loves wine, which surprises Jason (5. 593-595). Latagus<sup>20</sup> (5. 584) and Choaspes<sup>21</sup> (5. 584-586) deserve admiration. Choaspes is mentioned as *amnigena* (river-born), which possibly indicates<sup>22</sup> his divine origin. When Aeetes introduces this ally to Jason, Choaspes is drinking his charger's blood, yet none the slower will he gallop when the reins are loosed. Note that Jason's parents perform suicide by drinking bull's blood, while the horse's blood cannot damage Choaspes, which shows his extraordinary endurance (information about this custom is not verified with other authors). If we summarize the above said we will have a picture of a typical Caucasian: bellicose, hunter, capable of great endurance, wine lover; external features: curly (Herodotus' hint about Egyptian origin) and thick hair. Probably for this reason Flaccus does not think it necessary to identify their origin, but he offers a generalized picture. The reader gains good impression about Colchian's neighbours as it is.

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<sup>18</sup> The origin of the name is unknown. This oriental name may be related to certain place in Cappadocia, Κάμπαι. Or Flaccus may use a *camp-* element prevalent in Onomastic of ancient world (cf. name of mythical Monster - Κάμπη, Apollod. I 2, 1, see Kroll, RE, X, 1842) or derived from Lat. *campus* 'field' formative composes man name formed by ending *-esus*, which is not familiar from other sources.

<sup>19</sup> This oriental name was prevalent in ancient world, derived from the Thracian tribe of the Ὀδρύσαι (Plin., *Nat.*, 4.40: *Odrysarum gens fundit Hebrum*, see: Lenk B., *Odrysai*, RE, XVII 2, 1900-1903). According to Steph. Byz. Ὀδρύσαι is a town of Odrysians, while Ὀδρύση is a stream of river Rhyndacus in Mysia (Strab. 12, 550. 551. Xen. *An.*, 7, 5, 1. D. Per. 793, see Ruge W., RE, XVII 2, 1903-1904). According to Hesych it was the name of Scythian King (Hesych. Miles. fr. 4, 14). Flaccus uses this prevalent name for his fictionary personage and composes it with different suffix *-a*.

<sup>20</sup> Probably under influence of Vergilian Latagus (*Aen.*, X 697, no good derivation proposed), but with possibly an oriental flavour in view of Aelian: ἑστὶν Ἴνδῶν ἢ Λατᾶγη' (*Nat. An.*, 16.10).

<sup>21</sup> The name also can be related to the river Choaspes (Χοάσπης) in Susiana, ending in the Tigris (Her. 1. 188, see: Weissbach, RE 3.2354f.); according to legend the Persian kings and the Parthian monarchs used to drink its water (cf. [Tib]. Pan. Mess. 3.7.140 *regia lymptha Choaspes*, Plin., *Nat.*, 31.35: 'Parthorum reges ex Choaspe et Eulao tantum bibunt'). The same name has river in India (Strab. 15, 697) and also an African ally of Hannibal (Sil. 3.317).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Phasis (5. 425-428), Thydrus (6. 639).



In order to show internal Caucasian relations, in addition to the Golden Fleece Valerius takes up a theme of *coniunx Medea*, which echoes Homer. Several heroes are struggling to gain Medea's hand: Anausis, the noble commander of Heniochi and Alani, Styrus, the Albanian prince, Scythian magician Coastes, Parthian ambassador Myraces. Anausis and Coastes are presented in the Scythian catalogue. Note that the four has had a certain relationship with Colchis before the war too. Anausis<sup>23</sup> (6. 42-47) is mentioned in the first place in the Scythian catalogue and the expression *iam pridem* (6. 43) hints us about his previous relationships with Aeetes; his attitude towards Aeetes became hostile after the latter has decided to marry Medea off to Albanian Styrus (6. 43-44) and not him. So he has his own reason for engaging in the war. Gods' favoured Anausis is slain by Styrus on the battlefield (6. 265-278). We can compare him with Menelaus, who is engaged in the war to regain his wife. Scythian magician Coastes<sup>24</sup> rushes to the war with Choatrae and Centors. Centors and Choatrae want to obtain the Golden Fleece, while Coastes is interested in Medea. However, unlike other suitors he is driven neither by love of Medea nor heroic affairs, but the Colchian virgin's fame, achieved through her magic (6. 155-7). Myraces<sup>25</sup>, the ambassador of Parthian king arrives in Colchis from the eastern coast to strengthen the union between Parthians and Colchians. In return, in addition to gold, his reward is Medea too. He fell in love with the Colchian virgin before the war started between Aeetes and Perses and he was willing to engage in the war. Albanian Styrus<sup>26</sup> also

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<sup>23</sup> Flaccus is supposed to derive the name using widespread *anau-* element in ancient onomastic or derived from Greek verb ἀναύ-ω 'screa', also he might derive the name from ethnonym *Anasi*, which is once mentioned at Pliny (*Nat.*, 6. 22), possibly written as *Anausi* in the geographical source that Flaccus may have used. cf.: Colaxais/Colaxes, Auchates/Auchus, Tyra/Tyras, Bastarnae/Batarnae, Thyssagetes/Thyrsagetes.

<sup>24</sup> According to SC ВДИ commentator, name Coastes may be related to river Koas in north-west India (Ptol., *Geogr.*, VI, 18, 2). But in consideration with context, should be mentioned semantic of the name κῶας that means 'fleece' and again, mentioning two symbols as Medea and Fleece, Flaccus sequentially connect and unify the circle that is symbolic at the end of Scythian catalogue.

<sup>25</sup> The name can be connected with the river of the same name - Myraces, confirmed in the texts by Flaccus, nearby of which was born Scythian warrior Colaxes (6.50). According to SC ВДИ commentator this name supposed to oppose with the Tamirake of Ptolemaios (*Geogr.*, III, 5, 2). Tamirake was a city in Scythia and on the same time cape in Hylaea (cf. *Timolus (Timolus) Timorus* Strab. 7.7.11) and also the name of Myrgetian tribe (Hec. fr. 155).

<sup>26</sup> The origin of the name is unknown. It may be related to the city (Στύρα) in south-west coast of Euboea (Il. 2, 539) or ethnonym Στυρεῖς confirmed in the texts by Hero-

arrived in Colchis before starting the war and by the arrival of the Argonauts he is mentioned among the representatives of the king's court. He has a privilege among other suitors, because Aeetes has chosen him as a bridegroom; however the war thwarted the planned marriage. Styruus has many rivals for Medea including Jason after his arrival. When Jason escapes from Colchis with Medea, Styruus feels insulted, because nobody respects king Aeetes' decision and his love towards Medea is still more kindled (8. 302), when he sees the danger of losing her forever. He is very active among the pursuer Colchians (8. 298-305, 328-368). Styruus perishes tragically in the battle between the Colchians and Argonauts (8. 363-368).

Based on the above said, the Alan, Scythian, Albanian and Parthian are competing for Medea's hand. Aeetes knows from the prophecy, that Medea should not stay virgin in the paternal house and should marry a man desirable for her. Aeetes chooses Albanian prince willfully. It is clear that Colchis and its neighbour are almost relatives.

Whether consciously or unconsciously Valerius Flaccus showed us the relationship among Caucasian people, their customs, both at the level of region and separate countries of this region: Northern Caucasus on the one hand (Scythia, Hyrcania, Cimmeria, Maeotis) and Southern Caucasus (Colchis, Albania, Amazonia, including probably the generals helping Aeetes and if we judge according to their number, at least seven unnamed Caucasian regions should be meant) on the other. Northern Caucasus is presented spacious at the level of smaller units (city, mountain, river): Myrace, Gerus, Hylaea, Emoda, Hypanis, lake of Byce, Ambenus, Ophiusa. Numerous place names and Northern Caucasus tribes are named: Alani, Heniochi, Bisaltians, Cimmerians, Gangaridae, Hyrcanians, Coelalatae, Sindi, Corallians, Batarnae, Drancae, Caspians, Neuri, Iazigians, Mycaei, Cessaei, Arimaspes, Auchates, Thyrsagetae, Exomatae, Toryni, Satarchae, Centors, Choatrae, Balloniti, Moesian, Sarmatians, Sauromatae, Geloni, Hiberians. The information given by Flaccus about Caucasus and its tribes represents a precious source for the history of the regions near the Black Sea.

One may ask why Flaccus needed to invent so many new personages unknown for the mythological tradition and this war at all. Through the intensification of war theme, Flaccus made the Latin epos topical in its peculiar way for the society of his time. That must be caused mainly by two factors. Historical reality on the one hand and the author's interest

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dot (Her. 8. 1), Στυρέες (Her. 6, 107). Styruus can be compared with Vergilian Turnus, that allows us to think that Flaccus was influenced by him.

towards the information related to Caucasus on the other. Through including the war theme in the work, which undoubtedly represents its integral part, so called fictional episodes of 'Odyssey' is reduced and the subject of Caucasus is increased. His special interest is confirmed by the invention of so many new Caucasian personages. The linguistic analysis shows us, how Flaccus tries the increase the nomenclature of the regions of Northern and Southern Black Sea regions.

Accordingly, it can be said, that Flaccus creates a new phase, through developing the myth from the viewpoint of including Caucasian stories in the Argonauts legend, which conditionally can be called the phase of diffusion of information related to Caucasus. Of course this process to some extent reflects the expansion of Romans' sphere of interests, which included Caucasus as well.

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