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**PHASIAN CONFUSION.
NOTES ON KOLCHIAN, ARMENIAN AND
PONTIC RIVER NAMES IN MYTH, HISTORY
AND GEOGRAPHY***

ALTAY COŞKUN

Abstract. Due to its close link with the legendary kingdom of Aia, where the Argonauts found the Golden Fleece, the Kolchian Phasis is one of the most illustrious rivers in world literature. It is, at the same time, surrounded by several controversies, ancient as well as modern. The evidence seems to suggest that it was first pictured as part of the mythical landscape around 500 B.C. Mythical narratives, colonial ideologies, reports of explorers and geographical speculation led to a heterogeneous, in part fancy tradition, as is best exemplified by the Phasis/Tanaïs/Don, which was fathomed with a second outlet into the Baltic Sea. This notwithstanding, the concept of the Kolchian Phasis was quite sober. Eratosthenes, Strabo and the mainstream literary tradition identified it with the modern Rioni only as far as Rhodopolis/Geguti, whence its middle course equals the Kvirila River to Sarapa-

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na/Shoropani; its upper course, now the Barimela, connected it with its Armenian source. The knowledge that Herodotos and Xenophon had of the Phasis/Rioni and of the Araxes/Phasis/Aras was limited but not confused. Prokopios, however, describes the Boas/Akampsis as the upper course of the Phasis/Kvirila/Rioni in Book 2, but corrects this view in Book 8. His error stands in a broader tradition that ignored the Akampsis, possibly due to confusion with multiple rivers called Lykoi in the Argonautic and geographical literature. This insight will allow us to demystify Apollonios Rhodios' verses on the Phasis, Lykos and Araxes, and to appreciate the minor rivers of the riverscape of Aia: the Hippos, Kyaneos, Glaukos and Lykos, whose systematic study remains a desideratum.

1. GEOGRAPHY, MYTHOGRAPHY AND WATERWAYS – AN INTRODUCTION

Ancient Greek merchants, settlers and tourists (and not only these) had the thrilling adventures and exotic landscapes of their wandering heroes on their minds when exploring far-away lands, rivers and seas. The voyage of Jason and his Argonauts became the most influential for the Black Sea region: many of its rivers, settlements and landmarks were named after this legendary tradition. But since myth and geography are mutually transformative, some of the newly encountered waters, places and peoples gradually intruded into the old narratives as well. One stimulus that drove the flexible process of retelling the heroic plots and reframing the narrative space was the changing of geographical knowledge, which could grow, remain stable, or even shrink. Another factor was the rivalry between different groups of colonizers, who were not only vying for the best trade connections and settlement places, but also for tracing the most impressive vestiges of their heroic ancestors on their journeys and within their recently-occupied territories.¹

¹ Cf. Gantz 1993, 340-373, esp. 362; Braund 1998. Dan (2015) presents an impressive case study of the Thermodon River, illustrating how mytho-geography could also permeate historical traditions. She concludes: “les τόποι ne sont pas seulement des conteneurs, ils sont aussi des participants à l’histoire et des symboles des individualités historiques. Ils forment des réseaux aussi bien au niveau physique – si l’on pense aux contacts directs entre les terres d’émigration et celles d’immigration – qu’au niveau symbolique – par l’identification des habi-

The Greeks' antagonism, creative imagination and bold drive for opportunities are, on the one hand, at the heart of the rich, nuanced and colourful "Classical" world that has been intriguing humankind for millennia. On the other hand, they imply serious obstacles to reconstructing the topography of the Euxine coastline, both in its physical shape and its mental conceptualization. Historical geographers are confronted with multiple difficulties. They have to determine which part of a mythical tradition is grounded in a "real-world" experience, which is likely to have at least a historical kernel (though perhaps somewhere else), and which is purely fictional. Moreover, a lot of our evidence is fragmentary and belongs to different and often rivalling versions of a multi-layered mythical world. Even worse, when spun further, these distinct traditions could either be kept separate or intermingle into hybrids.

From early on, the rhapsodic and mythographic tradition evolved with a high degree of dynamism and flexibility. Homer's random references (ca. 730/710 B.C.) to the quest of Jason for the Golden Fleece leave open the whereabouts of the kingdom of Aïetes, although he may be thinking of a Mediterranean island. This is what Hesiod does (ca. 700 B.C.), who specifies that Jason and Medeia had their happy ending in the hero's hometown Iolkos.² Mimnermos (7th century B.C.) is the first to locate Aia, the land of Aïetes, in the Ocean, probably the Atlantic.³ Most likely, it was the naval explorations of the Milesians that began to redirect the Argonautic quest towards the Black Sea, the centre of their colonial activities in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C., before they began to settle on Kolchis for Aia

tants des terres homonymes, en dépit des écarts chronologiques ou géographiques."

² Hom. *Il.* 2.850-855, 7.468f. (on Queen Hypsipyle on Lemnos); *Od.* 12.850-872. He does not yet name Aia, but Aïetes' sister Kirke was living on Aiaia: *Od.* 10.133-139. And Hes. *Theog.* 992-1002.

³ Mimn. fr. 11 and 11a = Demetr. *Skeps.* F 50 = Strab. 1.2.40 (46f.C). Dräger (1996, 38) thinks of the eastern Ocean, Roller (2018, 39) of the western (without explanation). It seems that Mimnermos was pointing to the west with his reference to the Sun's bed chamber, whereas Demetrios (2nd century B.C.) relocated it in the east, given that the Kolchian scenery had become mainstream.

in the later part of the 6th century B.C.⁴ The Korinthian epic cycle seemed to be the first to attest the equation with Kolchis, but also the relocation of some of the adventures into the Adriatic Sea, a focus of Korinthian colonial activities. But it has been demonstrated recently that the 8th-century-B.C. poet Eumelos is a highly artificial persona and that the works attributed to him may have been composed between the mid-7th and mid-4th centuries B.C. More specifically, the *Korinthiaka* should be dated to around 500 B.C.,⁵ when independent attestations of Kolchis as the destination of Jason's quest began to multiply.⁶

But this is not where the development of the Argonautic plot and itinerary ended. The astonishing effect of synthesizing actually incompatible traditions is best illustrated by the fancy waterways that were gradually concocted. One particular conflation of these diverse traditions yielded an opaque river-route that connected the Istros/Danube with the Eridanos/Po, which empties into the Adriatic. Still in the 6th century A.D., Stephanos of Byzantium surmised this mysterious link for the Apsyrtides Islands: they are located in the Adriatic, but named after Medeia's butchered brother Apsyrtos.⁷ The same fabrication had already fooled one of

⁴ Cf. Tssetskhladze 1998, 171f.; Dräger 2001, 16f.; West 2002, 130. Pace Braund 1994, 14f., and Lordkipanidze 1996, 38-41.

⁵ For the reevaluation of Eumelos, see West 2002; Tausend 2012; cf. West 2003, 161. Other views which date Eumelos' testimony for Kolchis (Eumelos, *Korinthiaka* fr. 2 = Tzetz. *ad Lykophr.* 174 = Poltera 1997, 317 and Barnabé, *PEG F 3* = Poltera 1997, 316) to the mid-8th or early-7th centuries can no longer be upheld: Braund 1994, 15f.; 1998, 289; Dräger 2001, 16f.; inconsistent is Tssetskhladze 1998, 6, 171f.

⁶ Simon. *PMG* 545 (around 500 B.C., cf. West 2002, 130; also Poltera 1997, 319) and Pind. *Pyth.* 4.211-213: ἐς Φᾶσιν δ' ἔπειτεν ἧλυθον: ἔνθα κελαινώπεσσι Κόλχοισιν βίαν μῖξαν Αἰήτα παρ' αὐτῶ (462 B.C.; cf. Dräger 2001, 19; West 2003, 157; Dan 2016, 250); cf. Hdt. 7.193: ἔπλεον ἐς Αἶαν τὴν Κολχίδα (third quarter of the 5th century B.C.; cf. Dan 2016, 250).

⁷ Ap. Rhod. 4.452-590; Strab. 7.5.5 [315C]; Steph. Byz. s.v. *Apsyrtides* (A579). The connection also seems to be implied in Plin. *HN* 3.22.144: *Olcinium, quod antea Colchimum dictum est a Colchis conditum* (ed. Rackham 1961). For an explicit refutation of the Danube-Eridanos link, see the (weak) argument by Diod. Sic. 4.56.7. Others locate the murder near Tomi/Constanta, i.e. not far from the Euxine estuary of the Danube (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.24; Ov. *Tr.* 3.9). For a location near Apsaros

the sharpest minds the world has ever seen: in the 4th century B.C., Aristotle drew on the obscure river to explain that the trichiae can only be fished when swimming into the Danube or out of the Eridanos.⁸ Apollonios of Rhodes enjoyed varying this tradition even further by construing a link between the Eridanos and the Rhodanus/Rhône.⁹

Another product of wild speculation was the direct access from the Tanais/Don to the northern Ocean or Baltic Sea, whence the Argo was believed to have reached the Pillars of Herakles/Straits of Gibraltar. The most elaborate description of this navigation has come down to us in the Late Antique *Orphic Argonautika*, but traces can be followed up once more to the 4th (rather than 6th) century B.C.¹⁰ The same can be said for

at the Akampsis estuary, see Arr. *PPE* 6.3f.; cf. Prokop. *Bell.* 8.2.2.12, 14, also Steph. Byz. s.v. *Apsyrtides* (A 579). The earliest versions we know place the murder of Apsyrtos in the palace of Aia and the disposal of his limbs on a river, which must be the Phasis. See Soph. *Kolchides* F 343 R; Eur. *Med.* 1334f.; Pherec. *FGH* 3 = *BNJ* 3, F 32. Cf. Gantz 1993, 362-364.

⁸ Arist. *De animalibus* 7 (8). 13 = 598b.12-21 (ed. Balme and Gotthelf 2002): “The trichiae, however, only can be caught during their entry, but are never visible during their exit; in point of fact, when a trichia is caught in the neighbourhood of Byzantium, the fishermen are particularly careful to cleanse their nets, as they do not often swim out. The reason is that this fish alone swims northwards into the Ister, and then at the point of its bifurcation swims down into the Adriatic. And, as a proof that this theory is correct, the very opposite phenomenon presents itself in the Adriatic; that is to say, that they are not caught in that sea during their entry, but are caught during their exit.” Trans. Barnes 1984.

⁹ Ap. Rhod. 4.627-636. Cf. Dräger 2002, 537f.; Hunter 2015, 151, 167.

¹⁰ *Arg. Orph.* 1036-1249, ed. Vian 1987 (with French trans.); cf. ed. Abel [1885] 1971; for an English translation, see Colavito 2011. For a discussion, see Vian 1987, 28-42; cf. Dan 2015, 184-186; 2016, 261-271 on the “northern” Phasis; also Lordkipanidze 2000, 16-18, who, however, confines the tradition of a “Scythian” Phasis to Roman Imperial or later authors. The most detailed historiographical account that has survived is by Diod. Sic. 4.56.3-6 (1st century B.C.), but he is rationalizing in that he admits that the Argo had to be carried over land for a bit; he vaguely mentions “ancient historians” and names Timaios (4th century B.C.), *FGH* 566 F 85. Even more detailed, but without explicit reference to the Argonautic myth or a Phasis River, is the discussion among ancient geographers on the extension of Europe. Strab. 2.4.1-8 (104-109C) rehearses the treatment of

another variation that fathomed a link between the northern Tanaïs or the Istros/Danube on the one hand and the southern Nile on the other, unless access to Egypt was pictured through the eastern Ocean.¹¹

Polyb. 34.4.5. They strongly reject the account of Pytheas of Massalia (4th or 3rd century B.C.), who claimed to have surrounded all of Europe by ship, among others by sailing through the Tanaïs (2.4.1, 5f.) as well as passing by Gades and through the Pillars of Herakles (2.4.1-5, 8). Strabo repeatedly mentions Dikaiarchos, Eratosthenes and Poseidonios, who are said to have rejected Pytheas' allegations in part or wholesale. The throng of the argument resides on Pytheas' lack of means to embark on such a long journey, that the distances he provides do not add up to a consistent itinerary and that the geometrical speculations contain inaccuracies, such as the extent and course of the Tanaïs, for which Strabo claims an extension from north to south, to merge into the Euxine, instead of a source to the north-east of the mouth (2.4.5f.). Interestingly, Strabo does not address that Pytheas' itinerary implies a link to the northern Ocean. Cf. the commentaries by Walbank 1979, 3.587-598 (suggesting on p. 591 that the Tanaïs may be the Elbe); Mariotta and Magnelli 2012, 195-199; Roller 2018, 95-101; also Radt 2006, 5.251-261 for further philological detail; none of the three commentators addresses a connection to the myth, for which see Dan 2016, as below.

¹¹ Ps.-Skylax, *Europe* 20 attests a connection through the Istros to Egypt in the 4th century B.C. (a textual corruption leaves the link open), as does Ap. Rhod. 4.257-293, who also calls Aia an Egyptian settlement. This concept has left various traces in ancient geography, such as the debate on the symmetrical structure of the Tanaïs and the Nile as divisions between the continents, for which see Strab. 2.4.6 (107f.C) and the references in the previous n., or the assumption of kinship between the Kolchians and Egyptians, for which see Strab. 11.2.17 (498C). Roller (2018, 641 referencing Hdt. 2.104f.), however, seems to be conflating traditions of the Sea Peoples, Philistines, Kimmerians and Scythians invading the Levant or attacking Egypt in the time of King Psammetichos. For a connection with the semi-legendary king Sesostris, also see Dan 2017, esp. 172, 193. Dan (2017, 180-187) also discusses the theory that the Tanaïs was connected with the Caspian Sea, which was occasionally viewed as a gulf of the eastern Ocean. Dan attributes this conception to Patrokles, the general of Seleukos I (around 300 B.C.), whose theory gained currency through Eratosthenes. Cf. Kosmin 2014, 67-76, also on the ideological context. There is no need to follow the suggestion of Gantz (1993, 362) that the Phasis/Nile connection was already known to Hekataios and Sophokles; the evidence he produces is insufficient. Hunter (2015, 116-

While none of these fabrications ever formed the mainstream within our multivocal Argonautic tradition, it is unsurprising that scholars have claimed numerous cases of river confusion or conflation in Kolchis and its wider Euxine neighbourhood. Add to this the challenges that plurionymy and homonymy pose to researchers: two or more different names for the same river (or parts of its courses) were and are as widespread phenomena in hydronymy as the use of the same name for totally different rivers. As if this were not yet enough, natural causes for variation must not be underestimated either: sinking or rising water levels as well as the ever-changing riverbeds through the constant interplay of erosion and sedimentation were and are particularly strong features of the eastern-Euxine coastland.¹²

Our modern understanding of ancient hydronymy in general and the riverscapes of Kolchis in particular owes much to Otar Lordkipanidze and Anca Dan. The former has laid the ground by surveying the Graeco-Roman and Georgian literature on the landscape and waterways of ancient Kolchis; the latter has presented impressive case studies on the Thermo-don and Phasis, and also a panoramic scrutiny of the conceptualization of rivers by geographers.¹³ While being highly indebted to these scholars, the present study aims at some nuances that may enhance our understanding of how the ancients perceived the Phasis of Kolchis. After introducing into the modern debate on the ancient mytho-geographical concepts of this river, I shall discuss some key sections from Graeco-Roman geographers, historiographers and poets that relate to the source, course or tributaries of the Phasis. Despite some variation and even errors in our evidence, the overall picture that emerges is quite consistent, and several misunderstandings appear to be modern rather than ancient. The argument will conclude with a rereading of a section in Apollonios of

124) attributes the Egyptian theme to Hekataios of Abdera around 300 B.C. For other sources involving Egypt without a miraculous river connection, see, e.g., Hdt. 4.179; Mariotta and Magnelli 2012, 197f.

¹² For natural factors of change, see, e.g., Braund 1994, 102f.; Tsetskhladze 1998, 7; Dan 2016, 270f.

¹³ Lordkipanidze 1996; 2000; Dan 2015; 2016; 2018. Also Nawotka 2005 for further literary evidence.

Rhodes' *Argonautika* (3rd century B.C.), whose verses have so far been regarded as the greatest Phasian Confusion. Two maps will assist the readers while navigating through the complex argument: Map 1 displays the Kolchian Plain with all its major rivers and settlements, Map 2 shows the Caucasian Region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, including the courses of the Kyros/Mtkvari and Araxes/Aras in the east.

2. THE PHASIS RIVER AS A CONCEPT

The Phasis did not yet feature in the oldest versions of the Argonautic myth that have come down to us. As unfolded in the previous section, these located the home of King Aïetes and his daughter Medeia in Aia, which was gradually identified with a location somewhere in Kolchis in the later course of the 6th century B.C. Accepting this still leaves open a related question, namely whether the Phasis was an original part of the Greek myth or not yet. One might think that Lordkipanidze's argument for Kolchis and the Phasis as integral elements of the Argonautic story is the result of patriotism combined with optimism. But he has, among others, two strong advocates on his side: first, the geographer Strabo of Amaseia, who had a firm knowledge of the broad literary tradition when writing his books on history and geography largely under the monarchy of Augustus (31/27 B.C.-A.D. 14); and, second, David Braund, the author of the first and only English monograph that tries to synthesize the history of *Georgia in Antiquity*; the same Braund has also been in charge of the two maps covering Kolchis in the *Barrington Atlas*.¹⁴ Regardless of this accumulated authority, I remain unconvinced. Lordkipanidze and Braund have not been able to give plausible explanations for the omissions and variations in our early literary tradition. In addition, they seem to have been misled by Strabo's (skewed) claim that Homer knew about Aia's location in Kolchis.

In contrast, Anca Dan holds the view that the Phasis, not Kolchis, formed part of the Greek mytho-geographical tradition from its start,

¹⁴ Lordkipanidze 1996, 38-41; less explicit is Lordkipanidze (2000, 9-36), who only claims it for the "vast Argonautic literature ... as well as ... in the major historical and geographical works" (p. 16). Cf. Braund 1994, 14f.; also Braund 2000, BA 88; Braund and Sinclair 2000, BA 87.

denoting a stream on the edge of the world. This is why its name could flexibly be superimposed on other rivers, though yielded its best fit for the Rioni: “The Phasis-Rioni was a credible limit of the powers of the south, the Persians to the east, the Roman<s> to the west (Strabo 6.4.2; Zosimus 2.33.1) and the Armenians in the middle...” Likewise, other rivers such as the Araxes/Aras or the Hypanis/Kuban could be addressed as Phasis.¹⁵ In one regard, I would even go further than Dan and add to this list the mysterious Phasis on Taprobane, an island in the nebulous Far East which is most commonly equated with Sri-Lanka. Since the river has never been identified with any certainty, we cannot be sure about its actual name. Homonymy with the Greek or Graeco-Kolchian Phasis thus remains a theoretical possibility, but the *onus* of proof is entirely with those who claim that such a river indeed existed and that the Greeks did not impose the name *Phasis* themselves. The chances are very high that the Hellenic mythical conception has fed into the funky geographical construction of the Taprobanian Phasis.¹⁶

This said, Dan has so far convinced me only of the fact that some Greeks understood the Phasis in a generic way as the end-of-the-world river, and that this concept resulted in multiple rivers (also) called by this name. But she has not given me reason to believe that the Phasis had been genuine to the Argonautic landscape, or at least to any other ancient Greek myth of heroes migrating afar which might have been integrated into the Argonautic tradition sometime in the Archaic period. The evidence speaks against such a view, not least because *Phasis*

¹⁵ Dan 2016 *passim*, esp. 272 (quotation). Also see Lordkipanidze 2000, 24f., who rejects the view that the Tanaïs and Phasis were ever equated in antiquity.

¹⁶ Ptol. *Geog.* 7.4.1-10 (7.4.7 mentions the *Phasis*) and Steph. Byz. s.v. *Phasis* (cf. s.v. *Argyra*). For the identity with Sri Lanka, see De Romanis 1997, 161; Stückelberger and Graßhoff 2006, II: 734-739 (with further references, also considering Sumatra in n. 735) and 906f. (map); Schulz 2016, 79-83, 86; cf. Stein 1938, 1895f.; Starr 1956; Schwarz 1974. Dan 2016, 249 n. 9 (with further references) assumes that there was a river whose name sounded like *Phasis* in its vernacular language. I am grateful to Jean Coert for advising me on Taprobane.

seems to be based on the Georgian root *psa-* for “water.”¹⁷ The earliest attestation of the Phasis as part of the mythical narrative is roughly contemporary with the first mention of Kolchis in the early-5th century B.C.¹⁸ Moreover, arguably the oldest site that Greeks claimed as Aia around the same time could do without a river called Phasis: Dioskourias/Aia, located in the north-eastern edge of the Black Sea on the Kolchian coast. This observation is linked with an even more complex problem of the historical geography of Kolchis: multiple cities are called Aia or the home of Aietes and Medeia in our written sources, but most scholars have been inclined to regard the distinctive details as inaccurate, claiming that only one (or at the utmost two) such cities can be mapped.¹⁹ As far as I see, our entire evidence is compatible with the view that Aia was first considered a far-away island, then located in Kolchis (probably identified with Dioskourias) and only in a third stage also connected with the Phasis from around 500 B.C. onwards.

To gain more clarity, we would have to differentiate the specific influence that certain colonial societies exerted in the process of naming or renaming rivers and we should further distinguish how Greek authors framed or reframed the mythical landscapes. Such a purpose, however, would by far exceed the scope of the present paper, which is confined to the concept that ancient geographers, historiographers and mythographers had of the Phasis in Kolchis. Much of my argument will be negative: not every discrepancy from our present geographical knowledge results from a confusion among ancient witnesses, not every instance of homonymy triggered the conflation of distinct riverbeds, not every poetical license represents a different spatial conception, and not every occasional inaccuracy that has come down to us by chance created a new topographic or hydronymic “tradition.”²⁰

¹⁷ This is the plausible argument of Lordkipanidze (2000, 10f.), although it is hardly compatible with his overall assumption that the Phasis had always been part of the Greek myth.

¹⁸ Eumelos, *Korinthiaka* fr. 2 = Tzetz. *ad Lycophr.* 174 and Pind. *Pyth.* 4.211, quoted above, nn. 5f.

¹⁹ Further detail is provided below, esp. in the final n.

²⁰ Cf. Coşkun, forthcoming a, b, e.

3. THE RIONI, THE PHASIS AND THE CHOICE BETWEEN A CAUCASIAN, AMARANTIAN OR ARMENIAN SOURCE

Springing in the Central Caucasus in the Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti Planned National Park close to the Russian border, the Rioni first flows eastwards through the Kutaisi-Alpana-Mamisoni Pass, whence it takes a left-turn until Alpana and Tvishi in the southern slopes of the Greater Caucasus. From there, its course verges to the south, reaching the foothills at Zhoneti and plainer ground at Kutaisi. It bends westwards just past Geguti, which lies opposite Byzantine Rhodopolis, about 90 km (as the crow flies) inland from its estuary at Poti Harbour, close to the ancient city of Phasis. As the artery of the Kolchian plain, the Rioni's identification with the mytho-historical Phasis is now largely accepted,²¹ in contrast to the site of the homonymous city.²² Strabo of Amaseia, however, alleges an Armenian source for the Phasis, which conflicts with the course of the modern Rioni.²³ This might easily appear to be a random error at a first glance or a ramification of the multiple identifications of the Phasis at a second. Among others, Strabo's view differs from Aristotle's, who was convinced of the river's roots in the Main Caucasus. But it

²¹ E.g., Braund 1994, 25; Lordkipanidze 1996, 228; 2000, 20; Braund and Sinclair 2000, BA 87 and *Directory*, p. 1227. For discussion, see Dan 2016.

²² The site of Phasis City must be somewhere east of modern Poti, buried under layers of up to 12 m of alluvial sand: Tsetskhladze 1998, 7-11; 2013, 293f.; cf. Silberman 1995, 30; Lordkipanidze 1996, 228-232; 2000, 47-53; Nawotka 2005, 235. Braund and Sinclair 2000, BA 87 and *Directory*, p. 1227 recommend the results of underwater archaeology by Gamkrelidze 1992 for identifying the site largely in the Paleostomi Lake. See Coşkun, forthcoming b for further discussion.

²³ Strab. 11.2.17 (498C): διαρρεῖ δ' αὐτὴν ὁ Φᾶσις, μέγας ποταμὸς ἐξ Ἀρμενίας τὰς ἀρχὰς ἔχων, δεχόμενος τὸν τε Γλαῦκον καὶ τὸν Ἴππον ἐκ τῶν πλησίον ὀρέων ἐκπίπτοντας. "Through it flows the Phasis, a large river having its sources in Armenia and receiving the waters of the Glaukos and the Hippos, which issue from the neighboring mountains." Greek text by Meineke 1877 (cf. Radt 2004), English translation adapted from Jones 1924 (cf. Roller 2014). The source is not worth a comment for Radt 2008, 254, 259 or Roller 2018, 641, 680.

is the understanding of the great philosopher that would remain isolated for the best part of antiquity.²⁴

An alternative tradition that names the mountain *Amarantos* as its origin can be traced back to the poet Apollonios of Rhodes (3rd century B.C.). He puts its first mention into the mouth of the seer Phineus, who foretold to the Argonauts the way to the Golden Fleece in the kingdom of Aïetes:

But travel by ship / until you reach the most remote part of the sea. / There, through the lands of Kytaiis, from the far-away / Amarantian Mountains, through the plains of Kirke, / the whirling Phasis pushes its large floods towards the sea.²⁵

Aïetes was believed to be the brother of Kirke, one of the most famous witches of Greek mythology, whose profession would be continued by her niece Medeia. This must have been obvious to all ancient writers, not least because, as the sister of the king of *Aia* (Aïetes), Kirke ruled over *Aiaia*. In contrast, ancient and modern scholars alike cannot agree where to locate the *Amarantos*, whether in Pontos, Armenia, Kolchis or the Caucasus. Apollonios' geographical conception is not known to have influenced later poets, which makes his version even more difficult to map.²⁶ On the one hand, we cannot be certain whether he was envisag-

²⁴ Arist. *Mete.* 1.13 F350a: ἐκ δὲ τοῦ Καυκάσου ἄλλοι τε ῥέουσι πολλοὶ καὶ κατὰ πλῆθος καὶ κατὰ μέγεθος ὑπερβάλλοντες, καὶ ὁ Φᾶσις. "From the Caucasus flow many (rivers) of excessive breadth and length, such as the Phasis." My translation. Cf. Lordkipanidze 1996, 102, 104 n. 157, and 2000, 21, with other Late Antique references following this view.

²⁵ Ap. Rhod. 2.397-401: ἀλλ' ἐνὶ νηὶ / (400) πείρεθ', ἕως μυχάτη κεν ἐνιχρίμψητε θαλάσση. / ἔνθα δ' ἐπ' ἠπειροῖο Κυταιίδος, ἧδ' Ἀμαραντῶν / τηλόθεν ἔξ ὄρεων πεδίοιο τε Κιρκαιοῖο / Φᾶσις δινήεις εὐρὺν ῥοὸν εἰς ἄλα βάλλει. Greek text by Mooney [1912] 1964 (cf. Perseus Collection); my translation; cf. Dräger 2002, 129. Fränkel [1961] 1964, 75 "corrects" δ' ἐπ' ἠπειροῖο Κυταιίδος to δ' ἀπ' ἠπειροῖο Κυταιίδος, but this would relocate the source of the Phasis from the Amarantian Mountains close to Kytaiis. Attractive, however, is the emendation by Vian 1987 (δι' ἠπειροῖο), which is followed by Gleit and Natzel-Gleit 1996, I: 178. Also see Ap. Rhod. 3.1220 for the mountain.

²⁶ Lordkipanidze (1996, 104 n. 157, and 2000, 21) further cites the Late Roman catalogue of geographical names, Vibius Sequester, whose *De fluminibus* seems

ing a “real” mountain: if we are permitted to etymologize the name as Greek, it translates literally as “Never-Fading,” thus alluding to the endless water supplies from any of the mountain ranges encompassing the Kolchian plain or to the imperishable green banks of the Phasis.²⁷ On the other hand, if we were to press the case and assume some direct or indirect topographical knowledge, the Main Caucasus would be the more obvious choice, since Kutaisi is situated just south of its foothills, and the river passing by, the Rheon/Rioni, came straight from the north. There may even have been an oral tradition locally, which escaped the attention of Greek scholars albeit,²⁸ including Apollonios, who does not seem to have been aware of any geographical implication.²⁹

to be drawing immediately on Apollonios without adding clarity though: he locates the Phasis in Kolchis and simply names the Amarantos as its source, without further specification. However, *Schol. Ap. Rhod.* (2.39) seems to be more specific, quoting the opinion of “some” who regard Amarantos as a Pontic city, while (allegedly) Ktesias (who lived around 400 B.C.) posits a Kolchian location for the mountain (thus also Dräger 2002, 463). This kind of knowledge appears to have been generated on the mere basis of the *Argonautika*. Lordkipanidze (1996, 244, n. 412, conflicting with p. 104, and 2000, 21) takes the mountain’s identity with the Main Caucasus for granted.

²⁷ The latter view is ascribed to a certain Hegesistratos of Ephesos in *Schol. Ap. Rhod.* 2.399 (ed. Wendel [1935] ³1974, 163); cf. Lordkipanidze 1996, 104 n. 157; also Janssens 1969, 32. A similar concept is implied in the river *Anthemous* “Blossoming,” which ran through *Aia/Dioskourias*; see Plin. *HN* 6.5.15. Interestingly, however, the scholiast rejects the etymologizing explanation, offering an even weaker instead: that Amarantos is the name of a *polis* “in Pontos,” which means somewhere in the Black-Sea region (certainly not the Mithradatic Kingdom of Pontos in Asia Minor). When he further locates the Amarantian Mountains in Kolchis, he (or his source Herodian) simply writes out Apollonios’ text, rather than drawing on any independent geographical knowledge.

²⁸ In a different context, Braund (1994, 28f.) narrates the myth of the Georgian warrior hero Amirani, who absorbed some elements of the figure of Prometheus and was closely connected to the Caucasus. I wonder if the name roots in an identification of (part of) the Main Caucasus with Apollonios’ Amarantos. This would imply the existence of a now-lost oral tradition in Kolchis, which is, however, hypothetical at this stage.

²⁹ See below, section 9 on *Ap. Rhod.* 4.131-135.

At any rate, neither Aristotle nor Apollonios influenced how the subsequent generations of Greek poets and scholars would picture the Phasian riverbed. It was the famous geographer Eratosthenes of Kyrene who attributed an Armenian source to it. He was the authority that Strabo drew on, and not only once. Lordkipanidze has shown with all clarity that Strabo applied the same spatial construction consistently.³⁰ But this did not prevent the Georgian scholar from stating in a later publication that “the Graeco-Roman authors had no clear idea about the source of the Phasis. This must have been due to their inadequate knowledge of the inner regions of Kolchis...”³¹ In a different chapter, the geographer of Amaseia lists the Phasis among the rivers of Armenia, besides the Lykos, both said to merge into the Black Sea; the Kyros and Araxes are mentioned as emptying into the Caspian Sea, whereas the estuaries of the Euphrates and Tigris are located in the Persian Gulf.³² Further in line with this is Strabo’s comment that the river was navigable until Sarapana/Shoropani, which is located some 40 km east of Geguti and Kutaisi.³³

His description only conflicts with the modern equation of the Phasis and the Rioni, but it is in accordance with Prokopios, who calls the river coming from the north and passing by Kotais/Kutaisi “Rheon,” appar-

³⁰ Lordkipanidze 1996, 101-105, also referencing *Schol. Ap. Rhod.* 2.399 (ed. Wendel [1935] ³1974, 163), which mentions Eratosthenes for the assumption of an Armenian source.

³¹ Lordkipanidze 2000, 22, regarding *Xen. An.* (see below) as the reason for Eratosthenes’ confusion.

³² Strab. 11.14.7 (529C). See below, section 5, for discussion.

³³ Strab. 11.2.17 (498C), also admitted by Lordkipanidze 1996, 247 (cf. 2000, 27) in his description of Sarapana. This is compatible with Plin. *HN* 6.4.13, according to whom the Phasis was navigable for 38.5 miles (until Sourion/Surium/Vani) for large ships and further for smaller vessels; cf. Liddle 2003, 100. Ps.-Skylax, *Asia* 81, however, says that one could sail upstream for 180 stades (ca. 36 km), but this is to locate the unnamed home town of Medeia (probably Aia, not yet Kytaion), rather than to limit the navigable course of the Phasis. I therefore hesitate (*pace* Dan 2016, 259, 261) to equate this information with the one provided by Strabo. I shall resume the discussion of the various Aiai elsewhere, see below, final n.

ently the early version of the modern name “Rioni.”³⁴ Hence, we should not follow the nomenclature of the *Barrington Atlas*, which equates the Rheon with the middle and upper Phasis for antiquity.³⁵ The conception of Eratosthenes and Strabo requires us to regard the Barimela River as the upper course of the Phasis: originating in the Lesser Caucasus (i.e. in northern Armenia), it first meanders north-east before merging with the Dzirula River (an eastern tributary) to yield the Kvirila River as of Sarapana/Shoropani.³⁶

4. PHASIAN “CONFUSION”

Regardless of the coherency of this picture, scholars have been prone to contextualize Strabo’s assertion of an Armenian root among other instances of Phasian “confusion.”³⁷ Affected are the Araxes (Turkish Aras), a tributary of the lower Kyros (Georgian Mtkvari), which, in turn, has its estuary in the Caspian Sea, the Lykos (normally identified with the modern Kelkit Çayı), which empties into the Iris (Yeşil Irmak), and the Boas or Akampsis (Tchorokhi in Georgian, Çoruh Nehri in Turkish). The latter merges into the Euxine at the Western foothills of the Lesser Caucasus, called the “Moschian Mountains” by Strabo.³⁸ A good example is the aforementioned Lordkipanidze. He admits that

³⁴ Cf. Lordkipanidze 1996, 253, without references. In his discussion of Kytai’s (1996, 244-246, see previous n.), he quotes Prokop. *Bell.* 8.14.6.47f., who attests the river’s name, referencing a now-lost work of Arrian; Lordkipanidze 1996, 246 n. 418 suggests a *Historia Alanica*.

³⁵ Pace Braund 1997/2000, *BA* 88 and *Directory*, pp. 1257, 1261.

³⁶ In his latest approach, Lordkipanidze (2000, 15, 19-23) addresses the Kvirila as the middle course of the Phasis, but renders the Dzirula as its upper course. This implies a source in the south-east of the Main Caucasus, thus outside of Armenia.

³⁷ E.g., Magie 1950, II: 1225, and Braund 1994, 158. And see below.

³⁸ See Strab. 11.2.1 (492C); 11.2.15 (497C); Plin. *HN* 6.10.28: *per convalles autem proximi Armeniae sunt Menobardi et Moscheni*; 6.10.29: *ultra sunt Colchicae solitudines, quarum a latere ad Ceraunios verso Armenochalybes habitant et Moschorum tractus ad Hiberum amnem in Cyrum defluentem et infra eos Sacasani et deinde Macerones ad flumen Absarrum* (ed. Rackham 1961); cf. König and Winkler 1996. Cf. Herrmann 1933, 351; Lordkipanidze 1996, 256-259; Roller 2018, 639, 642. On the Boas/Akampsis, see below, section 8.

Strabo seems to be identifying the Phasis with the Rioni in most cases, but then provides cumulative evidence for exceptions:

An einer Stelle (XI, 14, 7) wird dieser Fluß zusammen mit dem Lykos (der heutige Fluß Kelkit-Çai in der Türkei) sowie jenen anderen Flüssen genannt, die in Armenien fließen (Kura und Araxes, Euphrat und Tigris ...). Daraus kann man schließen, daß hier mit dem Namen Phasis ein anderer Fluß bezeichnet wird, vielleicht auch der Tschorochi ... Der in Abschnitt XI, 2, 17 enthaltene Satz: Phasis, ein ... in Armenien entspringender Fluß ... ist ein zusätzlicher Beweis dafür, daß Strabon auch den Fluß Schorochi mit dem Namen Phasis bezeichnet (gleich den anderen griechischen Autoren, die mit diesem Namen sowohl den Rioni als auch den Araxes bezeichnet haben).³⁹

Lordkipanidze may have a potential case here as well, but the Phasis' mere association with other larger rivers in the region does not yet count for much in itself. Strabo clearly distinguishes the Phasis as a river merging into the Black Sea from the Araxes emptying into the Caspian. All the more relevant is therefore the evidence produced in the footnote, where Lordkipanidze discusses two other ancient authorities: Herodotos in the third quarter of the 5th century and Xenophon in the first third of the 4th century B.C.⁴⁰ More recently, Anca Dan has tried to reinforce the view that multiple confusion of riverbeds or names provide the best explanation for a seeming "Armenian" origin of the Phasis.⁴¹ Besides Xenophon for the Araxes, she refers to Claudius Ptolemy (2nd century A.D.) for the Lykos, Prokopios (6th century A.D.) for the Akampsis and Apollonios of Rhodes for an artful conflation of them all. It is worthwhile trying to disentangle this Phasian confusion by differentiating between homonymy, vicinity, imaginative construction and outright confusion, whether ancient or modern.

5. PHASIS AND ARAXES IN HERODOTOS

Somewhat surprisingly, Lordkipanidze concedes that both Herodotos and Xenophon actually denote the Rioni as Phasis in most instances, but

³⁹ Lordkipanidze 1996, 253; cf. 100f.

⁴⁰ Lordkipanidze 1996, 253, n. 425.

⁴¹ Dan 2016, esp. 259f.

claims only a single discrepancy in each case.⁴² For Herodotos, he references a section that mentions an alliance between the Scythians and the Spartans after Darius' failed Scythian campaign:

The nomadic Scythians, after Darius had invaded their land, were eager for revenge, so they sent to Sparta and made an alliance. They agreed that the Scythians would attempt to invade Media by way of the Phasis River, and they urged the Spartans to set out and march inland from Ephesos and meet the Scythians.⁴³

Lordkipanidze (cautiously) suggests that, in this instance, with Phasis "könnte auch der Araxes gemeint sein."⁴⁴ I am hesitant to follow, since Herodotos seems to be describing a route from the northern Black Sea littoral through the Kolchian plain (i.e. initially the riverbed of the Phasis) towards Media, most likely passing by Sarapanis to reach and then cross the Iberian mountains into the Kyros (Mtkvari) Valley. This is, by the way, the same route that the Father of History has described earlier in a different context, as the Georgian scholar has recognized in a later publication:⁴⁵

It is a thirty days' journey for an unencumbered man from the Maïotian Lake to the Phasis River and the land of the Kolchoi; from the Kolchoi, it is an easy matter to cross into Media: there is only one nation between, the Saspeireis; to pass these is to be in Media.⁴⁶

⁴² Lordkipanidze 1996, 253, n. 425.

⁴³ Hdt. 6.84.2: Σκύθας γὰρ τοὺς νομάδας, ἐπέιτε σφι Δαρεῖον ἐμβαλεῖν ἐς τὴν χώραν, μετὰ ταῦτα μεμονόνα μιν τίσασθαι, πέμψαντας δὲ ἐς Σπάρτην συμμαχίην τε ποιέεσθαι καὶ συντίθεσθαι ὡς χρεὸν εἶη αὐτοὺς μὲν τοὺς Σκύθας παρὰ Φᾶσιν ποταμὸν πειρᾶν ἐς τὴν Μηδικὴν ἐσβάλλειν, σφέας δὲ τοὺς Σπαρτιήτας κελεύειν ἐξ Ἐφέσου ὀρμωμένους ἀναβαίνειν καὶ ἔπειτα ἐς τῶντὸ ἀπαντᾶν. Greek text and translation adapted from Godley 1920.

⁴⁴ Lordkipanidze 1996, 253, n. 425.

⁴⁵ Lordkipanidze 2000, 18.

⁴⁶ Hdt. 1.104.1: ἔστι δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς λίμνης τῆς Μαυήτιδος ἐπὶ Φᾶσιν ποταμὸν καὶ ἐς Κόλχους τριήκοντα ἡμερῶν εὐζώνῳ ὁδός, ἐκ δὲ τῆς Κολχίδος οὐ πολλὸν ὑπερβῆναι ἐς τὴν Μηδικήν, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ διὰ μέσου ἔθνος αὐτῶν ἔστι, Σάσπειρες, τοῦτο δὲ παραμειβομένοισι εἶναι ἐν τῇ Μηδικῇ. Text and transla-

George Mooney, a commentator of the *Argonautika* by Apollonios of Rhodes, is also convinced that the Phasis and Araxes got frequently confused. The example he provides is a reference to another section in Herodotos, where the course of the Araxes is described. The mention of Lesbos might in fact evoke associations with Jason's miraculous return to the Aegean. But Herodotos does no more than compare islands surrounded by the Araxes with the size of Lesbos. And after specifying that one arm of the Araxes Delta empties into the Caspian Sea (through a "channel," i.e. the lower Kyros), he further points out that there was no connection with the Ocean, such as there was for the Red Sea.⁴⁷

6. PHASIS-ARAXES IN XENOPHON

Lordkipanidze and Dan also refer to a Phasis River which Xenophon encountered when marching the 10,000 mercenaries through the Armenian Mountains to the Black Sea in 401 B.C.⁴⁸ The Georgian scholar is convinced that here "wird eindeutig der Fluß Araxes Phasis genannt, und zwar seine Quelle."⁴⁹ The equation of the Araxes follows a widespread view, which is accepted by most (albeit not all) commentators of

tion adapted from Godley 1920. For further details on this route, see Bryer and Winfield 1985, 58.

⁴⁷ Hdt. 1.202.1, 4. Cf. Mooney [1912] 1964, 309, commenting on Ap. Rhod. 1.133.

⁴⁸ Xen. *An.* 4.6.4: μετὰ τοῦτο ἐπορεύθησαν ἑπτὰ σταθμοὺς ἀνὰ πέντε παρασάγγας τῆς ἡμέρας παρὰ τὸν Φᾶσιν ποταμὸν, εὐρος πλεθρῶναιον. "After this they marched seven stages at the rate of five parasangs a day to the Phasis River, which was a plethrum (ca. 30 m) in width." Greek text by Marchant 1904, translation adapted from Brownson 1922. Note, however, that Brownson's preposition "to" is grammatically incorrect and misconstrues the itinerary, which rather followed "along" the Phasis for seven days (cf. also Breitenbach 1967, 1608 and Masqueray 1961, 33). This is the normal meaning of ἐπορεύθησαν ... παρὰ τὸν ... ποταμὸν. Contrast this with the arrival at the Euphrates and its crossing in *Anab.* 4.5.2: ἐπορεύθησαν ... ἐπὶ τὸν Εὐφράτην ποταμὸν, καὶ διέβαινον αὐτὸν.

⁴⁹ Lordkipanidze 1996, 253, n. 425, with reference to Xen. *An.* 4.6.4. Is it a slip or change of mind that Lordkipanidze (2000, 13, 16) lists this source among those relating to the Kolchian Phasis? His discussion on pp. 18f. is inconclusive, but tends to acknowledge that it was the Araxes, even if Xenophon may not have recognized it as such.

the *Anabasis*.⁵⁰ Although many questions concerning the itinerary are still open,⁵¹ Xenophon is likely to denote a stretch of the upper Araxes as Phasis in Book 4. But only when he mentions Phasis (certainly the city, not the river) as a potential destination for a colonial settlement of the 10,000 in Book 5 does he explicitly locate it in Kolchis. It is in this latter context that he may be seen as alluding to an Argonautic connection by calling the king of his time a “grandson” of Aïetes.⁵²

⁵⁰ E.g., Diehl 1938, 1585, contradicting Herrmann (1938), who relates this passage to the Phasis in Kolchis; Magie 1950, II (map); Lendle 1995, 247-250; Dan 2014, 167f.; 2016, 257, 272. There is no reference to Xenophon’s Phasis in Braund and Sinclair 1997/2000. Also see next n.

⁵¹ See, on the one hand, Breitenbach 1967, 1579-1638 for a very cautious delineation of the itinerary, mentioning the Phasis in col. 1604 without comment or identification, and Lendle 1995 for a meticulous reconstruction of the itinerary, supported by several maps. Cf. Dan 2014, 164, who maps various reconstructions of Xenophon’s itinerary, all including a section along the Araxes. Surprisingly, however, Lendle does not discuss the meaning of the *parasanga* nor does he try to account for the river names. It is likely that professional step counters (*bematistai*) were employed (see Tuplin 1997; cf. Dan 2014, 184), but they may not have been available for all sections of the march, or some of the according information may have been lost. Rood (2010; cf. Dan 2014, 164, 191) even suggests a high degree of manipulation for the sake of literary or rhetorical effects. Without denying the subjectivity of the author’s perception and the selection and shaping of his information according to his multiple purposes, I am hesitant to accept that this involved arbitrary tweaking or fabrication of numbers. At any rate, too many questions remain open, so that the route of the 10,000 cannot be traced with certainty. Also see nn. 48, 52, 55, 71.

⁵² Xen. *An.* 5.6.36f.: ... δοκοίη κράτιστον εἶναι πλεῖν εἰς Φᾶσιν, ἐπεὶ πλοῖα ἔστι, καὶ κατασχεῖν τὴν Φασιανῶν χώραν. / Αἰήτου δὲ ὕδους ἐτύγχανε βασιλεύων αὐτῶν. “... thought it was best to sail to the Phasis, inasmuch as there were ships at hand, and seize the land of the Phasians. / Their king, as it chanced, was a grandson of Aïetes.” Greek text by Marchant 1904, translation adapted from Brownson 1922. Perhaps this Aïetes was a contemporary of Perikles in the 430s B.C., see Braund 2005, 86f., 90. Also see Xen. *An.* 5.7.1: καὶ ὁ Νέων λέγει ὡς Ξενοφῶν ἀναπεπεικῶς τοὺς ἄλλους στρατηγούς διανοεῖται ἄγειν τοὺς στρατιώτας ἔξαπατήσας πάλιν εἰς Φᾶσιν. Brownson translates: “And Neon said that Xenophon had won over the other generals and was intending to de-

Xenophon thus seems to be able to tell the Kolchian and Armenian Phasis apart, despite their homonymy. Further noteworthy is the fact that the next source to attest the equation Araxes/Phasis is Constantine Porphyrogennetos in the 10th century A.D.⁵³ The Byzantine emperor also mentions the modern town of Pasinler (Hasankale), located between Erzurum (Theodosiopolis) and the bend of the upper Aras. This seems to be further confirmation for the view that the onomastic tradition was local,⁵⁴ and that Xenophon's account largely depended on written notes composed during the campaign and informed by guides from the ar-

ceive the soldiers and lead them back to the Phasis." Lendle (1995, 349-351) takes for granted that this relates to the Kolchian Phasis and does not discuss any potential connection with the Araxes. Masqueray (1961, 77) rather understands that *πάλιν* expresses a contrast ("loin de la Grèce"), but admits a deliberate ambiguity in n. 1 (77f.): "Néon s'exprime de telle façon qu'on peut aussi bien comprendre, – à cause du double sens de *πάλιν*, retro, rursus, – que Xénophon veut ramener les Grecs en arrière, que les conduire une seconde fois vers le Phase d'Argonautes, qu'il confondrait, lui aussi, avec l'Araxès." But this is not what Xenophon had in mind. The backward movement is to be understood from the 10,000's perspective: they had just marched from Trapezus to Kotyora (5.3-5), a distance of nearly 300 km, as the crow flies. It was there that some generals put forward the plan to sail to Phasis (5.6.36f.), which would be to the north-east (rather than marching south-east to the Araxes). Xenophon tries to make it clear that he could barely deceive soldiers expecting to sail west towards Greece by taking them "backwards" (5.7.5-10). In addition, the lack of the article reveals that Xenophon is talking about Phasis City, not the Phasis River: there is hence even less potential for a misunderstanding or confusion.

⁵³ Constant. Porphy. *De Administrando Imperio* 45 for the explicit equation of the Erax (Araxes, Aras) with the Phasis, close to the place (*topos*) and territory (*chora*) of *Phasiane* (now Pasinler, formerly also Hasankale, east of Theodosiopolis/Erzurum), which was repeatedly devastated by the Romans when occupied by the Saracenes; the emperor finally took direct possession of the territory west of the Phasis and confirmed Iberian possession of the lands east of it.

⁵⁴ Thus, e.g., Kießling 1912, 2086; Bryer and Winfield 1985, 57, mentioning the Byzantine form *Phasianes*, without reference; Kroll, Roaf, Simpson, and Sinclair 2000, BA 89 and *Directory* p. 1277; Dan 2016, 257. See Const. Porphy. *De Administrando Imperio* 45 for *Phasianoi*.

ea.⁵⁵ We have thus no reason to assume that Xenophon confused the two homonymous rivers. As far as I see, not a single author within our ancient literary tradition can be shown to have conflated the Kolchian Phasis and the Araxes because of Xenophon's *Anabasis*.⁵⁶

7. LYKOS, GLAUKOS AND APSORROS (APSAROS)

In his aforementioned chapter on Armenia, Strabo lists the six most important rivers of the Armenian Mountains: the Phasis and Lykos, both said to merge into the Black Sea, the Kyros and Araxes, which empty into the Caspian Sea (after uniting into one), as well as the Euphrates and Tigris, which have their estuary in the Persian Gulf.⁵⁷ Scholars have taken issue with this catalogue not only because of the Phasis. The Lykos, if identified with the modern Kelkit Çayı (as is usual), runs parallel to the West-Pontic Mountain Range (Paryadres), to merge into the Iris (Yeşil Irmak); accordingly, it empties into the Black Sea (east of Amisos/Samsun) only indirectly.⁵⁸ The list is all the more of interest,

⁵⁵ Xenophon's sources are admittedly contested. Stylianou (2004) suggests the use of literary (geographical) accounts to have informed the composition of the *Anabasis*. Fowler (2012, 61) disagrees, but goes as far as to deny even the use of diaries or memoirs written by Xenophon himself or other participants during or shortly after the campaign. Rood (2010, 52, 61-64) remains undecided, whereas Rood (2011) suggests that Xenophon manipulated distances for rhetorical purposes (but see above, n. 51). Dan 2014, 190 considers that some of the metrical data could have been inserted later by a different hand. I think that some of the inconsistencies, especially the varied measuring by stades, parasangs or days, reflect the written reports Xenophon closely followed and that these largely drew on the various local guides or bematists in the first place.

⁵⁶ This is probably not even the case for Strab. 11.14.13 (531C): although he connects Jason with the Araxes, he does so for the (assumed) homonymy with the Thessalian river Peneios/Araxes (?). Jason is said to have dug a channel to let the water flow off from the flooded plains and empty into the Caspian Sea. Strabo does not name any authority to justify the equation Peneios/Araxes, and may be simply confused here, and desperate for any other link between Jason and Armenia; see Strab. 11.14.12 (530C); Roller 2018, 681f.

⁵⁷ Strab. 11.14.7 (529C).

⁵⁸ Strab. 12.3.15 (547C), though with some confusion (see next n.); Plin. *HN* 6.3.8-10; Plut. *Luc.* 15. Cf. Dan 2016, 258, with further references.

since Strabo specifies Eratosthenes as his source, if only to criticize him for confusing the Lykos with the Thermodon (modern Terme). The latter merges into the Black Sea at Themiskyra/Terne, between the Iris (to the west) and the city of Kotyora/Ordu (to the east).⁵⁹ Though much smaller than the Lykos or Iris, the Thermodon was also famous in Greek mytho-history, because the Amazons were believed to have lived at its banks, and Themiskyra was duly visited by the Argonauts.⁶⁰

At any rate, can it be that Strabo identifies the “Armenian” Lykos with the Kelkit? Armenia was a very flexible toponym and could – probably as a result of Achaemenid and Mithradatic administrative terminology – be extended west as far as the Iris or even Halys (Kızılırmak).⁶¹ While Strabo normally confines the sphere of Armenia proper to the east of the Euphrates, he concedes an additional stretch north-west of the upper Euphrates under the name *Armenia Mikra/Armenia Minor*. This lies opposite the mountain ranges that run parallel to the coast, and is divided from them by the Akampsis/Çoruh (Skydises Mountain) and Lykos/Kelkit (Paryadres Mountain).⁶² Strabo’s terminology varies, but

⁵⁹ Eratosth. F119 = Strab. 11.14.7 (529C). Lordkipanidze (1996, 101) concludes that this renders the identity of Phasis uncertain. Dan (2016, 260) assumes a “strong mythical reason” for Eratosthenes (also see below, next n.), though I cannot follow her suggestion for the conception of a Thermodon/Araxes River. Dan (2015) is interested in geographical questions relating the Thermodon in Greece, which is still relevant for all mythical connotations attached to the “Amazonian” river. Roller (2018, 680) mislocates the mouth of the Thermodon to Herakleia Pontike/Ereğli, whereas his comment on Strab. 12.3.15 (547C) (p. 702f.) does not draw any connection to Strab. 11.14.7 (529C), and thus fails to notice that Strabo here accepts Eratosthenes’ version, letting the Iris merge into the Black Sea at Themiskyra.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Strab. 11.5.1-4 (503-505C), 12.3.15 (547C); Plin. *HN* 6.3.10; Prokop. *Bell.* 8.2.1.2. Cf. Dan 2015, 278f.; Roller 2018, 648-650; also Mayor 2014, 162f., 272, 284f.

⁶¹ See Ballesteros Pastor 2012 and 2016, though with some modification by Coşkun 2016, 851f. and forthcoming c.

⁶² Strab. 12.3.18 (548C) mentions the Skydises (an extension of the Moschian Mountains) and Paryadres as lying opposite Armenia Minor; in 11.12.4 (521C), he calls the nearby mountains Paryadres and Moschian. The upper Euphrates before its turn to the south is the other boundary of Armenia Minor and Arme-

for the areas north of the rivers he either uses the aforesaid oronyms or more specific ethnics such as that of the Tibarenoi and Heptakometai, unless he classifies them more broadly as *Pontic Kappadokia* or variations thereof.⁶³ By this account, both the Kelkit and the Çoruh, together with their sources and tributaries, might have been catalogued as (Micro-) Armenian or Pontic (-Kappadokian). Be this as it may, when Strabo explicitly addresses the Lykos as the tributary of the Iris in his description of the hinterland of Themiskyra, he classifies it as Armenian.⁶⁴

But we should not yet jump to a quick conclusion. The assumption that the Lykos directly merged into the Black Sea remains problematic.

nia according to Strab. 11.12.3 (521C). Similarly, Paryadres, Skydises, the Euphrates, Lesser Armenia and Armenia (as well as Kappadokia and Kommagene further to the south) are mentioned in Strab. 11.14.1 (527C). More specific is Plin. *HN* 6.3.9: *a Neocaesarea supra dicta Minorem Armeniam Lycus amnis disternit* (ed. Rackham 1961); cf. König and Winkler 1996 (with p. 162).

⁶³ Strab. 12.1.1 (533C) emphasizes that the extent of Kappadokia changed over time; the description that follows immediately includes the east-Pontic coast. A bit further down, in 12.1.3 (534C) he includes everything “within the Halys” into Kappadokia, before differentiating as follows in 12.1.4 (534C): *περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν ἄλλων ἐροῦμεν ὕστερον. τὴν δὲ Καππαδοκίαν εἰς δύο σατραπείας μερισθεῖσαν ὑπὸ τῶν Περσῶν παραλαβόντες Μακεδόνες περιεῖδον τὰ μὲν ἐκόντες τὰ δ’ ἄκοντες εἰς βασιλείας ἀντὶ σατραπειῶν περιστάσαν: ὡν τὴν μὲν ἰδίως Καππαδοκίαν ὠνόμασαν καὶ πρὸς τῷ Ταύρω καὶ νῆ Δία μεγάλην Καππαδοκίαν, τὴν δὲ Πόντον, οἱ δὲ τὴν πρὸς τῷ Πόντῳ Καππαδοκίαν.* “The Macedonians obtained possession of Kappadokia after it had been divided by the Persians into two satrapies, and permitted, partly with and partly without the consent of the people, the satrapies to be altered to two kingdoms, one of which they called Kappadokia proper, Kappadokia near the Tauros, or Great Kappadokia; the other they called Pontos, but according to other writers, Kappadokia on the Pontos.” Greek text by Meineke 1877; translation adapted from Hamilton and Falconer 1903-1906. Cf. Roller 2018, 685f. for various comments, though without discussion of the overlapping terminology. Further see Strab. 12.2.1-11 (535-540C) on Great Kappadokia, 12.3.1-12 (540-546C) on Paphlagonian Pontos and 12.3.13-42 (546-563C) on Kappadokian Pontos east of the Halys/Kızılırmak. Cf. the later bipartition under Roman provincial rule, according to which the Pontus Polemoniacus formed part of the Provincia Cappadoci(c)a: Ptol. *Geog.* 6.10f.

⁶⁴ Strab. 12.3.15 (547C).

In addition, it is noteworthy that Strabo nowhere mentions the Akampsis/Çoruh or the Apsaros/Acharistskali, which shares its lower course with the Akampsis, to merge into the Black Sea north of the fortress of Apsaros. The latter gradually developed into the homonymous city (now Gonio), just south of modern Batumi. I thus wonder if Strabo or more likely Eratosthenes, on whom he is depending here, would not rather regard the Akampsis/Çoruh as *Lykos*.

Claudius Ptolemy is pointing into the same direction. He begins his catalogue of the cities and rivers of the Roman province of Kappadokia with a list of names referring to the Pontic littoral, beginning with Ankon, a city of the Leukosyroi, and the estuary of the Iris in the west before moving eastwards along the coast. Towards the end figures (the fortress or town) *Apsorros*, misspelt for *Apsaros*, and the mouth of the *Apsorros* River. Before ending with Sebastopolis, a fortress that Ptolemy locates just north of the estuary,⁶⁵ he provides some more detailed information on the *Apsorros* River, namely that it is split up into (or rather has as its two main tributaries) the *Glaukos* and the *Lykos*. He even adds the coordinates for their sources (72° 45'/43° and 71° 15'/43° respectively). It has been taken for granted that Ptolemy is here confusing the *Lykos*/Kelkit with the *Akampsis*.⁶⁶ For Dan, Ptolemy's entry betrays an even more complex conflation of a Phasis-Apsaros-Lykos-Iris, which would thus have had two Black-Sea estuaries. The name *Glaukos* seems to give further support to this reconstruction, since it is one of the attested tributaries of the Kolchian Phasis. The *Glaukos* of Ptolemy is, however, unanimously identified with the Oltu Çayı, which springs in the Kargapazarlı Mountains north of Erzurum and merges into the

⁶⁵ Perhaps Batumistsikhe or Tsikhisdziri, see Coşkun, forthcoming a. König and Winkler 1996, 161 as well as Stückelberger and Graßhoff 2006, II: 516f. with n. 99 confuse it with Sebastopolis/Karana/Sulusaray in the Tokat Province, Turkey. Braund 1994 as well as Braund and Sinclair 2000, BA 87 ignore it.

⁶⁶ Ptol. *Geog.* 5.6.7. See, e.g., Stückelberger and Graßhoff 2006, II: 517. This *Lykos* has not been accounted for by Braund and Sinclair 2000, BA 87. Also see below, nn. 68f. for the omissions in *RE*.

Çoruh near Yusufeli.⁶⁷ In other words, there may have been a tradition which rendered the Akampsis as a backward-extension of the Lykos.

But caution is in place, not least because Ptolemy is the only witness for an arm of the Apsaros or Akampsis called *Glaukos*.⁶⁸ Moreover, the latter was a popular hydronym, as was *Lykos*,⁶⁹ and both occur repeatedly – and flexibly – in Argonautic (and Amazonian) landscapes along the southern and eastern coasts of the Euxine, just as Hippos and Kyaneos.⁷⁰ If we further consider Ptolemy's coordinates (they are conveniently mapped out by Alfred Stückelberger and Gerd Graßhoff), it is much more likely that Ptolemy identified the Glaukos with the Apsaros/Acharistkali, which has its sources in the north-western part of the Lesser Caucasus, rather than the Oltu Çayı. If so, then his Lykos, whose source Ptolemy locates south of Rhizous/Rhizaion/Rize, becomes the upper and middle course of the Akampsis/Çoruh.

⁶⁷ Thus also Bürchner and Ruge 1910, 1408 (Glaukos 5); Bryer and Winfield 1985, 58; Braund and Sinclair 2000, BA 87, with *Directory*, p. 1232; Stückelberger and Graßhoff 2006, II: 517; Dan 2016, 260.

⁶⁸ Bürchner and Ruge 1910, 1407f. list seven different rivers called *Glaukoi*, not yet included the tributary of the Kolchian Phasis, on which see Strab. 11.2.17 (498C, as below) and Plin. *HN* 6.4.13. Also see below, section 12, for further references.

⁶⁹ Bürchner et al. 1927 list 14 *Lykoi* Rivers, without taking Ptol. *Geog.* 5.6.7 into account. Also see below, sections 11-12.

⁷⁰ E.g., Plin. *HN* 6.4.13: *maxime autem inclaruit Aea, XV (milia passuum) a mari, ubi Hippos et Cyaneos vasti amnes e diverso in eum (sc. Phasim) confluant.* "The most famous was Aia, 15 miles from the sea, where two very large tributaries join (the Phasis) from opposite directions, the Hippos and the Kyaneos." (Latin text and translation [adapted] from Rackham 1961; cf. König and Winkler 1996); Ptol. *Geog.* 5.10.2; Steph. Byz. s.v. *Aia* (A 86). On the Hippos and Kyaneos Rivers, also see Kießling 1913 (cf. Honigmann 1922) and below, section 12. I suggest adding to the list of Hippoi the Hyp(p)ios in Bithynia, as attested by Arr. *PPE* 13.2 and in *Tab. Peut.* A fuller understanding of the Kyaneai Rivers can only be gained by also considering the Kyaneai/Symplegades normally identified with the Thracian Bosporos, see Ap. Rhod. 1.3; Strab. 1.2.10 (21C); cf. Ruge 1922, 2236; Gantz 1993, 356-358; Roller 2018, 80f. That the Glaukos and the Kyaneos were rivers of the mythical landscape is also understood by König and Winkler 1996, 18, 166f.

Hence, Ptolemy does not endorse the view that the Lykos or the Akampsis were ever confused with the Kolchian (or Armenian) Phasis, nor does his testimony confirm the vision of a Lykos-Akampsis or Lykos-Phasis with two Black Sea estuaries. All of this melts down to a modern misconception. The accounts of Strabo and Ptolemy rather lend mutual support to my suggestion that there was one ancient tradition which named the Akampsis *Lykos*. As we shall see below, Apollonios of Rhodes reflects the same tradition. Beforehand, some further questions relating to the Akampsis need to be addressed.

8. THE BOAS/PHASIS IN PROKOPIOS' WARS

It is largely believed that the Akampsis is called *Harpasos* by Xenophon (4th century B.C.). I have my reservations against this equation, but they need not be unfolded here, since the name was never repeated in our ancient evidence, nor has its description affected other extant representations of the Akampsis (or Phasis).⁷¹

More important is the testimony that the 6th-century-A.D. historiographer Prokopios of Gaza provides. In the first two books of his *Wars of Justinian*, he states explicitly that the upper course of the Phasis was called *Boas*, and indeed construes a Boas/Phasis. For the river's source, he claims the area around Pharangion (probably near Ispir on the Çoruh) in the border zone between the Roman subjects of the Tzani and Persarmenia, although it is more than a hundred km too far east, but still several hundred km too far west from any potential Armenian source of the Phasis.⁷² After mentioning Pharangion, Prokopios becomes vague. He sur-

⁷¹ Xen. *An.* 4.7.18. For its equation with the Boas/Akampsis, see, e.g., Baumgartner 1912, quoting Xenophon for its qualification of "vier Plethren breit;" Kießling 1912, 2086; Janssen and Cobet 1944 (map); Masqueray 1961, 180f., 203; Janssens 1969, 36; Lendle 1995, 270-272; cf. Plontke-Lüning 2004. Mather and Hewitt (1962, map and p. 420) remain uncommitted. For more on Xenophon's itinerary, see above, n. 51.

⁷² Prokop. *Bell.* 2.29.3.14; see Braund and Sinclair 2000, BA 87 as well as Dewing and Kaldellis 2014, xxiv (map) on Pharangion; also Prokop. *Bell.* 1.15.3.18-1.15.4.27. A location closer to the sources of the Akampsis, e.g., in the plain of Bayburt (Sinclair 1989, 275) is incompatible with Prokopios' description. Also avoid confusion with the Phanaroia, the plain in which the Lykos/Kelkit merges into the Iris/Yeşil Irmak: Strab. 12.3.14 (547C).

mises a far turn to the right after a three-day march, in order to pick up the river again close to Iberian territory opposite the end of the Caucasus. Receiving further tributaries finally renders the river navigable, and hence the Boas is called Phasis.⁷³ The latter part of the description clearly points to Sarapana; the “opposite” mountain thus appears to be the Main Caucasus here. Less clear is where the imagined link between the Boas/Akamopsis and Boas/Phasis should be located: I leave it open whether Prokopios was thinking of the abovementioned Oltu Çayı or the Berta Suyu, which empties into the Çoruh further north-west at Artvin. Most likely, however, the Byzantine historiographer did not have any clear understanding of this (imaginary) part of the river course. Later on, in his Book 8, Prokopios explicitly tells us that the upper course of the *Akamopsis* was called *Boas*, which seems to find support in its Armenian name “Voh.”⁷⁴ Based on this, Dan suggests:

Or, if, for Procopius, the Phasis-Rioni became navigable at the level of the fortress of Sarapanis ... and if he supposed any link between the Boas-Phasis and the Boas-Akamopsis (which, in this case, would be the same river and not only an homonym), then this connection should correspond to an imaginary water channel, in fact one of the passes of the Southern Caucasus. ... Accordingly, for Procopius, it would not have been impossible to imagine a Boas river, as a segment of the Phasis, which would have linked not only the

⁷³ Prokop. *Bell.* 2.29.3.14, 16: “The river Boas rises close to the boundary of the Tzanoi by the Armenians who dwell around Pharangion. Its course inclines at first to the right for a long distance; its stream is small and can be forded by anyone with no trouble as far as the place where the boundaries of the Iberians lie on the right, and the Caucasus ends directly opposite. ... But when this river reaches the limits of the Caucasus and of Iberia as well, there other waters are added to it and it becomes much larger and from there flows on bearing the name of **Phasis** instead of **Boas**; it becomes a navigable stream as far as the Black Sea into which it empties; and on either side of it there lies Lazike.” Trans. Dewing and Kaldellis 2014.

⁷⁴ Prokop. *Bell.* 8.2.1.5-9 and Dan 2016, 258, who, however, confuses the Apsaros (“southernmost”) and the Akamopsis on p. 259.

Çoruh and the Rioni, but also the Kyros-Mtkvari (and, implicitly, its tributary Araxes/Aras).⁷⁵

Admitting to a serious confusion by Prokopios here, I think that the error can be narrowed down. The evidence seems to imply to me that he had a relatively thorough understanding of the Phasis, but, while writing Books 1 and 2, did not yet know of the Akampsis and thus conflated his limited information on the Boas with that on the Phasis, or rather conceptualized the Boas as a backwards extension of the Phasis. Occasionally, this also distorted his narrative on the Persian-Roman War, as far as its campaigns took place in Kolchis. Most affected are the sections that involve the fortress of Petra (Pia Iustiniana), which Prokopios knew stood close to a river estuary. Some passages convey the impression that Petra is located close to the Akampsis, which has induced most scholars to identify it with the ruins near Tsikhisdziri. But a reevaluation of the complete evidence strongly speaks in favour of a location just south of the Phasis mouth.⁷⁶

At any rate, when Prokopios later worked on Book 8, he implicitly corrected himself by equating the Boas with the Akampsis, without further specifying its relation to the Phasis. They appear as two distinct rivers, as we shall see in the next section. I thus wonder whether any of the upper tributaries, such as the Barimela, was really a namesake of the Boas/Akampsis. While this is possible in theory, the fact that the Boas/Akampsis and the Phasis were known to have Armenian sources and further to empty into the Black Sea as huge navigable rivers might have sufficed to induce Prokopios' error.

9. AKAMPSIS AND PHASIS IN THE WORKS OF PROKOPIOS, PLINY AND PTOLEMY
Much clearer and straightforward are the references to the rivers in Prokopios' Book 8: the Boas has its origin among the Tzani (who lived in the Eastern Pontic Mountains) and merges into the Black Sea under the name *Akampsis* after having come very close to the Lazian territory.

⁷⁵ Dan 2016, 259, referencing Prokop. "*Wars* 2. 29. 14, 16; cf. 1. 15. 21, 2. 30. 36-37, 8. 2. 2-9."

⁷⁶ Prokop. *Bell.* 2.15.2.9-13; 2.17.1.1-2.17.2.13; 2.17.2.18; 2.17.3.19-28; 2.19.6.47f.; 2.29.1.1; 2.29.3.19, 21, 23-25; 2.29.4.27; 8.2.2.29; 8.2.4.21, 29. See Coşkun, forthcoming a.

Later on, he locates the Phasis far-east from Pseudo-Kolchis (around Trapezus).⁷⁷ Another section is admittedly somewhat opaque, but still resists the equation suggested by Dan:⁷⁸ first, Prokopios speaks of the Meschians (sc. Moschoi) as mountain dwellers and neighbours of the Lazoi and Iberians as well as subjects of the latter (§ 24f.); the high mountains adjacent to them are called “Caucasian,” whereby Iberia and Persarmenia are located “behind them towards the east” (§ 26). Next the Phasis is mentioned as flowing “through these mountains, having its spring in the Caucasus” and emptying into the Black Sea where its coast recedes the farthest to the east (§ 26, also § 32). The latter detail is not entirely accurate, but would be just as inadequate for the Akampsis. Modern maps rather tell us that the much smaller Isis/Natanebi or Akinases/Kintrishi in-between the Phasis and the Akampsis have their estuaries in the easternmost “ditch” of the Black Sea.⁷⁹ At any rate, Prokopios’ Caucasus apparently includes the Lesser Caucasus,⁸⁰ and thus aligns with Strabo’s attribution of an Armenian source to the Phasis.

Prokopios’ description becomes even clearer when compared with Pliny the Elder and Claudius Ptolemy. Pliny still seems to be following the onomastic tradition underlying Strabo’s account. He claims the eth-

⁷⁷ Prokop. *Bell.* 8.2.1.5-9. On Pseudo-Kolchis, see 8.2.3.15; cf. Xen. *An.* 4.8.22: ἐντεῦθεν δ’ ἐπορεύθησαν δύο σταθμοὺς παρασάγγας ἑπτὰ, καὶ ἦλθον ἐπὶ θάλατταν εἰς Τραπεζοῦντα πόλιν Ἑλληνίδα οἰκουμένην ἐν τῷ Εὐξεινῷ Πόντῳ, Σιναπέων ἀποικίαν, ἐν τῇ Κόλχων χώρα. Also see the slight variation in Arr. *PPE* 11.1: Τραπεζοῦντιοὺς μὲν, καθάπερ καὶ Ξενοφῶν λέγει, Κόλχοι ὄμοροι; cf. 7.1. For further ancient sources and scholarly discussion, see Braund 1994, 132-135; Silberman 1995, 9 n. 75; Lordkipanidze 1996, 71-76; Tsetskhladze 1998, 107. The extent of the problem has in fact been underestimated: it is connected with a confused cartographical tradition of Trapezus, see Podossin 2012, 205f. and Coşkun, forthcoming e.

⁷⁸ Prokop. *Bell.* 8.2.4.24-33.

⁷⁹ On the rivers, see esp. Ps.-Skylax, *Asia* 81; Plin. *HN* 6.4.12; Arr. *PPE* 7.5; cf. Braund and Sinclair 2000, *BA* 87; also Coşkun, forthcoming b. On Dioskourias, see below, section 12.

⁸⁰ This also becomes clear in Prokop. *Bell.* 1.15.3.18-1.15.4.27 (location of Pharrangion near the Phasis, mistaken for the Boas/Akampsis) and 2.29.3.16 (course of the Boas/Phasis).

nic *Moschi* (probably meant to denote the Lesser Caucasus, just as Strabo's *Moschike*) as the source of the Phasis.⁸¹ In contrast, the maps of Asia by Ptolemy are more consistent with Prokopios' divisions.⁸² His coordinates show the Phasis estuary in the easternmost bay of the Black Sea; Kolchis is neighboured by the Iberians to the east, though separated by the Caucasus; the Moschian Mountains have been shifted south-west, reaching as far as the hinterland of Trapezus (Strabo calls this mountain range *Skydises*) and provide the sources for the abovementioned "Lykos" (i.e. Akampsis) and the Glaukos (i.e. Apsaros). We can thus trace a gradual shift of the oronyms to the south beginning with Ptolemy. At any rate, all three, Pliny, Ptolemy and Prokopios (in his Book 8) regard the Phasis as springing from the (Lesser) Caucasus, which is compatible with Strabo's assertion of its Armenian origin.

10. TANAÏS, PHASIS AND THE MYTHO-GEOGRAPHY OF LAZIA ACCORDING TO PROKOPIOS

Further on, Prokopios reports the "opinion" that the Phasis divided Europe and Asia.⁸³ This is not a mere confusion with the Tanaïs (Don), which is admittedly the more widely accepted boundary.⁸⁴ Prokopios drew on an ancient tradition traceable to Herodotos, if not beyond.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Plin. *HN* 6.4.12f.: *oritur in Moschis* (ed. Rackham 1961); cf. König and Winkler 1996. Thus also admitted by Lordkipanidze 1996, 103, who further adduces Solin. *Collectanea* 15.19 (sc. *Mirabilia* 15.19): *Heniochorum montes Araxen, Moschorum Phasidem fundunt* (Latin text drawn from *The Latin Library*). Solin may be quoting Pliny. On Strabo and the Moschoi, see above, nn. 38 and 62.

⁸² See Stückelberger and Graßhoff 2006, II: 847, 853.

⁸³ Prokop. *Bell.* 8.2.4.28.

⁸⁴ E.g., Ps.-Skylax, *Europa* 68: *ποταμὸς Τάναϊς, ὃς ὀρίζεται Ἀσίαν καὶ Εὐρώπην*; Diod. 2.2.1; Strab. 7.4.5 (310C); 11.1.1-5 (490f.C); 11.2.1 (492C); Arr. *PPE* 19.1; Ptol. *Geog.* 5.9.1; 8 map 2 (Stückelberger and Graßhoff 2006, II: 850). Cf. Lordkipanidze 2000, 23-26; Liddle 2003, 123; Heinen 2005; Roller 2018, 629-631. *Schol. Ap.* 2.399-401 (ed. Wendel [1935] ³1974, 162f.) attests an interesting case of conflation: he believes that there was one Asian Kytaiis in Kolchis and one European in the land of the Scythians, but both should be one and the same.

⁸⁵ E.g., Hdt. 4.45.2; cf. 1.104.2. Dan (2016, 261-263, 267-269) argues instead for a Scythian Phasis, which equals the Tanaïs, although she also discusses further

That he remains consistent with this geographical division emerges from the fact that he assigns the Lazoi to the European side, i.e. north of the Phasis/Rioni, instead of south of the Tanais (§ 29).

At the end of his account on the Lazian territory, Prokopios briefly digresses (once more) on the Argonautic tradition.⁸⁶ He reports the claim of the locals that Jason had found the Golden Fleece somewhere in “this part of Lazika” (τὴν Λαζικῆς μοῖραν). The immediately preceding words seem to relate this to the unsettled territory south of the Phasis.⁸⁷ But the previous description confined the effective living space of the Lazoi to the “European” μοῖρα (§ 28) in the north. In addition, only the latter interpretation renders the subsequent argument (poor as it may be) formally logical. Prokopios rejects the local tradition, because it is incompatible with the Argonauts’ safe withdrawal in secrecy from Aïetes’ kingdom; in his eyes, at least, the fleece must have been kept in an area that was separated by the Phasis from the “royal palace and the houses of the Kolchoi.”

While this may appear awkward to us, Prokopios’ criticism seems to be directed against those who located Aia along the north-west coast of Kolchis. Ptolemy and Stephanos provide explicit evidence for such claims, the former by placing a city of Aia somewhere between Phasis City and Dioskourias/Sebastopolis, the latter by identifying Dioskourias with Aia. Apparently, the Greek settlers in Kolchis or their descendants created a variety of Argonautic landscapes. They framed their new territory as the mythical kingdom of Aia surrounded by the rivers Hippos and Kyaneos and perhaps not too far from the Glaukos and Lykos either. Ptolemy, Stephanos and indirectly also Prokopios demonstrate that the Phasis, the most famous of all Kolchian rivers, could still be

potential evidence for the rendering of other “major North Caucasian rivers like the Kuban” as Phasis, which she suggests identifying further with the ancient Hypanis or Hybristes (263-271).

⁸⁶ Prokop. *Bell.* 8.2.4.30-32. He previously addressed the Argonauts, e.g., in the context of Apsaros/Absyrtos and Trapezus (*Bell.* 8.2.2.12-8.2.3.15).

⁸⁷ This is the understanding of the German translation by Veh 1978, 725.

ignored in the Roman and Byzantine periods.⁸⁸ The Homeric tradition which envisaged Aia located on a sea coast had not been forgotten and maintained its potential validity.⁸⁹

Be this as it may, those living along the Phasis successfully claimed Aia for themselves. At least from the early-5th century B.C. on, the mainstream of our tradition accepted that the kingdom of Aietes was to be found somewhere on the bank of this river.⁹⁰ For Prokopios, however, this seemed to imply that the grove of Phrixos was located on the opposite side, which means south of the Phasis. He no longer pictured the royal residence on an island or in a city called Aia, but recognized it in the ruins at Kotaïs/Kytaïs, today's Kutaisi on the middle course of the Rheon/Rioni. Kutaisi has been introduced above as being located some 90 km inland, overseeing the Caucasian foothills to its north and the juncture of the Rheon/Rioni and the Phasis/Kvirila at Rhodopolis/Geguti to its south. It also provides a scene for the Argonautic plot as the royal city in the land of Aia and the home of Aietes. In this sense,

⁸⁸ Steph. Byz. s.v. *Dioskourias* (Δ 93) on Dioskourias/Sebastopolis/Aia. And Ptol. *Geog.* 5.10.2; cf. Stückelberger and Graßhoff 2006, II: 854 map 3. It is unclear which of the two Aiai Steph. Byz. s.v. *Aia* (A 86) mentions as enclosed by the Hippos and Kyaneos. On the rivers, see above, nn. 66-70 and below, final n.

⁸⁹ See above, with n. 2, on the Homeric tradition.

⁹⁰ Eumelos and Pindar: see above, sections 1-2. Ps.-Skylax, *Asia* 81 locates Medeia's unnamed hometown 180 stades = ca. 32 km inland. Apollonios is treated above in section 2 and below in section 11. Plin. *HN* 6.4.12 knows one Aia 15 miles = ca. 22.5 km inland. The Phasis is mentioned repeatedly, though without indication of the distance, by Val. Flacc. 2.379, 3.501, cf. 2.597, 3.306, 3.662, etc. Also see Pompon. Mela 1.19.108: *Hic sunt Colchi, huc Phasis erumpit, hic eodem nomine quo amnis est a Themistagora Milesio deductum oppidum, hic Phruxi templum et lucus, fabula vetere pellis aureae nobilis*. "Here live the Kolchians, into this land the Phasis pours out, here is the town which the Milesian Themistagoras settled under the same name as the river, here are the temple and grove of Phrixos, distinguished through the old legend of the Golden Fleece." Latin text by Frick 1967; my translation. The location of the temple and grove are disputed, but, *pace* Lordkipanidze 2000, 98f., Mela does not allow us to disconnect the grove from the Phasis; see Val. Flacc. 2.596-600; Coşkun, forthcoming d. For other Aiai not said to be located on the Phasis, see below, final n.

Kytaïs is first attested by Apollonios of Rhodes in the 3rd century B.C. It is to his testimony that we are turning now.⁹¹

11. PHASIAN CONFUSION IN APOLLONIOS OF RHODES

Apollonios of Rhodes is adduced for the most complex mythogeographical conflation of the rivers in the region. The context is one of the most thrilling moments of the story, Jason's discovery of the Golden Fleece and his encounter with its guardian dragon. The beast's monstrous hissing was echoed by the river (i.e. the Phasis) and the sacred grove (where Phrixos had sacrificed the ram) – and far beyond. Since the text is not easy to understand, I first quote its Greek original, then its English translation by Anca Dan and third its German translation by Paul Dräger:

ἔκλυον οἱ καὶ πολλὸν ἐκάς Τιτηνίδος Αἴης / Κολχίδα γῆν ἐνέ-
μοντο παρὰ προχοῆσι Λύκοιο, / ὅς τ' ἀποκιδνάμενος ποταμοῦ
κελάδοντος Ἀράξεω / Φάσιδι συμφέρεται ἱερὸν ῥόον: οἱ δὲ
συνάμφω / Καυκασίην ἄλαδ' εἰς ἐν ἐλαυνόμενοι προχέουσιν.⁹²

Those heard it who dwelt in the Colchian land very far from Titanian Aea, near the outfall of Lykos, the river which parts from loud-roaring Araxes and blends his sacred stream with Phasis, and they twain flow on together in one and pour their waters into the Caucasian Sea.⁹³

⁹¹ Prokop. *Bell.* 8.14.6.47f.; cf. Ap. Rhod. 2.399-407; also 2.1093-1095, 1266f.; 3.228; 4.511. Moreover, see Kallim. F7 = Strab. 1.2.39 (46C). Cf. Lordkipanidze 1996, 243-246; Dan 2016, 256.

⁹² Ap. Rhod. 4.131-135. My text follows Dräger 2002 (300, 430), who maintains the transmitted reading together with the older editions (e.g., Mooney [1912] 1964). The Oxford ed. by Fränkel ([1961] 1964, 174) “corrects” the last word to προχέουσιν, which is accepted, e.g., by Glei and Natzel-Glei 1996, II: 86 (without mention in the critical notes, p. 210) as well as Hunter 2015, 36, 100: “The transmitted προχέουσιν would require ῥόον to be understood from 134, and that seems very awkward.” But this is not necessary, since Καυκασίην ἄλαδ' is the object; see below.

⁹³ Dan 2016, 258.

Es hörten sogar die, die das kolchische Land weit entfernt vom Titanischen Aia an den Fluten des Lykos bewohnten – dieser zweigt vom rauschenden Fluss Araxes ab und vereinigt seine heilige Strömung mit dem Phasis, und beide zusammen ergießen sich in eins verbunden ins kaukasische Meer.⁹⁴

Just as Dan and Dräger, Mooney and Lordkipanidze believe that Apollonios pictures the courses of the three rivers as mystically connected. And so did the anonymous scholiast: his paraphrase describes the Lykos as diverging from the Araxes to empty into the Phasis, and to merge into the sea together with this.⁹⁵ Dräger's commentary adds further details:

Der Lykos ist die Verbindung zwischen dem in das Kaspische Meer mündenden Araxes und dem in das Schwarze (Ostteil: Kaukasische) Meer mündenden Phasis; Flüsse sind "heilig" (V. 134) wegen der Flussgötter. Der geographische Exkurs in V. 131-134 betont Aïetes' Größe und Macht. Vom kolchischen Lykos ist der bithynische (2,724) zu unterscheiden.

Interestingly, none of the aforementioned interpreters thinks of a real confusion of the Phasis with the Araxes, whose waters empty into the Caspian Sea. While "Caucasian Sea" is ambiguous, the stream of the Phasis and its estuary make it clear that the Euxine is denoted here. Both translations further agree that the Lykos estuary was inside the kingdom of Kolchis, though far away from its centre (Aia or Kytäis). But accepting this, Dräger feels the need to comment that Apollonios is here referring to a different Lykos than the (only) one that has been mentioned before in his poem. Dan differs in that she does not address the first occurrence of the Lykos in the *Argonautika*, but explains regardless:

⁹⁴ Dräger 2002, 301.

⁹⁵ For the scholion, see Wendel [1935] ³1974, 268: ὁ δε Λύκος ποταμὸς ἀπὸ Ἀράξου φερόμενος συνκίρνεται Φάσιδι, καὶ οὕτως ἀπολέσας τὸ ἴδιον ὄνομα ἐκδίδωσιν ἐς θάλασσαν; this sentence is followed by a parallel (Onochonos, Peneios, Pamisos). Likewise, Glei and Natzel-Glei 1996, II: 87. Cf. Mooney [1912] 1964, 309, who distinguishes the Lykos from its Bithynian namesake, as Dräger does, see below.

Apollonios probably never referred to the Kelkit Çayı but rather to another course flowing into a river called Phasis. Judging by Ptolemy (*Geography* 5.6.7) who presents the Lykos as the tributary of the Apsorros along with the Glaukos (modern Oltu Çayı), this watercourse should correspond to the Çoruh Ne96

While my result concurs with Dan's, my explanation does not. At its first occurrence in Apollonios' poem, the Lykos clearly did not equal the abovementioned Kelkit, which merges into the Iris/Yeşil Irmak. It figured as a parallel river to the Sangarios/Sakarya, which, in turn, is known to have its origin in Phrygia and to empty into the Black Sea in Bithynia near Adapazarı.⁹⁷ The Lykos in its neighbourhood should be the one which Arrian attests 80 stades west of Herakleia Pontike/Ereğli. Or should we better locate it closer to the famous Megarite colony, as Pliny suggests us to do? Xenophon, too, situates it in the territory of the Herakleiois.⁹⁸ Scholarly opinion about its identification is divided,⁹⁹ but this need not surprise us, since there appear to be multiple Argonautic landscapes also along the north-western coast of the Black Sea, and thus potentially shifting or rivalling onomastic traditions.

No matter where exactly this Lykos was located or where precisely Apollonios imagined its course, I would suggest that the "narrative grammar" of the *Argonautika* discourages a distinction between the two Lykoi: in the mythical world of the Argonauts, there was only one river called Lykos. Indirectly, Apollonios seems to be attesting to the older epic tradition which delimited the kingdom (or perhaps the extended empire) of Aïetes by a Lykos River merging into the Black Sea. As such, he either consciously denoted or subconsciously alluded to the Akampsis-Lykos, which formed the southern boundary of Kolchis throughout much of

⁹⁶ Dan 2016, 258.

⁹⁷ Ap. Rhod. 2.272-274.

⁹⁸ Arr. *PPE* 13.2, 3; Plin. *HN* 6.1.4: *Sangarius ... oritur in Phrygia ... Coralius, a quo incipiunt Mariandyni, sinus oppidumque Heraclea Lyco flumini adpositum* (Latin text from König and Winkler 1996; Rackham 1961); Xen. *An.* 6.2.3.

⁹⁹ Foss 2000, *BA* 86 with *Directory*, p. 1221: Gürünç Su. – Silberman 1995, 40 n. 114: Kiliçe Su. – Liddle 2003, 110: Gülüç Çayı by Herakleia Pontike/Ereğli; cf. Magie 1950, II (map).

antiquity.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, we have seen that many scholars – geographers and probably poets alike – were simply unaware of its existence. Strabo and Prokopios have been named above, and I assume that Eratosthenes forms part of this negative tradition.

Apollonios thus had a very blurry picture of the Lykos (and other parts of the Euxine littoral), but the intended meaning of his abovequoted verses emerges more clearly now. Supernatural are the dragon and its terrifying hisses, which reached the last corners of the great Kolchian realm in mysterious ways. But, at least in the present section, the poet does not expect his readers to believe in geographical miracles beyond that: the waters of the Lykos and the Phasis do merge, but only in the salty water of the Black Sea, not in any one obscure riverbed, as the proleptic relative clause ὅς ... Φάσιδι συμφέρεται may mislead us to understand. The point of this expression is to illustrate the supremacy of the Phasis and, in this way, to characterize the Lykos/Akampsis as a river on the kingdom's margins.¹⁰¹ That Φάσιδι συμφέρεται indeed looks at their future mixing becomes clear not only through the plural of (συνάμφο) ... προχέουσιν, which points to two separate estuaries, and of ἐλαυνόμενοι, which reflects the two separate courses; it is also revealed by the fact that only after merging into the sea they become one (εἰς ἓν ... προχέουσιν). The inner object (Καυκασίην ἄλαδ') of the predicate (προχέουσιν) is once

¹⁰⁰ See esp. Ps.-Skylax, *Asia* 81 (cf. Lordkipanidze 1996, 71-76); App. *Mith.* 101.463-468. Also see the strategic location of the fortress of Apsaros in Plin. *HN* 6.4.12 and Arr. *PPE* 6. Ptol. *Geog.* 5.6.7 can be added here, although this includes a further Roman stronghold (Sebastopolis) just north of the Akampsis/Apsorros. Despite some confusion, even Strab. 11.2.14 (497C); 11.2.17 (498C); 12.3.13 (547C); Prokop. *Bell.* 8.1.1.7-11; 8.2.1.5-9 (see above, section 9) support the case. Cf. Coşkun, forthcoming a, c, d, e.

¹⁰¹ For a different nuance, see Gleit and Natzel-Gleit 1996, II: 191 (quoting Fränkel), who read the geographical digression as reminder of the "gewaltige Macht des orientalischen Despoten Aietes..., der selbst Hellas durchaus gefährlich werden könnte."

more proleptic in that it already qualifies the waters of the Phasis and Lykos as the “salt water of the Caucasian Sea.”¹⁰²

Since the latter denotes the Euxine beyond any doubt, there is no need to suppose that the beds of the Phasis and Araxes physically met (in the mysterious world of the poet). Otherwise, one would have to understand ἀποκίδναμαι in the narrowest sense and regard the Lykos as a distributary of the Araxes, in order to see Araxean and Phasian waters run together. But such thinking would be beyond the point that Apollonios is making, because his emphasis is on the relation between the Phasis and the Lykos. The Araxes is only introduced to provide his readers with background on the Lykos. While I cannot exclude that the poet had a confused geographical concept of the latter two rivers, we are not even compelled to accept this. *LSJ* translate the verb ἀποκίδναμαι as “spread abroad from a place.” This does not require the two rivers to originate from a single source or riverbed.¹⁰³ Both the Lykos/Akampsis and the Araxes were assumed to hail from Armenia, but to take opposite directions from there: the one turning north-west to empty into the Black Sea, the other following a north-eastern course towards the Caspian

¹⁰² Apollonios may be varying quite deliberately a similar expression used earlier (1.38f.), which more clearly described the merger of two rivers into one bed: ἔνθα μὲν Αἰτιδανός τε μέγας καὶ διος Ἐνιπεύς / ἄμφω συμφορέονται, ἀπόπροθεν εἰς ἔν ἰόντες. A closer parallel is Aratus, *Phaen.* 362-366: he describes a blending (though not of rivers, but of imaginery lines of constellations) with the same words and also implies that they unite only at the end point of their movement: δεσμοὶ δ' οὐραῖοι, τοῖς Ἰχθύες ἄκροισι ἔχονται, / ἄμφω συμφορέονται ἀπ' οὐραίων κατιόντες, / κητείης δ' ὀπιθεν λοφίης ἐπιμιξ φορέονται / εἰς ἔν ἐλαυνόμενοι, ἐνὶ δ' ἀστέρι πειραίνονται, / Κήτεος ὅς κείνου πρώτη ἐπίκειται ἀκάνθη. Kidd (1997) translates: “the tail-chains, by which the extremities of the Fishes are held, both come together as they descend from the tail-parts, and behind the Monster’s back-fin move jointly as they converge, and terminate in a single star that lies close to the top of the Monster’s spine.”

¹⁰³ *LSJ* s.v. (p. 202) references Ap. Rhod. 4.133, besides Aratus 735, see 733-736: οὐχ ὀράας; ὀλίγη μὲν ὅταν κεράεσσι σελήνη / ἔσπερόθεν φαίνεται, ἀεξομένοιο διδάσκει / 735 μηνός: ὅτε πρώτη ἀποκίδναται αὐτόθεν αὐγή, / ὅσσον ἐπισκιάειν, ἐπὶ τέτρατον ἤμαρ ἰούσα.

Sea.¹⁰⁴ And it is in the Black Sea that the floods of the Lykos mix together with the waters of the Phasis, which, as we have seen above in section 3, the poet fathomed to originate in the Amarantian Mountains (Main Caucasus). Apollonios thus surmises a consistent Kolchian riverscape.

12. WATERS AROUND AIA

Most of the diverse observations made throughout this paper imply only minor corrections and need not be summed up here. But in two regards, they seem to be adding up to further-reaching conclusions. As far as the Kolchian Phasis is concerned, it seems that the mainstream of the geographical and mythographical literature had a solid understanding of the river: having one of its sources in Armenia, it becomes the horizontal artery of the Kolchian plain, which empties into the Black Sea. This course is consistent with most of our evidence from the 5th century B.C. until Late Antiquity, and it is at least compatible with modern topography. Miraculous river courses seem to focus on the Ister/Danube, Tanais/Don or Hypanis/Kuban and originate as late as the 4th century B.C., without affecting the bulk of the geographical or mythographical tradition.

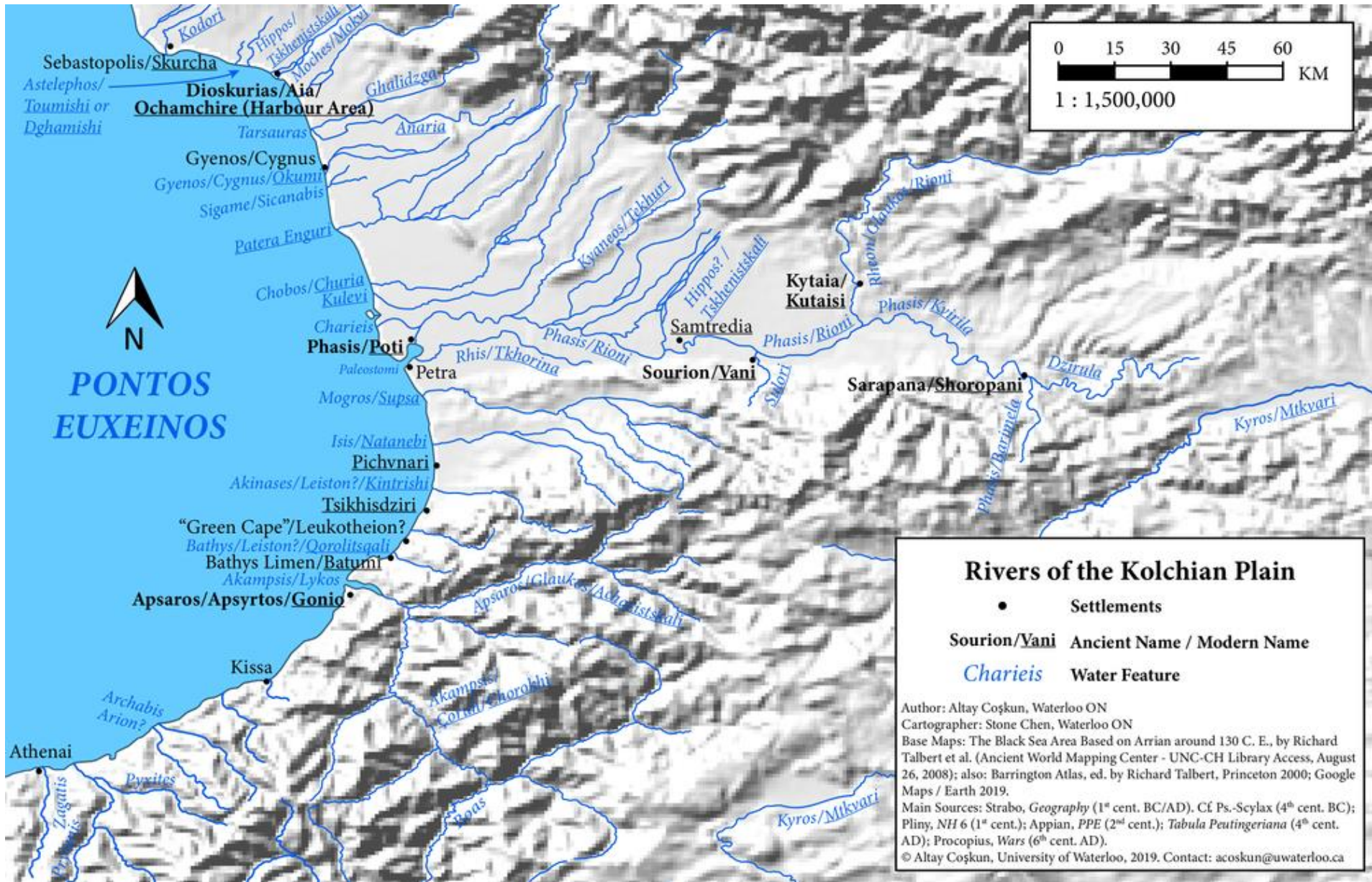
This is not to say that there was no confusion of waterways in and around Kolchis. I have repeatedly referred to four other rivers which form part of the myth's fluvial landscape: Hippos, Kyaneos, Glaukos and Lykos. Two or three of them, though never the Lykos, are included in the brief descriptions of Strabo, Pliny and Stephanos. Claudius Ptolemy is the only prose text to have them all, though disconnected in two pairs, the former attributed to Kolchis, the latter to the Roman province of Kappadokia. The multiple Lykoi in northern Asia Minor cannot be coincidental, considering the river's role in the epic tradition as an important stage on the way to Aia. The gradual occupation of the Euxine coastline by Greek colonists and further their strife for hegemony in the area resulted in multiple Aiai. Proliferation of homonyms, confusion and uncertainty were further side-effects. And this was even worsened by the omission of the Akampsis/Lykos in one branch of the tradition.

¹⁰⁴ There is no hint that Apollonios might have seen the two Phaseis of Xenophon as one.

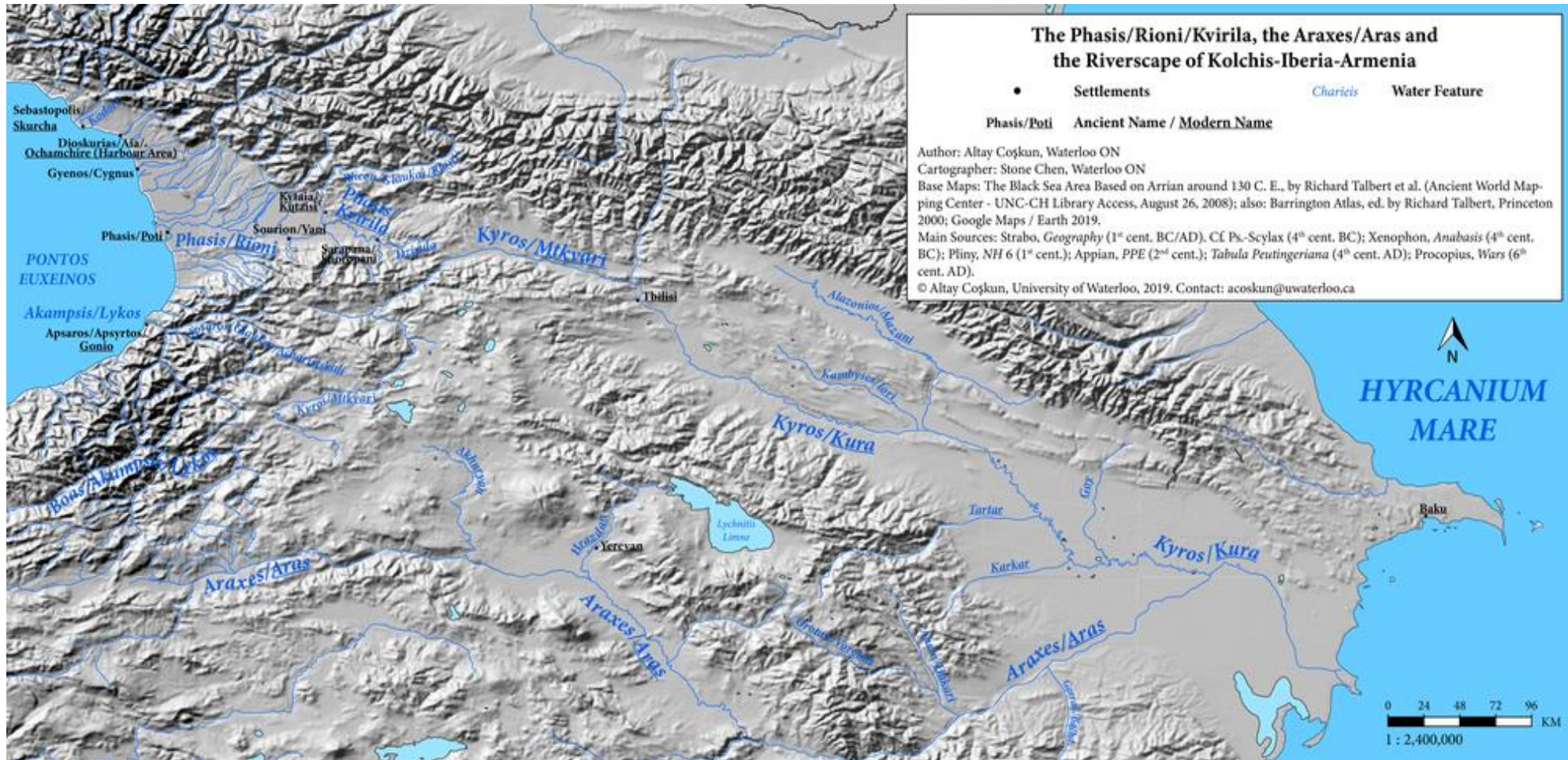
A systematic study of these secondary rivers will not only help us better understand the gradual design of Argonautic landscapes up the stream of the Phasis, but also pave the way to locating the first city of Kolchis declared to be Aia by Milesian settlers. Small surprise that this Aia will be identified with Dioskourias. More novel will be my identification of its site: instead of modern Sukhumi, I shall argue for the harbour district of Ochamchire, as revealed by the Hippos and Kyaneos Rivers surrounding it.¹⁰⁵

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¹⁰⁵ In fact, the locations of Gyenos, Dioskourias, Sebastopolis, and Pityus are at stake, see Map 1. The standard views (e.g., Braund 1994; Lordkipanidze 1996; Braund and Sinclair 2000, *BA* 87; Tsetskhldze 1998; Avram, Hind and Tsetskhldze 2004) anchor in the identification of Dioskourias/Sebastopolis/Sukhumi. This results in rejecting much information of the relatively consistent literary tradition, whereas the material evidence remains entirely inconclusive. The reevaluation will take more closely into account the specific riverscapes of Aia (see above, nn. 27, 33, 66-70 and 90) and the references to the recess of the coastline (Ap. Rhod. 2.399, 1261; Strab. 1.2.10 [21C], 1.2.40 [46f.C], 11.2.14 [297C]; Ptol. *Geog.* 5.10.2; Arr. *PPE* 11.4; cf. Prokop. *Bell.* 4.2.4.21, 32). See Coşkun, forthcoming b. For updates and further maps, see my website *Dr. Altay Coşkun – Black Sea – Maps.* <http://www.altaycoskun.com/>.



MAP 1



MAP 2

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