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## ΠΑΝΤΑ ΎΠΕΙ AND ΠΟΝΤΟΣ ΎΠΕΙ – STRABO ON THE BLACK SEA

Building on Strabo's references to the Black Sea in his *Geography*, this article examines the perceived changeability of this region as it is summed up in his work and mainly until Strabo's own age. These changes are considered through three spheres of reference: (1) Geographical – this section offers a discussion of the shape of the sea and its connection to the Mediterranean. The Black Sea was at times conceived as a gulf linked to the surrounding Ocean, at times – as a closed sea, and at times – as a gulf linked to the Mediterranean. All three ideas reflected changes in geographical knowledge and their reflection in Greek sources. (2) Cultural – this section deals with the ethnic character of habitation in the regions surrounding the Black Sea. The change in this sphere of discussion pertains to various ethnicities said to inhabit the region while reflecting in the Greek sources a gradual change from barbarism to Hellenic and then Roman cultures. (3) Conceptual – this section surveys the image of the Black Sea in Greek and Roman myth and literature. It shows how the concept of the region went from marginal to central to marginal again. This image originated in historical reality, but resulted in the unique interpretation of the geopolitical developments within myth and literature. On the whole, this article demonstrates how the Greeks and the Romans perceived the region as at once known and unknown, close and distant, and abandoned and settled. All these perceptions contributed to the dynamic image of this unique environment.

*Keywords:* Strabo, Black Sea, Argonauts, Greek colonization, Roman Empire

The centre of the Hellenic world was Delphi, the centre of the Roman empire was Rome, and the Mediterranean was the central environmental hub for both Greek and Roman societies. This geopolitical reality and this spatial concept prevailed throughout most of Classical antiquity. The Black Sea, for its part, did not figure as a central region for cultural and political activities. Yet, Hellenic knowledge of the Black Sea region appeared in writing as early as the Homeric and Hesiodic epics<sup>1</sup>. And even earlier, Hellenic contacts with the

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<sup>1</sup> The Iliad, for instance in 2. 851–857, includes names of tribes and place-names from the south shore of the Black Sea without indicating specifically the sea itself. Odysseus' underworld may hint at the edges

region are attested in archaeological findings and in collective memories preserved in the Greek myths. In the mental map of the early Greeks, the Black Sea was in a constant state of change. This article aims to demonstrate such change in three spheres of reference: geographical, cultural and conceptual.

First, let us consider the name of this large body of water. In Greek texts, it was called *Pontos* (“sea”)<sup>2</sup> or *Euxeinos Pontos/Pelagos* (“hospitable sea”)<sup>3</sup> or simply *Euxeinos* (“hospitable”)<sup>4</sup>. The name “Black Sea” first appeared in the thirteenth century. This name may have been related to earlier notions associating colours with relative directions<sup>5</sup>. In all its designations, it seems that knowledge of the regions surrounding this sea preceded a clear identification of it as a defined geographical unit. This situation originated in a very early time when the region was not yet fully recognized, and, in it, the later “Euxinus” was not seen as a distinct body of water.

### **The geographical change: from gulf to locked sea to an extension of the Mediterranean**

We will begin with the description of the Black Sea in Strabo’s *Geography*. This is a solid point of departure because Strabo incorporated into his first-century CE magnum opus centuries of Greek thought on geography and ethnography. Strabo’s geographical discussions usually begin with the Homeric epics, and this is true also for his description of the Black Sea as we see in the following excerpt:

Those who lived at that time simply thought of the Black Sea as a kind of another ocean and that those who sailed to this place went out similarly as those who advanced outside the pillars [of Heracles]; for they considered it as the largest [sea] of those [seas] in our part of the world, and because of this, they named it specifically “Pontus” (=Sea) for its prominence, as [they named] Homer “Poet” (Strabo 1.2.10)<sup>6</sup>.

Two ideas are highlighted by this passage. First, the Black Sea was considered “a second ocean” and sailing into it was likened to sailing through the

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of the *oikoumene* by the Black Sea, on which see Podossinov 2013. Similarly, Hesiod alludes to rivers pouring into the Black Sea, such as the Ister (Danube) and the Phasis (Theog. 339-340), but does not mention the sea.

<sup>2</sup> Hesychius s.v. Πόντος for the definition, and Hdt. 7.95.2 as an example for the application.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, in Pind. Nem. 4.49; Hdt. 1.6.1.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, in Eur. IT 125; Eur. HF 410. The same variations appear in Latin texts, mainly and frequently in Ovid, for instance *mare Euxinum* in Tr. 4.8.42 or simply *Euxinus* in Tr. 2.197, but also *Pontus* for instance in Cic. Tusc. 1.45; 1.94.

<sup>5</sup> For this explanation, see Schmitt 1996. Other discussions of possible etymologies of all denominations in Graeco-Roman texts appear in Moorehouse 1940; Allen 1957; Moorehouse 1948; West 2003. P. 156–158. For the sake of clarity, I will use the modern appellation “Black Sea” throughout this article, even in translations of ancient texts.

<sup>6</sup> All translations of Strabo are mine.

Straits of Gibraltar. Hence, the it was conceived of as being vast and connected to the ocean surrounding the inhabited world, just as the Caspian Sea was considered to be a gulf of the surrounding ocean (Strabo 2.5.18; 11.11.7)<sup>7</sup>. Such depiction may have stemmed from times in which sailors arriving from the Greek or Mediterranean world had not yet reached the far ends of the Black Sea (or the Caspian Sea) and so it seemed to them endless. Second, the idea of the Black Sea's immensity turned it into a generic sea, a concept expressed in its designation as "*The Sea*" (*Pontos*).

As seafaring progressed, geographical knowledge expanded. In his discussion of the formation, shape and nature of the Black Sea, Strabo relies mainly on Strato of Lampsacus (c. 335–269 BCE), who was born in a Greek polis on the eastern side of the Hellespont. Hence, he lived at least part of his life right on the Mediterranean gates to the Black Sea and it is likely that his records were based on his own observations (Desclos and Fortenbaugh 2012). The head of the Lycaeum in Athens, Strato, who was referred to as "Physikos" (Diog. Laert. 5.58) due to his interest in natural science, was clearly influenced by Aristotle.

According to Strato, the formation of the Black Sea was determined by numerous rivers emptying into it. He does not recognize a stage when this sea was a gulf of the ocean but starts his discussion at a phase in which it was a closed sea. Accordingly, the Black Sea "formerly did not have its mouth at Byzantium, but the rivers, which empty into it, forced and created an opening and then the water flowed into the Propontis and the Hellespont" (Strabo 1.3.4). Strato, quoted by Strabo, argued that this process is continual and perpetual so that the entire sea would eventually silt up and become dry land. He identified what he considered to be a parallel process in Egypt: "... the temple of Ammon too was earlier on the sea but, because there was an outflow, it now lies in the hinterland" (Strabo 1.3.4)<sup>8</sup>.

The rivers pouring into the Black Sea thus shifted the interplay between landmass and sea. Following the Homeric commentator Apollodorus of Athens, Strabo remarks that about forty rivers flow into the Black Sea, the most famous of which, he says, are the Ister (modern Danube), Tanaïs (modern Don), Borysthenes (modern Dnieper), Hypanis (modern Bog), Phasis (modern Rion), Thermodon (modern Thermeh), and Halys (modern Kizil-Irmak) (Strabo 7.3.6)<sup>9</sup>. As noted, Strato assumed that this extensive flow of both water and silt caused the breach in the boundaries of the originally closed body of water and would eventually result in the solidification of the entire sea<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> On this concept and its link to the identification of the Elysium, see Ivantchik 2017. P. 9–13.

<sup>8</sup> Strato spent time in Alexandria as a tutor of Ptolemy I and thus became acquainted with the Egyptian environment (Diog. Laert. 5.61).

<sup>9</sup> On Apollodorus' geography, see Bravo 2009.

<sup>10</sup> This does not happen because there is a constant flow from the Black Sea towards the Mediterranean. For a modern scientific survey of the currents, see Poulos 2020.

Leaving aside such understandings of primordial topographic and hydro-logic processes, we note that, in the early records of the Greeks, the Black Sea was seen as connected to the Mediterranean (see below for the Argonauts). In a somewhat symmetrical view, the Black Sea was presented as one of two gulfs of the Mediterranean which “ends in two sea-like gulfs, the one on the left, which we call the Black Sea, and the other consisting of the Egyptian, the Pamphylian, and the Issican Seas” (Strabo 2.5.18). This depiction reflected a vantage point based on the Greek mainland or at the Aegean Sea, facing the eastern Mediterranean. From this perspective the Black Sea was indeed situated to the left and the other marine zones were in the right-hand side of the eastern end of the Mediterranean. These marine zones included the sea mass facing Pamphylia and Issus in Asia Minor, and Egypt. According to this image, there were two sections in the eastern Mediterranean, here presented as two gulfs, although the Black Sea had a set of narrows leading to its full span.

At a finer-grained conceptual resolution, the Black Sea itself was depicted as a sort of double sea (διθάλαττος τρόπον τινα):

...at about the midpoint two capes protrude, one from Europe and the northern parts, the other from Asia opposite to it, and they connect the mid sailing route and form two large seas. The cape of Europe is called “Criumetopon”<sup>11</sup>, and the one of Asia, Carambis (Strabo 2.5.22 cf. 7.4.3).

Although the distance between the two promontories is about 250 km – far from being a narrow – this concept depicts the Black Sea as composed of a western (τὸ πρὸς ἑσπέραν πέλαγος) and an eastern sea (τὸ ἑῶν πέλαγος). This idea is most probably based on actual sailing experiences of sailors who mentally separated the western part of the Black Sea, which they encountered first on arrival, from its eastern parts situated beyond the aforementioned imaginary midpoint.

Another issue related to the physiography of the Black Sea was its depth and sea level. Again, Strato of Lampsacus is Strabo’s source for this discussion:

...the bottom of the Black Sea is higher than that of the Propontis and of the sea next after... it is filled up by the mud carried by the rivers and becomes shallow and because of this, it flows outward (Strabo 1.3.5).

Thus, both the sea level and its gradual shallowing contributed to a process of change, impacting the direction of water flow outside the Black Sea and into the Mediterranean. In this description, part of this chain of seas pour-

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<sup>11</sup> Κριοῦ μέτωπον, meaning “ram’s forehead”, located in the southern tip of the Crimean peninsula. The name derives either from the myth of Phryxus or relates to the shape of the coastline curvature, similarly to the use of the shape of a Scythian bow to describe the shape of the Black Sea, for instance in Strabo 2.5.22; Sallust. Hist. 3.63; Mela 1.102; Plin. NH 4.76; 4.86.

ing into each other was Lake Maeotis (sea of Azov), which emptied into the Black Sea (Strabo 2.5.23). Strabo notes that a similar inflow occurs in another Mediterranean strait situated in the west, i.e. the Straits of Gibraltar, through which water flows into the Mediterranean. However, he plays down this point because it is less observable, remarking that the inflow is “hidden under the lows and the tides” (Strabo 1.3.5).

The discussion of the differences in sea depths and in sea levels is motivated by Strabo’s eagerness to comprehend these phenomena (ἐκείνο πυνθάνομαι, Strabo 1.3.6). The analysis, clearly based on observation, is supplemented by an assumption that the hydrologic behaviour of the currents in the Black Sea parallels similar occurrences in the wider Mediterranean: “We must apply these to the whole of our sea [the Mediterranean] and to the outer sea [the Atlantic]” (Strabo 1.3.7). In this sense, the Black Sea is conceived of as a smaller version of larger bodies of water. This analogy includes a comparison between the depth of the water in the Black Sea as being deeper than that in Sardinia “which is said to be the deepest of all the seas that have been measured, about 1,000 *orgyia*”<sup>12</sup>, as Poseidonius says” (Strabo 1.3.9). The accuracy of these measurements aside, the discussion reveals an awareness of different depths and efforts to measure them.

The overall treatment of the physiography of the Black Sea in Strabo thus reflects unceasing change and endless flow. This flow translates into a fluid concept of the region, from earliest to latest: a gulf of the surrounding ocean, a closed sea, a gulf of the Mediterranean.

### **Cultural change: the coming of the Hellenes and the Romans**

Strabo refers to the Homeric acquaintance with the region at a time when sea routes were still vague:

He [Homer] knows the Paphlagonians of the hinterland from those who have approached the places on foot, but he is ignorant of the coastline... for this sea was then unnavigable and was called *axeinos* because of its wintry weather and the savageness of the tribes dwelling around it, and particularly the Scythians, who sacrificed strangers, ate their flesh and used their skulls as drinking cups; but later it was called *euxeinos* when the Ionians founded poleis on the coastline (Strabo 7.3.6).

The ethnic change, which also involved a cultural change, is evidenced through the shift from the classification of the sea as “*axeinos*” (inhospitable) to its identification as “*euxeinos*” (hospitable). This personifying illustration stems from the ethnic opposition between the Scythians and the Ionians, the former presented as barbaric cannibals and the latter as civilized citizens who

<sup>12</sup> *Orgyia* = The length of the outstretched arms = one fathom = 1,8 m.

founded Hellenic poleis. It seems that the hostile image of the region was not connected to natural conditions but rather to the character of its inhabitants: “Because of them [the Scythians] the Black Sea was called *axenos*” (Strabo 7.3.7). This understanding may be inherent in the terminology, since it includes the component of *xenia*, which relates categorically to human relationships. Hence, the sea is described through a personifying title.

Archaeological and textual evidence for a Hellenic presence in the region appears as early as the seventh century BCE (echoed in the myth of the Argonauts; for which, see below). The first navigation of the Black Sea was likely motivated by the commercial search for metals, such as iron and silver, and resulted in colonization mainly on the western and southern coastlines. The Hellenic settlement during the process of colonization in the Archaic Age was relatively late in these regions, probably due to both physical hindrances (it was difficult to sail against currents) and mental hindrances (the Sea was associated with the outer ocean) (Drews 1976; Boardman 1962–1963; Treister and Vinogradov 1993; Ivantchik 2017).

Eventually, the Hellenic colonization, which spread “everywhere” in that region (Strabo 14.1.6), seems to have influenced the knowledge that penetrated the awareness of the Greeks living closer to the centre of their physical and mental world, namely, in mainland Greece and the Aegean islands. Yet Strabo admitted that he had a limited knowledge of the northern coasts of the Black Sea, and in particular of the *peoples* who dwelt there:

We know neither the Bastarnae nor the Sauromatae and even, simply, those who dwell above (ὑπέρ) the Black Sea, nor how far they are from the Atlantic Sea nor whether they live near it (Strabo 7.2.4).

According to Strabo, Homer compensated for his ignorance by inventing tribes such as the *Hippemolgoi* (horse-milkers), the *Galaktofagoi* (milk-eaters) and the *Abioi* (unviolent). In contrast, Strabo’s scholarly integrity enabled him to admit the limits of his knowledge. At the same time, however, he does mention some of the tribes by name. The barbaric image of habitation around the Black Sea is further reflected, for instance, in Strabo’s allusion to the exceptionally numerous tribes in the region of Dioscurias (modern Sukhumi). He seems, however, to let his inner logic determine that there are seventy tribes and not 300 according to “those who do not care for the facts” (Strabo 11.2.16). Moreover, these tribes “live scattered and unmingled”. This situation is implicitly contrasted with the concept of civilized life as involving social and political communication.

Skipping ahead a few centuries, still in Strabo’s *Geography*, we find Greeks who are familiar with this region and who consider at least the southern shores of the Black Sea their homeland. This was the result of the massive colonization in the Archaic Age, which produced numerous Greek colonies

on the shores surrounding the Black Sea. Hence, thriving and active Hellenic communities in this region bred distinguished men such as Heracleides (“Ponticus”) of Heraclea, Diogenes the Cynic of Sinope, and Demetrius and Dionsodorus the mathematicians of Amisus. Strabo thus included many Black Sea communities in his “map of intellectuals”<sup>13</sup>.

Strabo’s awareness of the geopolitical situation in the region is current until the Roman alliance with the Cimmerian Bosphoran kingdom, located at the point where Lake Maeotis is linked to the Black Sea (Strabo 2.5.23)<sup>14</sup>. According to Strabo, this kingdom was the only one in the region that was loyal to the Romans; the others regularly revolted against the Roman regime (Strabo 6.4.2; 7.4.4). As Strabo summarizes the geopolitical reality, “Today everything is under the Bosphoran kings, whom the Romans appointed” (Strabo 7.4.7). This is clearly a situation-in-the-making; the Roman presence and influence were incomplete, and the political situation was in flux<sup>15</sup>.

In Strabo’s time, even the western regions of the Black Sea – which were closer to the centre of the Greek and Roman worlds – were considered beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire. In the famous exile of Ovid to Tomis (modern Constansa), the poet laments his destiny based on the region’s natural and social environments (see below).

### **Conceptual change: fearful, friendly, forlorn**

Both the physiographic notions related to the Black Sea and the geopolitical role of this sea in the history of Classical antiquity influenced its image in the eyes of the Greeks and Romans and, subsequently, shaped their attitude towards the regions surrounding it.

The earliest Greek concept of the Black Sea and its environs is enfolded in ancient mythological traditions. Prior to the Trojan War, the Argonauts set out to explore the shores of the Black Sea in search of the Golden Fleece. This group of heroes included men who later became famous for this endeavour as well as for other mythic tales, and included, among others, its leader Jason, Asclepius, Castor and Pollux, Heracles, Orpheus, and Peleus, Achilles’ father. References to this tradition appeared already in the Homeric epics<sup>16</sup>, but the most comprehensive literary description of their journeys was the fourth-century BCE *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes, who was known to Strabo (Strabo 14.2.13)<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> On Strabo’s lists of famous men, see Dueck 2000. P. 79–81; Engels 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Strabo seems to be unaware of contacts between the Ptolemaic kingdom and the Black Sea, for which see Archibald 2007.

<sup>15</sup> For a survey of this kingdom’s interaction with the Greek and Roman worlds, see Podossinov 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Echoes of the myth of the Argonauts in the *Odyssey* are discussed in West 2005.

<sup>17</sup> An elementary edition is the one by Hunter 1989.

According to the myth, the destination of this group of heroes was Colchis, situated at the eastern end of the Black Sea, “at the edge of the Black Sea and of the world (γαῖα)” (Apollon. Argon. 2.417–418). Apollonius emphasizes the perils of this journey, basing himself on practical geographical knowledge acquired by sailors, most probably of his own time:

...if ye shun the clashing rocks and come scatheless inside the Black Sea, straightway keep the land of the Bithynians on your right and sail on, and beware of the breakers, until ye round the swift river Rhebas and the black beach and reach the harbour of the Isle of Thynias. Thence ye must turn back a little space through the sea and beach your ship on the land of the Mariandyni lying opposite (Apollon. Argon. 2.345–352, transl. by R.C. Seaton (1913, LCL).

The first contacts with the region, which gave birth to the earliest concept of this environment, were thus tightly linked with the myth of the Argonauts<sup>18</sup>. The basic chronological elements of this story link it to prehistoric times. However, archaeological and textual evidence indicates a Greek presence in the region starting only in the seventh century BCE. Thus, the myth does not support claims of contact between the Aegean Greeks and the Black Sea regions in the precolonial period. It does, however, seem to reflect times when travel to the Black Sea was characterized by danger and mystery. Eratosthenes, quoted by Strabo, observed that, “in ancient times no one had the courage to sail on the Black Sea” (Strabo 1.3.2). This atmosphere indicated both a geographical reality in which the Greeks stepped for the first time beyond the framework of their Mediterranean world, and a conceptual idea of unknown and faraway places.

The association of danger with this region is apparent in Odysseus’ remark about the divine assistance that the Argonauts enjoyed, without which they would have crashed on the rocks at the gate of the Black Sea as did others who attempted to sail there:

One seafaring ship alone has passed thereby, that Argo famed of all, on her voyage from Aetes, and even her the wave would speedily have dashed there against the great crags, had not Hera sent her through, for that Jason was dear to her (Od., 12.69–72, transl. by A.T. Murray).

Eratosthenes, however, according to Strabo, also talked about “why we should not trust those who report about the regions along the Black Sea and the Adriatic” (Strabo 1.3.2). This comment alludes to the broader issue of the relationship between truth and myth, a theme that preoccupied Strabo (Patterson 2017). Apart from the role of myth as evidence, the early myths preserved collective notions of space and of specific regions. Thus, the image of the

<sup>18</sup> On the myth and its link to the Greek knowledge of the Black Sea, see Ivantchik 2017. P. 13–15.

Black Sea environs as peripheral, strange and frightening penetrated these early tales<sup>19</sup>.

Centuries later, the interplay between reality and fantasy resurfaced in an entirely different geopolitical context. The expansion of the Roman Empire placed the Black Sea regions in a new framework. Since the centre of the Roman world was further west of the Aegean Greek cultural zone, the Black Sea became again relatively peripheral. The poems of Ovid contributed to this sense since the poet was exiled by the emperor Augustus to Tomis (modern Constanța) on the western shores of the Black Sea. The combination of this personal development with the geographical reality yielded dark descriptions of the region<sup>20</sup>. Ovid's special circumstances enhanced the already existing Roman idea of the region's remoteness and marginality in multiple senses: geographically, ethnically, culturally and politically. The Black Sea was again seen as a peripheral region at the fringes of the main world.

In this image of the world – on its geographical, ethnic, and political levels – the Romans were presented as successors of the Argonauts. The Argonautic myth was one of conquest through exploration: conquest of the periphery, of barbarians, of the East. The involvement of the Romans in the Mithridatic Wars imparted fresh significance to the myth of a Roman victory in the East over a Black Sea ruler. In this atmosphere of global conquest, Varro Attacinus wrote the first Argonautic epic in Latin and thus burnished the image of the Romans as heirs to the Argonautic tradition (Braund 1993; Munz 2018).

The next historical stage at which the Black Sea region was again practically relevant to Roman politics took place at the beginning of the second century BCE when Trajan conquered the Dacians. His triumph was celebrated as a major achievement, emphasizing the barbaric character of the local inhabitants, tightly associated with the remoteness of these regions on the western shores of the Black Sea (Opreanu 2011). In this sense this image somewhat echoed the earlier depictions of the Scythians, and thus repeated the archaic idea of civilizing the barbarians.

We see, then, that the concept of the Black Sea region went from marginal to central to marginal again. This image originated in historical reality, but it seems that the interpretation of the geopolitical developments within myth and literature gained additional dimensions based on the perceptions of the various periods.

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<sup>19</sup> For a survey of the Greek view of the Black Sea, see West 2003. For other myths associated with the region, see Ivantchik 2017. P. 15–18.

<sup>20</sup> Podossinov 1987. On the ethnographic aspect of Ovid's image of the Black Sea regions, see Batty 1994; Ramsby 2018.

## Change and the dynamics of historical geography

Strabo's *Geography* represents centuries of observation and documentation. Through the details Strabo chose to include in his encyclopedic survey, a vast mental and physical world is revealed. But the result is not a static depiction of past situations or present conditions; rather, it is an animated reflection of the constant change caused by time and nature (Clarke 1999. P. 280; Dueck 2000. P. 45). Thus, topography shifts, human settlement evolves, and, above all, knowledge of the *oikoumene* continuously increases. It is against Strabo's overall representation of geographical change – both physical and human – that the Black Sea and its environs are described, with several unique undertones. These seem to be based on two factors. One is the special local conditions of topography and climate; the other is Strabo's sources of information on this part of the world. We may thus once again characterize Strabo's approach to geography as depicting the dynamics of change within the framework of the inhabited world, and determined by local conditions and by available sources. So, what is unique about the Black Sea from Strabo's perspective?

I suggest that there are overtones of personification related to the treatment of the Black Sea in Strabo, who sums up dominant traditions in the classical heritage. First, the description of the sea as hospitable or hostile is illuminating. In ancient Greek, the term *Xenia*, or friendship, is generally – and unsurprisingly – reserved for relationships between human beings. When the Greek sources refer to the Black Sea as hospitable or inhospitable, they are clearly alluding to the behaviour of the local inhabitants. But the natural conditions and natural local elements were also considered uncomfortable: the perilous rocks at the straits, the unknown paths, and the gloomy weather. In this sense, it is the very sea and land that discourage strangers or newcomers from arriving in the region. The Black Sea, then, assumes an identifiable personality.

Moreover, in several allusions to the region's geography, there are terms which may be read as personifying details. Strabo mentions the Sea's mouth (στόμα) (7 fr. 9 cf. Apollon. Argon. 1.2) referring to the Sea's outlet into the Propontis. Furthermore, according to him, the Black Sea has many other mouths in every point where one of its many rivers pours into it:

This [the Sacred Mouth] is the first mouth on the left as one sails into the Black Sea; the others come in order as one sails along the coast towards the Tyras; and the distance from it to the seventh mouth is about 300 stadia. So small islands are formed between the mouths. The three mouths that come after the Sacred Mouth are small, but the rest are much smaller than it [the Sacred Mouth], but larger than them [the three mouths] (Strabo 7.3.15).

Furthermore, according to Strabo, the forty rivers flowing into the Sea may be envisioned as veins circulating blood into the main organ (heart?), which is

the Black Sea. This body of water has sides and, in some verbal images mentioned above, is symmetric. The constant water flow as well as the changes surveyed in this article add to the sense of “breathing” life of this region. It thus appears as if the sea is a living entity and, as such, processes of change connect to depict natural developments and features typical of vital bodies.

## Conclusion

The Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus is said to have coined the phrase Πάντα ῥεῖ (“everything flows”)<sup>21</sup>, meaning that everything is in flux. In this article, I have examined the notion of universal perpetual change in a particular region, namely, the Pontus, or the Black Sea. Thus, we might say by way of paraphrase that Πόντος ῥεῖ. The Black Sea and its surroundings were hardly exceptional in this regard; historical and geographical surveys show similar processes for nearly every place in every period. However, the fact that the Greeks and the Romans perceived the region as at once known and unknown, close and distant, and abandoned and settled, added to the dynamic image of this unique environment.

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<sup>21</sup> In variation in Plat. *Crat.* 402 a; 440 c (DK 22A6).

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## ΠΑΝΤΑ ΠΕΙ И ΠΟΝΤΟΣ ΠΕΙ – СТРАБОН О ЧЕРНОМ МОРЕ

Статья построена на упоминаниях Страбоном Черного моря в его «Географии». Автор исследует замеченные изменения данного региона, представленные в его сочинении вплоть до времени самого Страбона. Эти изменения прослеживаются в трех аспектах: (1) Географический – эта часть предлагает рассмотренные формы моря и его связи со Средиземноморьем. Черное море виделось то как залив, связанный с окружающим Океаном, то как закрытое море, то как залив, связанный со Средиземным морем. Все три представления отражали изменения в географических знаниях, а также в греческих источниках. (2) Культурный – эта часть посвящена этносам, населявшим окружающие Черное море регионы. Изменение в этой обсуждаемой сфере касается разных этносов, якобы населявших этот регион; одновременно в греческих источниках находит отражение постепенный переход от варварства к эллинской (древнегреческой), а затем – к древнеримской культурам. (3) Концептуальный – в этой части дается обзор образа Черного моря в древнегреческих и древнеримских мифах и литературе. Показано, как данное понятие региона претерпело изменение из маргинального в центральное и вновь – в маргинальное. Этот образ возник в исторической реальности, но превратился в уникальную интерпретацию геополитического развития в мифах и литературе. В целом, статья показывает, что древние греки и римляне воспринимали этот регион одновременно известным и непознанным, близким и далеким, необитаемым и населенным. Всё это способствовало созданию динамичной картины этого уникального региона.

*Ключевые слова:* Страбон, Черное море, аргонавты, греческая колонизация, Римская империя

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