

The Bosphorus: Gateway between the
Ancient West and East
(1st Millennium BC–5th Century AD)

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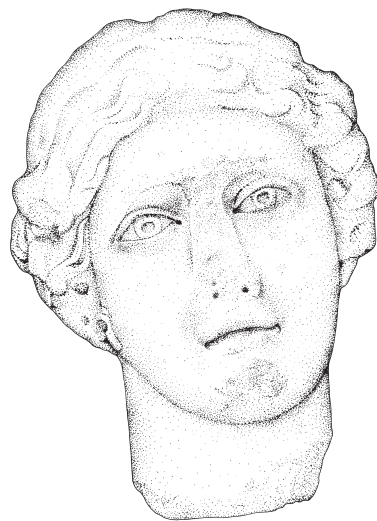
Gocha R. Tsetskhladze

Sümer Atasoy

Alexandru Avram

Şevket Dönmez

James Hargrave



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ATHENS AND THE PONTIC *POLEIS* IN THE TRIBUTE LIST OF 425/424 BC

Luigi GALLO

(University of Naples – L'Orientale)

In Athens in 425 BC, Thudippus (a man who was probably bound to the powerful radical leader Cleon) proposed an ambitious decree to meet heavier and heavier war expenses (*IG I³ 71*).¹ The decree set forth a conspicuous increase in the tributes paid by allied *poleis*, establishing the criteria for their assessment and collection of the *phoroi*. In the long and very fragmentary list following the decree and divided in four columns, we see the *poleis* divided into districts with the *phoroi* and, for the first time, we read a new rubric: [πόλες] ἐκ τοῦ Εὐ[ξσεῖνο].³ There are about 40 sites but their names are almost all undecipherable (IV, ll. 126 ss.). The total amount of the *phoroi*, registered at the end of the column, is undecipherable too, but it is unlikely to have been very low as a lot of sites (16 at least) had to pay 1 talent or more.⁴

The questions about this controversial tribute list are well known. The authors of the *Athenian Tribute Lists (ATL)* have defined it 'an unrealistic assessment' because it even lists centres (for instance, Melus) which were probably not allies of the Delian League and whose inclusion was only for propagandistic and political purposes.⁵ As to the Pontic cities, however, there is no reason to suppose a propagandistic motive for their inclusion.⁶ The Black Sea area was certainly included in the Athenian *symmachia*: in the list we can read clearly the ethnic of Heracleia Pontica (*IG I³ 71*, l. 127) and, as we know from Thucydides (4. 75. 1-2) and Justinus (16. 3. 9-12), in 424 BC Lamacus went to the Black Sea with a fleet to exact *phoros* from the Heracleiots who did not wish to pay it, and, in spite of the loss of the fleet in a violent storm, he persuaded them to do so. Therefore, we can certainly infer that in a precedent period Athens included even the Pontic *poleis* in its hegemonic sphere. It happened, as seems evident, during the well-known Pontic expedition of Pericles in the 430s BC, testified only by Plutarch (*Pericles* 20. 1-2), probably

using Ephorus as his source, so this list can help, in my opinion, to reconstruct the range of this controversial expedition.⁷

The Pontic expedition of Pericles is a matter of lively discussion as to both its aims and true import: some scholars consider it a fundamental event in relations between Athens and the Black Sea, whilst others minimise its range because Plutarch mentions only the stop at Sinope and the struggle against the tyrant Timesileon (but even the subsequent envoy of *epoikoi*).⁸ I do not intend to consider here the causes of the expedition or the problematic question of Athenian interest in Pontic grain just before the 4th century;⁹ it is sufficient to note that we cannot understand different aspects of Athenian policy if we do not recognise Athens had a strong interest in exchange with the Black Sea area, in which grain probably played a role, though not an exclusive one (I think, for example, of the occupation of Lemnos, Imbros and Scyros, or to the colonisation of Thracian Chersonesus, the source of many copies of Attic vases in Pontic sites).¹⁰ But what was the range of Pericles' Pontic expedition? It is true that Plutarch mentions only the adventure in Sinope and the struggle against the tyrant (probably a pro-Persian one) to highlight Pericles' merits as a democratic politician, but Sinope was only one of the various stopping points on the journey, as is clear from Plutarch: he says, in fact, that Pericles treated the Greek *poleis* very well, granting them everything they asked, and he demonstrated to the local peoples the naval power of the Athenians, who were able to sail wherever they wanted. Just from this information, we can assume that there were important contacts with other Pontic communities besides Sinope. In addition, there is the tribute list of 425/4, which, even though it is very fragmentary, permits us to reconstruct the range of Pericles' expedition in the 430s.

Which are the *poleis* whose names we can read in the list? The western coast is certainly represented: there is Apollonia (Ἀπολλωνία) at line 128; likewise the probable restoration of Νικονία at line 167. More hypothetical is the restoration of Τύρας at line 163 (it is

¹ On this decree and on the probable links between Thudippus and Cleon, see *ATL* III, 70-72; Meiggs 1972, 324-25.

³ On this restoration, against the doubts of Brashinskii and others, see *BE in Revue des études grecques* LXXI (1958), 226-28.

⁴ On this, see Meiggs 1972, 328, according to whom the sum of all *phoroi* would be inferior to 50 talents.

⁵ On this problem, see Gallo 2008. For the definition of 'unrealistic assessment', see *ATL* III, 196.

⁶ See however Mattingly 1996, 157, according to whom 'we do not know to what extent or for how long after 424 tribute came in from the area... the creation of the new panel may have had much more to do with prestige and singeing the King of Persia's beard': against this opinion we can consider the case of Nymphaeum, whose *phoros* (1 talent) was registered in a list that is probably to be dated to 410/9 (Craterus, *FGrHist* 342 F 8; *IG I³ 100*).

⁷ On Ephorus as a source for Pericles' biography, see Stadter 1989, LXXI-LXXII.

⁸ See Angelescu 1992; Mattingly 1996, 155-56; Tssetskhladze 1997, 461-62; 1998, 56-57; Braund 2005, 80-81.

⁹ Among the latest works on this vexed question, see Braund 2007, 39-40; Moreno 2007; Tssetskhladze 2008, 47-48.

¹⁰ See Bouzek 1989, 250.

possible to restore also Τυριτάκε or Τυράμβα) and of Νί[φσα at line 143 (the tribute is 2 talents, which is very expensive for this centre which was probably a very modest one).¹¹ Less certain – and this is the focus of the discussions of scholars such as Zebedev and Brashinskii – is the presence of *poleis* on the northern coast. Among the restorations proposed by the authors of the *ATL*, probable are two cities of little importance of Cimmerian Bosphorus (that pay indeed a low tribute of 3000 drachmas): Πάτ[ρασυς (a site on the Asiatic side) at line 168 and Κιμ[μερικόν at line 166 (another site on the Asiatic side, if it is the centre cited by Strabo at 11. 2. 4-5).¹² More uncertain are Τα[μυράκε at line 164, Κα[ρκιύτις at line 165 (where we cannot exclude that this refers to Kallatis, if its foundation dates back to the 6th century, as some scholars suppose) and Δα[νδάκε at line 170 (a site attested only by late sources).¹³ About the southern coast, if the restoration of [Κάρο]σα at line 129 is very uncertain,¹⁴ that of the Sinopean sub-colony of Κερ[ασός] at line 169 is more probable, and the ethnic of Heracleia, [Ἡερ]ακλειῶται, at line 127, is definite. I have not considered the restorations with only a single letter, like Mesambria at line 161 or Olbia at line 162; even the authors of the *ATL*, who underlined that these important sites were surely in the list, recognised the extreme uncertainty of these restorations.¹⁵ As to Olbia, some scholars think that its inclusion in the Athenian League can be confirmed by a fragment of the well-known Athenian coinage decree that, according to its first editor, Karyshkovskii, came from Olbia; but the origin of the fragment, now lost, is uncertain.¹⁶

So what can we deduce from this list of cities? Apart some uncertain restorations, one fact is clear: a great part of the Black Sea area was subject to Athenian hegemony. If this was the result of the Pontic expedition of Pericles in the 430s, the information attested by Plutarch is confirmed: this expedition was a long-range venture, during which different alliances were made between Athens and various Pontic cities, some of them probably involved in *symmachia*, to be defended against neighbouring barbarian peoples.

¹¹ About Nipsa, see Herodotus 4. 93, who lists the Thracians Nypsaioi on the north of Salmidessos, and Stephanus of Byzantium *s.v.* Its inclusion in the list has been accepted uncritically by many authors (see, for example, Isaac 1986, 240) but, in my opinion, it is very improbable if we consider that Nipsa was a Thracian centre, not a Greek one.

¹² About Patrasys, which is listed by Hecataeus (*FGrHist* 1 F 214), and is probably the same *polis* cited by Strabo (11. 2. 8) with the name Patraeus, see *ATL* I, 532-533. On Kimmerikon, see *ATL* I, 502, and Avram *et al.* 2004, 946-47: there were two different *poleis* with the same name, one on the European Bosphoran side (Arrian *Periplus Ponti Euxini* 50) and the other on the Asiatic side (Strabo 11. 2. 4-5).

¹³ For a high chronology of for the foundation of Kallatis, see the convincing arguments of Avram 2009, 216-17; for a different opinion, see Uggeri 2009, 67. As far as Tamyrake, it is not certain that it was a *polis* (see Avram *et al.* 2004, 930). About Dandake, see *ATL* I, 478-479.

¹⁴ Curiously, the restoration is probable according to Mattingly 1996, 151.

¹⁵ *ATL* I, 539.

¹⁶ On this problem, see Tsetschladze 1997, 465; Figueira 1998, 322. Some believe that the Athenians rescued Olbia from a Scythian protectorate which had existed over it from the beginning of the 5th century, but see Kryzhitskiy 2005, 123-24, who shows how flimsy the evidence is for such a protectorate.

Which areas did Pericles visit? There is no doubt about the cities on the southern (as Plutarch himself testifies) and western coasts. More uncertain is the northern coast, because the restorations in the list are not entirely certain. But to demonstrate this coast's inclusion we can consider the well-known case of Nymphaeum: according to Aeshines III 171-172, this *polis* was under the Athenian hegemony before the betrayal of Gylon, Demosthenes' maternal grandfather, who gave it to the Spartocids in the last decade of the 5th century.¹⁷ It is very probable that the Athenian settlement in the *polis* occurred during the Periclean expedition, when Athens, as Plutarch testifies, gave a strong demonstration of its power to the peoples of the Black Sea. From this point of view it is not surprising to find two places on the Cimmerian Bosphorus, Kimmerikon and Patrasys, in the tribute list.¹⁸ But is there a link between the expedition and the beginning of Spartocid rule in the Bosphorus, as many scholars think?¹⁹ I do not believe that it was possible that the Spartocids took power with Athenian help: the case of Nymphaion suggests precisely that the relationship between the early Spartocids and Athens was not friendly; on the contrary, it is possible that the arrival of the Athenians, passing Nymphaeum (and perhaps other sites of this area) under their control, contributed to the crisis of Archaeanactid power, indirectly supporting the accession of the new rulers, the Spartocids.²⁰

Finally, what we can say about the eastern coast? The list of 425/4 gives us no indication about it, nor can we deduce anything about relations between Athens and this area of the Black Sea from historical sources. Nonetheless, it is very probable in my opinion that Pericles' expedition did not neglect the east coast. Recently, David Braund highlighted that 'a voyage far and wide in the Pontus could hardly ignore the eastern shores, not least because they form a geographical continuum with the southern shore',²¹ and I think that the probable presence in the list of a site on the south-eastern coast, Kerasous for instance, could strengthen his hypothesis.

In conclusion, it is difficult to deny that the Periclean expedition of the 430s was a fundamental event: without it we cannot understand the list of 425/4 or the numerous references to the Pontic world in many Athenian sources of the last decades of the 5th century (I think, for example, of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Medea*, but it is possible to cite many other examples).²²

¹⁷ On the chronology of Gylon's treason, see Davies 1971, 121 (who dates it to the first half of the last decade of the 5th century).

¹⁸ We can observe that both Patrasys and Kimmerikon (if we may identify it with the centre on the Asiatic side – on which see Strabo 11. 2. 4-5) were not yet part of Bosphoran kingdom, which, in the 5th century, probably included only the Kerch peninsula (Saprykin 2006, 276).

¹⁹ On this opinion see, for example, Rostovzev 1930, 564-65; Braund 2005, 85-86; 2007, 53.

²⁰ On this, see Gallotta 2011.

²¹ Braund 2005, 86.

²² On the references to Black Sea area in many Athenian sources of the last decades of the 5th century, see Braund 2005, 90-91. To his examples we can add, I believe, *Iphigenia in Tauris* by Euripides, which was performed between 414 and 413 and seems to suggest clearly links with Tauric Chersonesus.

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