

Ethnic Constructs, Royal Dynasties
and Historical Geography
around the Black Sea Littoral

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SEARCHING FOR THE SANCTUARY OF LEUKOTHEA IN KOLCHIS

Altay Coşkun

To Mackenzie Lewis, who left us too early

Abstract: Strabo mentions a sanctuary of Leukothea, together with an Oracle of Phrixos, in the *Moschike* somewhere in Kolchis (11.2.17f. 498f.C). O. Lordkipanidze (1972) suggested a location in modern Vani at the confluence of the Sulori and Rioni (Phasis) Rivers. In contrast, D. Braund (1994) proposed an area farther to the east in the Lesser Caucasus (Moschian Mountains), southwest of Borjomi, in the valley of the upper Mtkvari River (Kyros). Both identifications are difficult to accept. First, Ino, the wife of the Theban king Athamas and stepmother of Phrixos, called Leukothea after her *apotheosis*, was a sea goddess. As such, her cult was widespread along the northern coast of the Mediterranean. Its only attested branch in the Black Sea region should therefore not be sought in the hinterland or far-away mountains. Second, Strabo's indications do not point to a location east of the mouth of the Phasis, but rather south of it, where the westernmost foothills of the Lesser Caucasus reach the sea. Third, we can now contextualize Strabo's historical references in detail: the sack of the sanctuary by Pharnakes II occurred after his defeat at Zela in Pontos by Caesar and before his final battle against Asandros near Pantikapaion. Since both battles occurred within no more than a month, Pharnakes had no time to march through the Kolchian hinterland, let alone to lay siege to its fortifications, when sailing back to Pantikapaion in August 47 BC. As a result, the Leukotheion most likely stood out as a landmark for sailors on their way from Trapezus to Phasis. The Mtsvane Kontskhi ('Green Cape'), which is now covered by the Batumi Botanical Garden, might have been an ideal location, and the hills of Tsikhisdziri would offer a feasible alternative.

Абстракт: В поисках святилища Левкофеи в Колхиде: Страбон упоминает святилище Левкофеи вместе с Оракулом Фрикса в «Москике» где-то в Колхиде (11.2.17f. 498f.C). О. Лордкипанидзе (1972) предположил, что это место находилось в современном Вани у слияния рек Сулори и Риони (Фазис). В отличие от него, Д. Браунд (1994) предположил, что оно находилось в регионе намного дальше на восток, в Малом Кавказе (горы Мошиан), к юго-западу от Боржоми, в долине верховья реки Мтквари (Кирос). Обе идентификации трудно принять. Во-первых, Ино, жена фиванского царя Атамаса и мачеха Фрикса, называемая Левкофея после ее апофеоза, была морской богиней. Таким образом, ее культ был широко распространен вдоль северного побережья Средиземного моря, поэтому его единственную аттестованную ветвь в Черноморском регионе не следует искать во внутренних районах или в далеких горах. Во-вторых, показания Страбона указывают не на местоположение к востоку от устья Фазиса, а на юг от него, где самые западные предгорья Малого Кавказа достигают открытого моря. В-третьих, теперь мы можем подробно описать упоминания Страбона об исторических событиях: разграбление храма Фарнаком II произошло после его поражения от Цезария в Зеле в Понте и перед его последней битвой против Асандра под Пантикапеем. Поскольку оба сражения произошли в течение месяца, у Фарнака, при возвращении в Пантикапей в августе 47 г. до н.э, не было времени пройти через внутреннюю часть Колхиды, не говоря уже о том, чтобы осадить ее укрепления. В результате Левкофейон, скорее всего,

выделялся как ориентир для моряков на пути из Трапезунда в Фазис. Мцване-Концхи («Зеленый мыс»), который в настоящее время находится на территории Батумского ботанического сада, возможно, был идеальным местом для святилища, а холмы Цихидзири можно считать возможной альтернативой для его локализации.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE LEUKOTHEION IN THE CONTEXT OF STRABO'S *GEOGRAPHY*

The sanctuary of Leukothea is among the few *realia* of ancient Kolchis mentioned in the preserved literary tradition. Strabo of Amaseia has encapsulated two references to it in his account of the landmasses between the Black and Caspian Seas. Beginning with the Tanaïs / Don in the north, the geographer introduces his treatment of Asia with a brief outline of the largest mountain ranges, waters and peoples of the region, before going into more detail. The second chapter starts with a description of the Tanaïs and gradually introduces the (Asian parts of the) Bosporan Kingdom as far as the foothills of the northern Caucasus.¹ The flight of Mithradates VI Eupator from Pontos to the Bosporos in 66 BC provides an elegant transition to the exposition of Kolchis.² Strabo starts by surveying the coastline of the eastern Black Sea from the Bosporos to Sinope, before presenting yet another overview of the area's mountain ranges. Next comes a section on Dioskurias to the south of the northernmost outliers of the Caucasus, which, at the same time, forms the northern part of Kolchis.³ Then he describes the Kolchian coast, centering on the Phasis River, i.e. the modern Rioni (though only as of Rhodopolis / Geguti) and its homonymous city at its mouth.⁴ This section ends with a few lines on the Leukotheion, which I here present in an English translation adapted from the Loeb edition:

Above the aforesaid rivers in the Moschian country lies the temple of Leukothea, founded by Phrixos, and the Oracle of Phrixos, where a ram is never sacrificed; it was once rich, but it was robbed in our time by Pharnakes, and a little later by Mithradates of Pergamon.⁵

- 1 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.1 (490–492C) and 11.2.1–12 (492–496C). For a general survey of Strabo's *Geography*, see now Roller 2018, esp. 629–684 for book 11.
- 2 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.13 (496). On Eupator's flight in 66 BC, also see App. *Mith.* 101.463–102.477; Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 269; Biffi 2010, 119–124; Roller 2018, 638f.
- 3 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.14f. (496f.C) and 11.2.16 (497f.C).
- 4 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.17 (498C). The identity of the Kolchian Phasis with the Rioni is widely accepted, see, e.g., Braund & Sinclair 1997/2000, *BA* 87; Dan 2016. But Lordkipanidze 1996, 101–105, 247 (cf. 38–41) and 2000, 9–36 points to a tradition represented by Eratosthenes and Strabo (*Geogr.* 11.2.17f. [498f.C]) that the Phasis was navigable until Sarapana / Shoropani and originated in Armenia. Lordkipanidze thus identifies the Kvirila River as the middle course of the Phasis between Shoropani and Geguti, opting for the Dzirula River (coming from the north-east) as the upper course of the Phasis. However, a broad ancient tradition claims an Armenian source, which recommends the Barimela River. This has its spring in the Lesser Caucasus and unites with the Dzirula into the Kvirila at Shoropani. See Coşkun 2019c.
- 5 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.17 (498C), translation adapted from Jones 1924. For the Greek text, see below, n. 47. I render Strabo's *hieron* with the more neutral term 'sanctuary' (with Roller 2014,

The first of the two plunderers is king Pharnakes II, son and successor of the aforementioned Mithradates Eupator, whom he dethroned in 63 BC at the end of the Third Mithradatic War. The Roman supreme commander Pompey had acknowledged his rule only in the Bosporean Kingdom. Pharnakes therefore waited for an opportunity to re-incorporate Kolchis and Pontos into his realm. He took his chances when Rome was plunged into a civil war, but Caesar defeated him at Zela on 2 August 47 BC and compelled him to retreat. His situation was exacerbated by the revolt of Asandros in the Bosporean Kingdom, and he fell while fighting against the insurgent. Caesar refused to accept the succession of Asandros, and saw the turmoil in the North as an opportunity to promote his friend Mithradates, the son of a priest from Pergamon and a princess from the Trokmian Galatians. He made the Pergamene Mithradates tetrarch of the Trokmoi in central Anatolia and further appointed him king of the Bosporos. The pillage of the sanctuary in Kolchis is the last we hear of this Mithradates. He must have died in the course of 46 BC, either in combat with Asandros or on his march up north.⁶

After these historical notes on the Leukotheion, Strabo touches in passing on the famous myths of Jason and the Argonauts as well as Phrixos. The account is unusually short, perhaps because he had dealt with them in more depth before.⁷ He shows a bit more interest in the historical kings of Kolchis, most prominently the aforesaid Mithradates Eupator, in which context Strabo pays homage to his mother's uncle Moaphernes, who had served as the king's governor in the area. The short historical outline ends with Queen Pythodoris, who ruled during the author's time. An additional clarification of geopolitics mentions the Leukotheion again:

Now the Moschian country, in which is situated the sanctuary, is divided into three parts: one part is held by the Kolchians, another by the Iberians, and another by the Armenians. There is also a small city in Iberia, the City of Phrixos, the present Ideëssa, well fortified, on the confines of Kolchis.⁸

Strabo somewhat misleadingly speaks of a 'Moschian country'. In the Augustan period, *Moschike* no longer referred to a territory inhabited by a Moschian population, since it had ceased to exist by the Hellenistic period. The term rather denoted the mountain range now usually called *Lesser Caucasus* or *Meskheti* according to a Georgian local tradition.⁹ The second chapter of Strabo's eleventh

482 and Radt 2004, 307) instead of Jones' 'temple' (thus also Hamilton & Falconer 1903/6) or even 'Tempelstadt' (Lordkipanidze 1996, 251). We do not know how the sanctuary looked.

6 See Coşkun 2019a and forthcoming a on the chronology. For further details esp. on Pharnakes and Asandros, see below, Argument 3. For general information on the kings, see, e.g., Heinen 1994; Ballesteros Pastor 2008/19a; 2008/19b; 2017.

7 See esp. Strab. *Geogr.* 1.2.37 (46C), on which see below, ns. 34 and 51.

8 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.18 (499C), quoted below, n. 47; translation adapted from Jones 1924.

9 See Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.1 (492C); 11.2.15 (497C); Plin. *NH* 6.10.28: *per convalles autem proximae Armeniae sunt Menobardi et Moscheni*; 6.10.29: *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*. Cf. Herrmann 1933, 351; Roller 2018, 639; 642. According to Lordkipanidze 1996, 151, they seem to have originated in the eastern parts of the Lesser Caucasus, before expanding westwards around

book continues with a doggerel flashback to Dioskurias, which provides further detail on the Caucasian peoples. He thus gradually transitions to the chapters on the Iberians, Albanians and the legendary Amazons, before dealing with the Caspian Sea.¹⁰

Well into the 20th century, the location of the Leukotheion was accepted as either being unknown or the object of wild speculation.¹¹ After all, neither the topographical details nor the description of the site itself are overly specific. We do not even know what type of sanctuary or monument to look for.¹² Moreover, although archaeological and historical work in Georgia has increased over the past few generations, the available data do not yet compare with equally important sites elsewhere in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region. To a significant extent, however, the difficulties of writing a History of Ancient Kolchis is due to the area's lack of stone inscriptions, which is further aggravated by the fact that ancient coins are rare to find especially along the coast and the Graeco-Roman literary tradition rarely went beyond celebrating the myths of Phrixos, Jason and Medeia.¹³

Scholars have, of course, made efforts to find the sanctuary. Given the lack of supportive epigraphic and numismatic sources, suggestions have largely been based on the wealth and prominence of a given location, combined with some material evidence pointing to a major cult site. One of the most authoritative Georgian archaeologists of the past generation, Otar Lordkipanidze, has repeatedly argued for Akhvlediani's Hill in Vani, situated on the Sulori River, about 2 km south of where the latter merges into the Rioni. Some 70 km east from Poti Seaport near the ancient city of Phasis,¹⁴ Vani covers a slope from the northernmost ridge of the

300 BC. Also see pp. 256–259, although his effort to explain ‘warum Strabon einen Teil der Rioni-Niederung als “das Land der Mos’cher” bezeichnet’ (p. 258) is superfluous, since his preferred location of Vani (see below) would still justify the notion of Moschian Mountains. Note, however, that Prokop. *Goth.* 8.2.4.24–26 speaks of the *Meschoi* (*sic*) as subject to the Iberians, being settled in the mountains in-between the Iberians and the Lazoi. I suppose that the name of the mountains had been imposed on its inhabitants by the time.

10 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.19 (499C) and 11.3–6 (499–508C).

11 E.g., Eitrem 1925, 2296f. only mentions its location in Kolchis; Jones 1924, vol. 5, 213–215 avoids any specification. For a discussion of the evidence, a historical synthesis and a scholarly survey, see Lordkipanidze 1996, 141–153 and 252f.

12 See above, n. 5.

13 Cf. Braund 1994 and Tsatskhladze 1998. To some degree, Vani is an exception, see Dundua & Lordkipanidze 1979 on the coins found there, although their historical interpretation remains problematic; see below, n. 18.

14 The location of Phasis City in the Poti area is widely accepted, although identifying the site remains a challenge due to the frequent changes of the river bed and the rise of the sea water level; see, e.g., Silberman 1995, 30; Lordkipanidze 1996, 228–232; 2000, 47–53; Tsatskhladze 1998, 7–11; Nawotka 2005, 235. Braund & Sinclair 1997/2000, *BA* 87 and *Directory*, p. 1227 recommend the results of underwater archaeology by Gamkrelidze 1992 for pointing to the Paleostomi Lake; cf. Belfiore 2009, 175 n. 86 with further references. But dislocated evidence mainly from the Byzantine period is insufficient; see Tsatskhladze 2018, 477. The most probable location is slightly north-east of the Paleostomi Lake, see Coşkun 2020b, 658f. with n. 9. The effective distance from Vani may have been closer to a hundred km, depending on road

Lesser Caucasus extending into the Kolchian plain. Now it is only a small town of less than 5,000 inhabitants, but its ancient settlement was extraordinarily affluent, based on easy access to gold washed out of the mountain rivers, fertile farmland and a combination of land and water routes fostering trade. The impressive monuments on Akhvlediani's Hill thus seemed to encourage us to look for the Leukotheion among them.¹⁵

Lordkipanidze also points to a twofold Hellenistic destruction layer. He ascribes this evidence to conquests in 49 and 47 BC respectively, as he dates the abovementioned campaigns of Pharnakes II and Mithradates VII (I would rather propose August 47 and spring 46 BC).¹⁶ Lordkipanidze's view seems to be accepted, with some hesitation albeit, by Gocha Tsetsckhladze, who further emphasizes the long-term historical implications:

Wenn die Annahme zutreffend ist, daß in Strabos Schilderung des Heiligtums der Leukotheia von der alten Stadt die Rede ist, die in Vani ausgegraben wird, dann ereignete sich das bei den Einfällen in die Kolchis zuerst des bosporianischen Königs Pharnakes (ungefähr 49 v.Chr.) und etwas später des Mithridates von Pergamon (47 v.Chr.), von denen Strabo (XI, 2, 17) und Cassius Dio (42, 45) berichten. Der Fall von Souris (Vani) war der Schlußakkord des Zusammenbruchs der alten Kolchis. Der Schwarzmeerküstenteil gerät in Abhängigkeit vom Imperium Romanum, der Ostteil fällt an Iberien.¹⁷

conditions. *Google Maps* now suggests a route via the E60 as the quickest connection by car, which is 88 km.

- 15 See Lordkipanidze 1996, 251–269, esp. 258–268; cf. 1991, 194; 2000, 99 n. 658. For Vani as the location of the Leukotheion, also see Blázquez 2005, 235; Licheli 2007, 1122; Radt 2008, 255; Belfiore 2009, 173 n. 82 (quoting Lordkipanidze 1972, but also considering Samtredia, as below, n. 21); also Sens 2009, 166f. (despite admitting several difficulties). Tsetsckhladze 1998, 114–164 offers a critical survey of the archaeological material of Vani, esp. 119–126 on the gold industry; he also describes the hill as located about 170 m above the sea level (114; 133–143); he identifies it as the 'Akropolis' with the palatial residence of the *skeptouchos* (138f.); he further addresses the traces of rituals (115) and sanctuaries (144–150), esp. on the Mother Goddesses Demeter and Aphrodite (150). Only in a final note (164 n. 92), he admits Leukothea as the central divinity of the 'Tempelstadt ... als eine der möglichen Hypothesen', though he gives more credit to this possibility at the end of his historical account (p. 186, quoted below). For an updated summary of the material evidence and history of Vani, see Tsetsckhladze 2018, 485–500, though without mention of the Leukotheion; cf. Balandier 2005; Blázquez 2005; Sens 2009, 172–186. This is convincingly accepted by Tsetsckhladze 1998, 132 (*Souris*) and 2018, 485–500. The settlement at the confluence of the Sulori and the Phasis near Vani has been identified with *Surium* by Pliny (*NH* 6.4.13). This is convincingly accepted by Tsetsckhladze 1998, 132 (*Souris*) and 2018b, 490f. (cf. 498–500 on a less likely alternative: Zeda Tsikhesulori slightly north of Vani) as well as by Licheli 2007, 1091, further considered closely by Lordkipanidze 1996, 269 (with n. 437), but doubted by Braund 1994, 148. Sens 2009, 167 regards the identification of Vani with *Surium* or the *Leukotheion* as mutually exclusive.
- 16 See previous note, esp. Lordkipanidze 1991, 194: 'Vani was destroyed in the middle of the first century. If, as I have conjectured, Vani is the sanctuary of Leukothea in Strabo, then the destruction must be credited to two invasions of Colchis – the first ca 49 by the Bosporan king Pharnaces and a second ca 47 by Mithridates VII. Excavations have clearly revealed traces of two destructions within a short period.' On the numismatic evidence, see n. 18 below.
- 17 Tsetsckhladze 1998, 186. Cf. Braund 1994, 147, who considers the chronological interpretation of the destruction possible regardless of rejecting the identification with Vani; also see p. 149:

But it is unconvincing to claim two materially distinct strata for late-Hellenistic Vani and to assign them to such a narrow timeframe without conclusive numismatic evidence.¹⁸ What is more, Strabo does not even mention destruction, but rather speaks of pillage and impoverishment. Vague indications of destruction in the archaeological data are thus not helpful for the identification of the sanctuary's site.

Irrespective of this difficulty, David Braund has put forward the strongest objections to Lordkipanidze's interpretation. While he accepts that the site of Vani formed a large city in the Hellenistic period, he does not see sufficient evidence for conceiving of it as a 'temple city'. Most of the evidence adduced to prove its pre-eminence as a cult site appears ambiguous to him.¹⁹ I would add that the term 'temple state' has been defined as a sanctuary of regional pre-eminence centred around one specific cult and ruled largely autonomously by a high priest, who is, however, appointed by and ultimately a vassal of a king: Lordkipanidze has not even tried to argue that any of these criteria have been met.²⁰ More importantly, Braund understands Strabo as implying a location in the triple border zone of the Kolchians, Iberians and Armenians. He thus proposes the Akhaltsikhe area or Atsquri, southwest of Borjomi in the valley cut into the mountains by the upper Mtkvari / Kyros.²¹

'Rather, destruction at Vani and at the temple of Leucothea are better seen as symptomatic of the extensive destruction that Strabo mentions.' Lordkipanidze's interpretation is further quoted in the German version of *Wikipedia*: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wani>. Without discussing Lordkipanidze's or Tsetskhladze's views or even addressing the Leukotheion, Licheli 2007, 1096 points to Parthian influence around the time.

- 18 Lordkipanidze bases his argument on the discussion of Dundua & Lordkipanidze 1979, while Dundua actually relates the destruction to the Kolchian revolt around 83 and Pompey's campaign in 65 BC. For the latter, one may add reference to Diod. 40.4; Plut. *Pomp.* 34; App. *Mith.* 103.477–104.484; cf. Braund 1994, 161–169. There is no clearly attributable destruction layer after this, and an isolated coin from Pergamon dated to 50/49 BC does not justify the postulate of one, let alone, two destruction layers in the early 40s. Lordkipanidze 1996, 262–264 adds further detail, but the chronological implications remain circular. The evidence has been addressed only in passing by other scholars (e.g., Braund 1994, 159–161; Tsetskhladze 1998, 115; Coşkun 2018b) and passed over in silence by de Callataÿ 1997.
- 19 Braund 1994, 146f., only excepting a female terracotta statue possibly representing Hekate. He is followed by Tsetskhladze 1995, 298, although Tsetskhladze 1998 fully endorses the view of Lordkipanidze, speaking of 'ein Heiligtum oder eine Tempelstadt' (133) and 'Kultzentrum' (158); also see pp. 164 and 184f. (comparison with Anatolian 'temple states' and explanation with Greek or Anatolian immigration); Tsetskhladze 2018, 496f. is more cautious and concludes 'that Vani was both the administrative (sceptuchal) and religious 'capital' of central Colchis'. For Vani as a 'temple city' also see Blázquez 2005; cf. Henkel 2007, 1: 'eine Tempelstadt des 7. bis 1. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.', and is considered *communis opinio* by Lordkipanidze 1996, 251 (with further references); cf. 262.
- 20 Foundational is Boffo 1985. Also see Coşkun 2018a with further bibliography.
- 21 Braund 1994, 146–151, speaking vaguely of 'a body of water or a water source' in the 'general region of modern Akhaltsikhe' (followed by Roller 2018, 641). He mentions Atsquri as a site on the upper Mtkvari, where 5th-century Athenian ware has been found, but not as the sanctuary's site (p. 185). Braund 1997/2000, 1260 specifies Atsquri as the location of the Leukotheion, tentatively followed by Belfiore 2009, 173 n. 82, who, however, also considers near Samtredia (following Lordkipanidze 1972). For another description of Atsquri, without reference to the Leukotheion, see Licheli 2007, 1124f.

But a site in the Borjomi area is at least as problematic to accept as in Vani, for mainly three reasons, as I shall unfold in this paper. First, such inland locations would be quite unusual for the sea goddess Leukothea; second, they do not seem to be fully in line with Strabo's topographical description; and third, they appear to be incompatible with the implications of the military campaigns which induced the downfall of the Leukotheion in the times of the Roman Civil War. My argument will conclude with a tentative suggestion of two sites in the sea-facing foothills of the Lesser Caucasus that would ideally fit Strabo's description. A new map of ancient Kolchis drawn by my student Stone Chen will help the reader navigate through this investigation (Map 4 at the end of the volume).

II. ARGUMENT 1: MYTHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE LEUKOTHEA CULT

1. Ino-Leukothea and Phrixos in the Graeco-Roman Tradition

Throughout the ancient world, Leukothea was identified with Ino, one of the daughters of king Kadmos, the mythical founder of Thebes. She was also married to his successor Athamas, son of the god Aiolos. One branch of the broad tradition emphasizes the couple's role in the upbringing of Dionysos: Zeus had engendered him with Ino's sister Nephele, Athamas' first wife, whom Hera killed out of jealousy. The goddess also took revenge on Dionysos' foster parents, striking them with madness, so that Ino would live on as a Maenad in the wilderness. Her sons Learchos and Melikertes were also persecuted, if not slaughtered, by Athamas or his next wife Themisto, though some accounts even name Athamas' oldest son Phrixos as the evildoer, if not Ino herself. The older versions of the myth had Learchos die first at the hands of Athamas, whereas Ino escaped, together with Melikertes. In despair, they leaped into the sea, imploring Dionysos for help. According to some, they were saved by a dolphin, while others have them stranded or even drowned, but they were eventually transformed into divinities. Ino turned into Leukothea, named after the white foam of the sea, or perhaps after the shimmering reflection of the sunlight. Her son became Palaimon. Henceforth, they were called upon by sailors in distress. As such, Ino-Leukothea was already known to Homer by the end of the 8th century BC, who had her save Odysseus when erring all over the sea on a raft.²²

22 Hom. *Od.* 5.333–353, 461–463; cf. Hyginus, *Fab. 'Odyssea'*: *Ibi cum fluctibus iactaretur, Leucothoe, quam nos Matrem Matutam dicimus, quae in mari exigit aevum, balteum ei dedit, quo sibi pectus suum vinciret, ne pessum abiret.* And see Eitrem 1925, 2293 (on possible etymological explanations); 2297–2302 (on the myths involving her); 2304 (Leukotheai as an epithet of the Nereids according to Hesychios *s.v.*); Krauskopf 1981 (discussing her cults throughout the Mediterranean); Nercessian 1990 (cataloguing her ancient depictions); *theoi.com s.v.* 'Leukothea' (with many literary sources quoted in English translation); Gantz 1993, 176–180; 183f.; 473–478. For further references on Ino, see below, ns. 31–33.

While this is the basis of my assumption that Leukothea should be regarded as a maritime divinity, an important variation of the legend may have the potential to alter our view. According to some ancient sources, Ino was not so much the protectress of Dionysos than an ‘evil queen’. She is said to have plotted against Athamas’ son by Nephele, her nephew and stepson Phrixos. There is repeated talk of a vicious design: she had the seeds in her land secretly roasted, in order to prevent them from sprouting, so that the ensuing famine would cause demand for the most costly sacrifice: Phrixos, the oldest son of Athamas. Just before his father slaughtered him on the altar, Hermes or Nephele intervened by sending a miraculous golden ram for his and his sister Helle’s escape. Riding on the ram’s back, she made it only to the Dardanelles, duly called *Hellespont* after she drowned there. Her brother reached Aia, the exotic realm of Aiëtes, which the later tradition identified with Kolchis (by ca. 500 BC). There, he became the son-in-law of the king.²³

Ino’s perilous role is now considered the standard version of the myth.²⁴ According to Paul Dräger, this was already the case in the plot that he reconstructs for the pre-Homeric period.²⁵ If this were true, it would raise serious question about her ‘qualification’ as a helper in need. What is more, Phrixos would seem to be a very unlikely candidate for ‘founding’ a sanctuary of his evil stepmother, as the local aetiology seems to have claimed. Despite these problems, however, the connection of Leukothea with Phrixos has largely been accepted without further comment so far.²⁶ There are only few exceptions to such views. On the one hand, Duane Roller thinks that ‘a sanctuary to his evil stepmother might be a reasonable precaution for Phrixos to have taken’ – as if she continued to pose a risk to his safety even in far-away Kolchis.²⁷ On the other hand, Otar Lordkipanidze finds the combination so hopelessly unlikely that he simply rejects it wholesale, together with all the clues to the sanctuary’s location. But his radical approach fails to explain why Strabo or anyone before him would have wanted to connect the two cults in the first place.²⁸

A diachronic reading of our sources reveals, however, that Ino’s role as the blameful stepmother is an Athenian innovation which can be dated to the 430s, if not early 420s. The myth seems to originate in rites, probably involving human sacrifice, that were meant to avert the failure of the crops. Its earliest narratives elaborations focused on how king Athamas navigated between the ritual demands

23 See previous n. for references to scholarship and add Keyßner 1941; Bruneau 1994. The learned but speculative musings by Graves 1952/71 need not distract us: he rashly equates Leukothea with Nephele (as the mother of the Centaurs) (p. 63), further links her indirectly with Io (p. 62) and a pristine lunar goddess, the ‘White Lady’ (p. 24).

24 E.g., Keyßner 1941; Nercessian 1990; Bruneau 1994; Antoni 2006/18; Radt 2008, 255; Węcowski 2009, on *BNJ* 6 F 11; Roller 2018, 641. It is called ‘the common story’ in *theoi.com*.

25 Dräger 2001, 8.

26 There is no reference to the connection in Keyßner 1941; Nercessian 1990; Bruneau 1994. The link is mentioned but not explained by Eitrem 1925, 2296f.; Krauskopf 1981, 145 (‘seltsamerweise’); Braund 1994, 149 (he merely comments on the higher popularity of Phrixos compared to Jason on p. 32); Martin 2001, 172; Radt 2008, 255; *theoi.com*.

27 Roller 2018, 641.

28 Lordkipanidze 2000, 99 n. 658.

of the gods and the physical needs of his subjects. We find the first clear attestation for a misogynistic reinterpretation in Pindar's *Fourth Pythian Ode* (462 BC), which, however, leaves the name of the stepmother open.²⁹ An Alexandrian scholion to this poem provides some further precious information:

And from a stepmother's godless bolts] For he (sc. Phrixos) was maltreated because of his stepmother having lusted after him, and he was plotted against, so he ran away. In his *Hymns*, Pindar says that this woman is Damodika, but Hippias says she is Gorgopis; Sophokles in his *Athamas* says (she is) Nephele; Pherekydes says (she is) Themisto. He also says that he (Phrixos) willingly gave himself over to be sacrificed when the crops failed of their own accord.³⁰

Our first witness for Ino sharing in the guilt of Athamas is Herodotos, who may have added a passing note to his *Histories* towards the end of his life (ca. 427 BC):

When Xerxes had come to Halus in Achaia, his guides, desiring to inform him of all they knew, told him the story which is related in that country concerning the worship of Laphystian Zeus, namely how Athamas, son of Aiolos, plotted Phrixos' death with Ino, and further, how the Achaians by an oracle's bidding compel Phrixos descendants to certain tasks.³¹

The ensuing literary tradition is very heterogeneous. Only some of its branches represent Ino in a negative light,³² while others either focus on her role as victim or on Themisto as the antagonist of Phrixos' sons. Quite telling are the two Argonautic epics that survive: Apollonios Rhodios (3rd century BC) fades out completely the question of guilt for the fate of Phrixos, whereas Valerius Flaccus (1st century AD) avoids explicit blame, plays with subtle ambiguities and concludes with some kind of reconciliation between Ino on the one hand and Helle and Phrixos on the other.³³ We can thus be sure that, when Leukothea's cult began spreading through the Mediterranean world in the 8th and 7th centuries, the common versions of the legend presented her as an unstained maritime divinity. There is no reason to assume that conditions had changed, when Greek settlers (probably from Phokaia) introduced Leukothea to the Black Sea in the 6th century. The unique conflation of her cult with that of Phrixos was not induced by any events that form part of the preserved mythical narratives, but most likely reflects the physical take-over of her sanctuary

29 Pind. *Pyth.* 4.159–164, with Dräger 2001, 19 and West 2003, 157 for the date.

30 Pherekydes, *BNJ* 3 F 98 = *Scholia (BDEGQ) on Pindar*, 4.288a: ἔκ τε ματριᾶς ἀθέων βελέων] ἐκακώθη γὰρ διὰ τὴν μητριᾶν ἐρασθεῖσαν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπεβουλευθή ὥστε φυγεῖν. ταύτην δὲ ὁ μὲν Πίνδαρος ἐν Ὑμνοῖς Δαμοδίκαν Ἰππίας δὲ Γοργῶπιν· Σοφοκλῆς ἐν Ἀθάμαντι Νεφέλην· Φερεκύδης Θεμιστώ. ὃς καὶ φησι τῶν καρπῶν φθειρομένων ἐκ ταυτομάτου ἐθελούσιον δοῦναι αὐτὸν εἰς σφαγὴν. Greek text and English translation from Morison 2011; cf. Hippias of Elis, *BNJ* 6 F 11 ed. by Węcowski 2009.

31 Hdt. 7.197.1: ἐς Ἄλον δὲ τῆς Ἀχαιῆς ἀπικομένῳ Ξέρξῃ οἱ καταγεμόνες τῆς ὁδοῦ βουλόμενοι τὸ πᾶν ἐξηγγέσθαι ἔλεγόν οἱ ἐπιχώριον λόγον, τὰ περὶ τὸ ἱρὸν τοῦ Λαφυστίου Διός, ὡς Ἀθάμας ὁ Αἰόλου ἐμηχανήσατο Φρίξῳ μόνρον σὺν Ἴνοι βουλεύσας, μετέπειτα δὲ ὡς ἐκ θεοπροπίου Ἄχαιοι. Greek text and English translation (adapted) from Godley 1920.

32 Thus also the painting on a Tarentine red-figure vase of ca. 340: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz 1984.41; see Bruneau 1994, 399 no. 1; Giuliani 1988, 6–10. For this and other (seeming) representations of Ino on vases, see Coşkun, in preparation a.

33 Apollonios' silence is conspicuous in 2.1140–1156. For ambiguity, see Val. Flacc. 1.277–292; 1.521f.; also 8.1–23; for a conciliatory tone, see 2.605–607; cf. Coşkun, in preparation a.

by either Milesian (2nd half of 6th century) or Sinopean colonists (6th or 4th century). We can only speculate about narrative aetiologies that would have been spun locally, but there is no good reason to believe that such nuances would have disconnected Leukothea's cult from the sea.³⁴

2. Leukothea in Her Kolchian Context: Mother, River or Maritime Goddess?

The most serious obstacle of investigating the cult of Leukothea in Kolchis is that no specific monument dedicated to her has so far been identified. We thus lack the usual additional evidence that coins, inscriptions or plastic votive offerings might provide us with. In addition, the goddess barely seems to have played a role in the Black Sea region at large. Strabo's reference to her sanctuary is completely isolated. Given the density of our knowledge of the cultic landscape along the Euxine coast, the silence of our remaining sources is quite telling.³⁵

As laid out in the introduction, however, the most eminent scholars have proposed either Vani or the Borjomi area for the location of the Leukotheion. If either of these were accepted, we would have to picture the sanctuary far inland, if not high up in the mountains, and thus disconnected from the sea. Accordingly, Leukothea's Kolchian emanation would have been less important as a maritime divinity, but probably one of the many syncretic manifestations of the Asian Mother Goddess.³⁶ The Black Sea region is very rich in evidence for the veneration of the Ephe-

34 For the Phokaians as the promoters of Leukothea in the Mediterranean, see Morel 2006, 380, 407. For the engagement of the Milesians and Sinopeans along the Black Sea coast, see, e.g., Strab. *Geogr.* 1.2.37 (46C), quoted below, n. 51; 1.2.39 (46C); 11.2.17f. (498f.C); 12.3.11 (546C); Pomp. Mela 1.19.104 on Kytissoros / Kytoros, discussed below, n. 50; cf. Ehrhardt 1988; Braund 1994, 8–39; 1998; 2005; Lordkipanidze 1996, 18–66; Tsetskhladze 1998; 2013; Burcu Erciyas 2007. Batumistsikhe may have hosted the earliest 'Greek colonies in Colchis ... somewhere between 610 and 570 BC'; see Tsetskhladze 2018b, 512–514.

35 Cf. Ehrhardt 1988 on Milesian colonies or *Ancient Sacral Monuments in the Black Sea* by Petropulos & Maslennikov (2010). The most recent monograph on *Goddesses in the Bosporan Kingdom* (Braund 2018) does not even have a lemma *Leukothea* in its index. Word searches for the same have also been in vain in Robu & Birzescu 2016 and Fornasier 2016 (who, in contrast, mentions Apollo 87 and Achilles 10 times). The survey of male deities by Saprykin 2010 also takes note of their female companions, but once more there is no reference to Leukothea. For Phasis, see Lordkipanidze 2000, 62–99 and Braund 2010. The latter emphasizes the key role of the Phasis River in its male and female emanations, calling 'both profoundly local to the landscape' (see below, with ns. 39–42), besides Artemis and Apollo. For the fortress of Apsaros (see below, n. 66), see Kakhidze & Mamuladze 2010; while they make no explicit reference to Leukothea, one might tentatively relate the topaz intaglio of a silver ring (2nd–3rd century AD), which shows a dolphin, although the authors (p. 459) connect it with Neptune.

36 Cf. the vague considerations of Lordkipanidze 1996, 265, claiming that 'unter dem Namen der Leukothea eine örtliche Gottheit zu verstehen ist, deren Attribute sehr jenen der griechischen Leukothea – der weißen Göttin, der Bewohnerin des Meeres, einer der eigenartigsten Gestalten der griechischen Mythologie – ähneln. Auch sonst sind die Griechen bei der Beschreibung religiöser Kulte fremder Völker oft auf diese Weise verfahren ...' But then he goes on to specify – arbitrarily, as I find, – that both Leukothea and the anonymous local divinity were in charge

sian Artemis, Artemis Parthenos, Artemis Hekate, Aphrodite Urania, or Kybele. We may add Egyptian Isis as another variation celebrated throughout the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman Empire, often as the consort of Serapis.³⁷ Her Near-Eastern counterparts were Babylonian Ishtar and Syro-Phoenician Astarte, whereas she went by the name *Anahid* or *Anahita* in Persian and Armenian societies, who had more immediate relevance for Kolchis. Strabo calls this eastern Mother *Anaitis*, presenting her as the most popular divinity in Armenia, famous not least for ritual prostitution. Precisely this detailed knowledge of the geographer should caution us not to accept that the Kolchian Leukothea is a variation of *Anaitis*.³⁸

An intriguing alternative might be *Theos Phasiane*, a distinct Kolchian version of the Magna Mater, which Arrian introduces as follows:

The Statue of the Goddess Phasiane is placed to the left of the entrance into the Phasis; which Deity we may reasonably conjecture, from her figure and appearance, to be Rhea, as she holds in her hands a cymbal, has lions under her throne, and is seated in the same manner as the statue by Pheidias in the temple of Kybele at Athens. / An anchor, said to be of the ship Argo, is shown here; but as it is of iron, it does not seem to be ancient; it differs indeed both in size and shape from those at present in use, but nevertheless appears to me to be of later date than the Argonautic period. They also show there some fragments of an ancient stone anchor, which are more likely than the other to be the remains of the anchor of the Argo. No other monument is now to be found there of the fabulous history of Jason.³⁹

of fertility, agriculture and viticulture (266–268). Moreover, he suggests identifying her by reference to a statue base beside one of the city gates, which a graffito reveals as ‘eindeutig’ dedicated to Leukothea, although the inscription only implies a female figure, whether goddess or queen (*anassa*) (pp. 267f.). Lordkipanidze goes one step back when denying that Leukothea could have been the main goddess as a maritime divinity, before downplaying his theory as ‘rein hypothetisch’ (p. 268). This is all quite confusing. Cf. Blázquez 2005, 235 for Leukothea as a local goddess; Belfiore 2009, 170 n. 80: ‘forse assimilata ad una dea di origine assira’ and 173 n. 82: ‘identificabile con una dea assira delle acque’. Against such speculations, see Nawotka 2005, 236. Bremmer 1999 presents Leukothea as a goddess of ‘initiation and rites of reversal’, focusing on practices known from the wider context of a few cult sites, irrespective of the literary evidence. For a more balanced approach, see Krauskopf 1981, quoted below, n. 46.

37 For all of them in the Bosporean Kingdom, see Braund 2018; also Maslennikov 2010, 211; 217 etc. as well as Molev & Moleva 2010. Add Lazarenko et al. 2010 on the ‘Pontic Mother’ in Dionysopolis; Rousyaeva 2010, 74–76 and Krapivina 2010 on mother goddesses (esp. Aphrodite) in Olbia; Moga 2012 on Artemis in Pontos, Licheli 2007, 1091–1093 on Hekate in Kolchis and ritual pits in Vani and Saikhe. For Aphrodite and Demeter as well as Hekate and Hestia in Milesian colonies, see Ehrhardt 1988, 164–167 and 173–176. For Serapis and Isis in Kolchis, see Kakhidze & Mamuladze 2010, 456–458; for Pontos, see Saprykin 2010, 492–498.

38 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.14.16 (532f.C). Pace Chaumont in Boyce et al. 1989/2012, ch. iii: ‘Regarding the Caucasian countries adjacent to Armenia, Strabo (*Geography* 11.2.17) states that there was a temple dedicated to Leukothea, obviously an analogue of the Iranian goddess (O. G. von Wesendonck, *Caucasica* I, 1924, p. 87) in the land of the Moschi in Colchis. The legendary and late-dated *Life of the Apostle St. Andrew* mentions a cult of Apollo and Artemis, that is, Mithra and Anāhitā, in the same region.’ But for the children of Leto, we should rather think of a Milesian background, see Ehrhardt 1988, 127–161 on the Apolline triad; also above, n. 35.

39 Arr. *PPE* 9.1f.: Εισβαλλόντων δὲ εἰς τὸν Φᾶσιν ἐν ἀριστερᾷ ἴδρυνται ἡ Φασιανὴ θεός. Εἴη δ’ ἂν ἀπὸ γε τοῦ σχήματος τεκμαιρομένῳ ἡ Ῥέα· καὶ γὰρ κύμβαλον μετὰ χειρᾶς ἔχει καὶ λέοντας ὑπὸ τῷ θρόνῳ, καὶ κάθηται ὡσπερ ἐν τῷ Μητρόφῳ Ἀθήνησιν ἢ τοῦ Φειδίου. / Ἐνταῦθα καὶ ἡ ἄγκυρα

Arrian's description of Phasiane stands out in his otherwise mostly dry report.⁴⁰ It is a beautiful example of Kolchian syncretism. On the one hand, he explicitly refers to the Athenian Mother of the Gods under her names Kybele and Rhea, supporting this identification with her typical features (cymbal, lions and throne). On the other hand, the name and site unfailingly betray Phasiane's local roots. In addition, her gender also reveals her non-Greek origin, since river gods in the Hellenic world are normally represented as bull-horned father gods.⁴¹ Of particular interest is the anchor and its motivation: there would actually be no need to reference the Argonauts here, since the protection of seafaring would be sufficiently plausible for the river goddess, especially in a place where the Phasis releases sailors onto the open sea or receives those coming in from the Euxine. The link between Phasiane and the anchor was old and strong, when Arrian wrote those lines, a conclusion which its antiquated shape and its twofold manifestation in iron and stone both endorse.⁴²

In theory, the anchor might allow us to muse about a potential connection of this Phasiane with Leukothea, but not a single detail in the accounts of Arrian and Strabo matches. After all, it would be hazardous to identify the statue of a composite chthonic-fluvial goddess in the estuary of the Phasis (superficially linked to the Argonauts) with the sanctuary of a sea goddess (opaquely connected with Phrixos) in the Moschian Mountains.⁴³ The description of Phasiane thus sets the expectations for how Strabo or Arrian might have introduced a sanctuary of Leukothea as a local variation of the Mother Goddess or of Phasiane – had only she been such.

Considering the evidence we have, as lacunose as it may be, I see no reason to doubt that Kolchian Leukothea largely followed Mediterranean traditions. Strabo, at least, did not feel the need to alert his readers to any local peculiarity, except perhaps the unique circumstance that her sanctuary was regarded as founded by Phrixos.⁴⁴ We therefore have to consider her a sea goddess, a quality so genuine to Leukothea that some ancient authors turned the offspring of Kadmos into one of the

δείκνυται τῆς Ἀργοῦς. Καὶ ἡ μὲν σιδηρᾶ οὐκ ἔδοξέ μοι εἶναι παλαιά – καίτοι τὸ μέγεθος οὐ κατὰ τὰς νῦν ἀγκύρας ἐστίν, καὶ τὸ σχῆμα ἀμηγέπη ἐξηλλαγμένη –, ἀλλὰ νεωτέρα μοι ἐφάνη εἶναι τοῦ χρόνου. Λιθίνης δέ τινος ἄλλης θραύσματα ἐδείκνυτο παλαιά, ὡς ταῦτα μᾶλλον εἰκάσαι ἐκεῖνα εἶναι τὰ λείψανα τῆς ἀγκύρας τῆς Ἀργοῦς. Ἄλλο δὲ οὐδὲν ὑπόμνημα ἦν ἐνταῦθα τῶν μύθων τῶν ἀμφὶ τὸν Ἰάσονα. The text follows the ed. of Wirth 1967 (cf. Silberman 1995; Liddle 2003); also see Sz wajcer (undated = Arr. *PPE* 11). The translation has been adapted from the one by Falconer 1805 (= Arr. *PPE* 7) and compared with that of Silberman and Liddle.

40 Silberman 1995, 29f. explains it with Arrian's particular interest in the Mother Goddess in general; cf. Belfiore 2009, 171f. n. 180. Tsetschladze 1998, 11 emphasizes her function as city founder. Lordkipanidze 2000, 90–96, explores here role as mother goddess and (p. 96) focuses on her position at the city's gate. Cf. Licheli 2007, 1090; Braund 2010, 434f.

41 See Braund 2010, 433; also see Lordkipanidze 2000, 81–90 on the male emanation of Phasis.

42 For antiquarian comments, see Silberman 1995, 30; Liddle 2003, 100; Belfiore 2009, 172f. n. 81, referencing Paus. 1.3.4 (for another mention of the statue) and Apollon. 1.955–960 (as the potential reason for Arrian's concern with the anchor's authenticity).

43 The awareness of Phasiane's nature is also implied in the custom that sailors entering the Phasis were expected to pour out their old water supplies, due to superstitious beliefs: Arr. *PPE* 8.5.

44 Also note how closely familiar Strabo was with various branches of the Argonautic myth; see Lordkipanidze 1996, 18–38. On the location of the Phrixion, also see below, with ns. 50–57.

sea nymphs, although these were known as the daughters of Nereus (Nereids).⁴⁵ Besides, the article in Pauly-Wissowa compiles 29 cities, islands or territories for which her cult is attested. Although nearly a century old, the list is still impressive and meaningful for us, since the entirety of these locations endorse Leukothea's direct relevance for seafaring. Ingrid Krauskopf has presented a revised list in the hope of elucidating the Etruscan sanctuary of Pyrgi built around 500 BC for the mother goddess Uni (later identified with Eileithyia, Mater Matuta and Leukothea, instead of her more typical counterpart Juno). She explores possible non-maritime functions Leukothea may have fulfilled, such as that of *kurotrophos* (in her role as foster mother of Dionysos), guide for initiation rites, or helper in birth or death; despite observing a significant potential for local variation, she admits that the surest parts of our evidence relate her to the sea, with all known sanctuaries and a coherent literary tradition from Homer to Late Antiquity.⁴⁶ Hence, we should also expect the Kolchian branch of her cult to have had an immediate connection with the Euxine, if not to have been visible from the sea itself. Strong evidence to the contrary should be required to have us reject this assumption.

III. ARGUMENT 2: THE TOPOGRAPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF STRABO'S ACCOUNT

1. The Textual and Topographical Context of the Leukotheion

Let us now examine whether Strabo's topographical details support the conclusion that I have drawn from the mythical and cultic traditions. For a better understanding, I include some relevant context preceding the brief notes on the sanctuary itself, starting with the description of the Phasis. The sections that will be important in my subsequent discussion are printed in bold:

Further, the greater part of the remainder of Kolchis **is on the sea**. 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 neighbouring mountains. It is navigated as far as Sarapana, a fortress capable of admitting the population even of a city. From here people go by land to the

45 A loose connection with the Nereids is expressed as early as the 5th century BC (Pind. *Olymp.* 2.29f.); she is counted among them by Philostratos the Elder, *Imagines* 2.16 (3rd century AD), and Nonnos, *Dionysiaka* 10.122. Cf. Eitrem 1925, 2300; Nercessian 1990, 659f.; *theoi.com*, with further references.

46 Eitrem 1925, 2293–2297. And Krauskopf 1981, e.g., 140: 'Leukothea wird also in der antiken Dichtung einhellig als Göttin der Schifffahrt und der Seeleute, als Retterin in Seenot, als freundliche, hilfreiche Meeresgottheit geschildert. Andere Funktionen sind, soweit ich sehe, nicht überliefert – nicht berücksichtigt wurden hier die Stellen, die sich auf Mater Matuta und nur indirekt durch sie auf Leukothea beziehen.' Also 148: 'Sicher erscheint mir aber, daß die Leukothea, die Griechen im 4. Jh. mit der Göttin von Pyrgi identifizierten, nicht eine der Mater Matuta völlig entsprechende Göttin war, sondern ganz wesentlich eine See- und Schifffahrtsgottheit, und daß dieser Aspekt nicht außer acht gelassen werden darf.' Braund 1994, 149 only concedes that 'the cult of Leucothea would most naturally be associated with water', but rivers and seas are sufficiently different, as are their divine personifications.

Kyros in four days by a wagon road. On the Phasis is situated a city bearing the same name, an emporion of the Kolchians, which is protected on one side by the river, on another by a lake, and on another by the sea. Thence people go to Amisos and Sinope by sea (a voyage of two or three days), because the shores are soft around the **outlets of the rivers**. The country is excellent both in respect to its produce – except its honey, which is generally bitter – and in respect to everything that pertains to ship-building; for it not only produces quantities of timber, but also brings it down **on rivers**. And the people make linen in quantities, and hemp, wax, and pitch. Their linen industry has been famed far and wide; for they used to export linen to outside places; and some writers, wishing to show forth a kinship between the Kolchians and the Egyptians, confirm their belief by this. **Above the aforesaid rivers in the Moschian Mountain lies the temple of Leukothea, founded by Phrixos, and the Oracle of Phrixos, where a ram is never sacrificed. It was once rich, but it was robbed in our time by Pharnakes, and a little later by Mithradates of Pergamon.** For when a country is devastated, “things divine are in sickly plight and wont not even to be respected”, says Euripides.

... **Now the Moschian Mountain, in which the sanctuary is located, is divided into three parts: one part is held by the Kolchians, another by the Iberians, and another by the Armenians.** There is also a small city in Iberia, the City of Phrixos, the present Ideëssa, well fortified, on the confines of Kolchis.⁴⁷

A first, superficial reading of the text seems to be suggestive of a site in the coastal area. This is not only a possible implication of the first sentence, which describes Kolchis as mainly coastal, but it is also compatible with the structure of the account: e.g., the treatment of the Phasis River ends with Phasis City, which is said to touch the sea; the route to Amisos and Sinope is by sea following the sandy shore; and the produce of the plain is transported to the coast on the rivers. Strabo’s main perspective obviously stands in the tradition of the *periplus* literature.

47 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.17f. (498f.C). The translation has been adapted from Jones 1924. The Greek text follows Meineke 1877, slightly corrected according to Radt 2004: **καὶ ἡ λοιπὴ δὲ Κολχίς ἐπὶ τῇ θαλάττῃ ἢ πλείων ἐστὶ διαρρεῖ δ’ αὐτὴν ὁ Φάσις, μέγας ποταμὸς ἐξ Ἀρμενίας τὰς ἀρχὰς ἔχων, δεχόμενος τὸν τε Γλαῦκον καὶ τὸν Ἴππον ἐκ τῶν πλησίον ὄρων ἐκπίπτοντας: ἀναπλεῖται δὲ μέχρι Σαραπανῶν ἐρύματος δυναμένου δέξασθαι καὶ πόλεως συνοικισμὸν, ὅθεν περζεύουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν Κύρον ἡμέραις τέτταρσι δι’ ἀμαξιτοῦ. ἐπὶκείται δὲ τῷ Φάσιδι ὁμόνυμος πόλις, ἐμπόριον τῶν Κόλχων, τῇ μὲν προβεβλημένη τὸν ποταμὸν, τῇ δὲ λίμνην, τῇ δὲ τὴν θάλατταν. ἐντεῦθεν δὲ πλοῦς ἐπ’ Ἀμισοῦ καὶ Σινώπης τριῶν ἡμερῶν ἢ δύο (*) διὰ τὸ τοῦς αἰγιαλοῦς μαλακοῦς εἶναι κατὰ τὰς τῶν ποταμῶν ἐκβολὰς. ἀγαθὴ δ’ ἐστὶν ἡ χώρα καὶ καρποῖς πλὴν τοῦ μέλιτος (πικρὶζει γὰρ τὸ πλέον) καὶ τοῖς πρὸς ναυπηγίαν πᾶσιν: ὕλην τε γὰρ καὶ φύει καὶ ποταμοῖς κατακομίζει, λίνον τε ποιεῖ πολὺ καὶ κάνναβιν καὶ κηρὸν καὶ πίτταν. ἡ δὲ λινουργία καὶ τεθρύληται: καὶ γὰρ εἰς τοῦς ἔξω τόπους ἐξεκόμιζον, καὶ τινες βουλόμενοι συγγένειάν τινα τοῖς Κόλχοις πρὸς τοῦς Αἰγυπτίους ἐμφανίζεῖν ἀπὸ τούτων πιστοῦνται. ὑπέρεκειται δὲ τῶν λεχθέντων ποταμῶν ἐν τῇ Μοσχικῇ τὸ τῆς Λευκοθέας ἱερὸν Φρίξου ἴδρυμα, καὶ μαντεῖον ἐκείνου, ὅπου κριὸς οὐ θύεται, πλοῦσιόν ποτε ὑπάρξαν, σιληθὲν δὲ ὑπὸ Φαρνάκου καθ’ ἡμᾶς καὶ μικρὸν ὕστερον ὑπὸ Μιθριδάτου τοῦ Περγαμηνοῦ. κακωθείσης γὰρ χώρας “νοσεῖ τὰ τῶν θεῶν οὐδὲ τιμᾶσθαι θέλει”, φησὶν Εὐριπίδης. / ... ἡ δ’ οὖν Μοσχικὴ, ἐν ἣ τὸ ἱερόν, τριμερὴς ἐστὶ: τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἔχουσιν αὐτῆς Κόλχοι, τὸ δὲ Ἴβηρες, τὸ δὲ Ἀρμένιοι. ἔστι δὲ καὶ πολίχνη ἐν τῇ Ἴβηρίᾳ Φρίξου πόλις ἢ νῦν Ἰδέεσσα, εὐεργετὴς χωρίον ἐν μεθορίοις τῆς Κολχίδος. * Radt indicates a lacuna after δύο; Nicolai & Traina 2000, 32 and 90 read τεττάρων with lacuna (for which they reference Lassère 1975, criticising him for the indication of the lacuna albeit). Perhaps δύοῖν?**

In order to reject Vani as the sanctuary's site, Braund has claimed: 'Strabo explicitly locates the temple of Leukothea at the common border of Colchis, Iberia, and Armenia: he states that it was administered jointly by these three peoples.'⁴⁸ Obviously, this statement draws on the last sentence quoted in bold letters. But there is no mention of a joint administration of the Leukotheion, nor even of its location close to the triple border. Strabo rather states that the sanctuary was to be found in the Moschian Mountain, and that the latter extended over three distinct geopolitical units. And since the context of the paragraph deals with Kolchis (11.2.13–19 [496–499C]), we should assume that the Leukotheion was located somewhere in the Kolchian part of the Lesser Caucasus. Only the City of Phrixos is explicitly located in Iberian territory.⁴⁹ There may even have been another sanctuary of Phrixos near the city of Phasis, which is mentioned by Pomponius Mela in the 1st century AD. It is difficult to decide whether it escaped Strabo's (or his sources') attention, did not yet exist at his time or was located too far in the hinterland.⁵⁰

2. The Leukotheion and Phrixion in Kolchis versus the City of Phrixos in Iberia

This said, Braund may be right to link the Leukotheion and the Phrixion: at their first mention, they are united not only through the authority of Phrixos, the founder of the former and the oracular god of the latter, but also by their location in the Moschian Mountains. We should therefore leave it open whether the sanctuary of Leukothea was also the place where oracles of Phrixos could be obtained or whether there was a distinct Phrixion not too far from the Leukotheion. When Strabo repeats his mention of the sanctuary (sc. of Leukothea) a few lines below, he also adds another reference to Phrixos, but this time to the City of Phrixos among the Iberians. He does not specify whether this hosted the Oracle of Phrixos mentioned before. While it is plausible to assume that a city named after a hero had a sanctuary dedicated to its mythical *ktistes*, I am inclined to distinguish it from the Oracle, since this was mentioned only in a Kolchian context, if not as part of the Leukotheion. In a very different context, however, Strabo mentions once more 'a

48 Braund 1994, 148f.; cf. 170.

49 For Strabo on Kolchis, see *Geogr.* 11.2.13–19 (496–499C). The City of Phrixos is not identified by Braund 1997/2000, BA 88, cf. *Directory* p. 1283, with reference to *Phrixou polis* and Lordkipanidze 1996, 275.

50 Pomp. Mela 1.19.108. Lordkipanidze 2000, 98f. questions that Mela requires us to locate this Phrixion within the city boundaries of Phasis and suggests identifying *Phruxi templum et lucus* with the Phrixion that Strab. *Geogr.* 1.2.39 (46C) locates in the mountainous border zone between Kolchis and Iberia. Mela is admittedly vague, but searching for it close to the Phasis River would still be most intuitive, since Mela continues with a description of the Caucasian mountains (1.19.109: *hinc orti montes* ...). This means that the temple and grove were in the Kolchian plain, most likely not far from the mouth of the Phasis River. The Phasis was regarded as Phrixos' destination by the early 5th century, see Pind. *Pyth.* 4.211f. of 462 BC.

Phrixion on the boundary of Kolchis and Iberia’, which must be referring to the City of Phrixos, again.⁵¹

But there is further evidence which may seem to support Braund’s interpretation. In his *Annals*, Tacitus contrasts Pharasmanes, king of the Iberians and ally of the Albanians and Armenians, with the Parthian Prince Orodes, boasting of the military versatility of the Caucasian peoples as follows:

And their (sc. the Parthians’) strength only resided in their cavalry: Pharasmanes also had a vigorous infantry, since the Iberians and Albanians, as dwellers of forested mountains, had become accustomed to roughness and toil; they boasted that they hailed from Thessalians, at the time when Jason, after he had carried away Medeia and she had given birth to his children, returned to the then empty palace of Aiëtes and the abandoned (territory of the) Kolchians. They praise his name and the Oracle of Phrixos much, and no one would ever have sacrificed a ram, for there is the belief that Phrixos had ridden on it, whether this was an animal or a ship of distinction.⁵²

While this additional testimony may explain the temptation to draw a close connection between the two cults mentioned by Strabo and to regard them as largely shared between the various Caucasian peoples, there is reason for pause. First, Tacitus’ explanation can barely be accepted as authentic. It is obvious that he only adduces the exotic oracle of Phrixos to exemplify the alleged genealogical link, which was intended to give some clout to the otherwise less glamorous enemies of the Parthians. This is unlikely to reflect the content of the original diplomatic exchange, but rather constitutes historiographical flourish.⁵³ For its design, Tacitus drew on a literary source, perhaps Strabo himself (whether the passages we have

51 Strab. *Geogr.* 1.2.39 (45C): καὶ ἔστιν ὑπομνήματα τῆς ἀμφοῖν στρατείας τό τε Φρίξειον τὸ ἐν τοῖς μεθορίοις τῆς τε Κολχίδος καὶ τῆς Ἰβηρίας, καὶ τὰ Ἰασόνεια, ἃ πολλαχοῦ καὶ τῆς Ἀρμενίας καὶ τῆς Μηδίας καὶ τῶν πλησιοχώρων αὐταῖς τόπων δείκνυται. But also see Roller 2018, 38, who locates the Oracle of Phrixos somewhere on the upper Phasis and the City of Phrixos further inland; the same, however, locates this city ‘presumably on the upper Phasis’, though at the same time in the Moschian Mountains, which is inconsistent. Sens 2009, 166 identifies the Leukotheion and the Oracle of Phrixos.

52 Tac. *Ann.* 6.34.1f.: ... *atque illis sola in equite vis: Pharasmanes et pedite valebat. nam Hiberi Albanique saltuosos locos incolentes duritiae patientiaeque magis insuevere; feruntque se Thessalis ortos, qua tempestate Iaso post avectam Medeam genitosque ex ea liberos inanem mox regiam Aeetae vacuosque Colchos repetivit. multaque de nomine eius et oraculum Phrxi celebrant; nec quisquam ariete sacrificaverit, credito vexisse Phrixum, sive id animal seu navis insigne fuit.* The Latin text has been drawn from *The Latin Library* (cf. Woodman 2017); the translation is mine (cf. Martin 2001). For the idea of Jason’s (or Medeia’s) return to Kolchis, also see Just. 42.2.12; 42.3.5; Koestermann 1965, 323; De Siena 2001; Woodman 2017, 236.

53 More optimistically, Radt 2008, 255 believes that the oracle ‘existierte offenbar noch zu Tacitus’ Zeit’; likewise, Keyßner 1941, 768 regards Tacitus as an accurate witness. Woodman 2017, 235–237 does not directly address the question, but discusses the grammatical implication of *qua tempestate ... repetivit* (indicative instead of subjunctive might imply that this is an authorial addition rather than part of the *oratio obliqua*) – but this does not change much, since *feruntque ... celebrant* clearly surmises the Iberians’ point of view, though in the historiographical construction of Tacitus. Woodman also talks about the topical nature of mythical digressions and their entertaining character, without discussing whether recourse to them may still be seen as an authentic part of the diplomacy or only literary flourish.

cited in the *Geography* or a similar reference in his lost *Histories*). This is betrayed by the tralatitious mention of the avoidance of ram sacrifices, which here lacks the motivation that it still had in its former ethnographic context. Tacitus quite obviously conflates Strabo's information on the Oracle of Phrixos with that on the City of Phrixos, both of which the geographer has located in the Moschian Mountains, but only the latter also in Iberian territory.

The evidence for Phrixos among the Iberians thus comes down to their possession of Ideëssa, possibly a Kolchian foundation ascribed to Phrixos. We hear no more of the relevance of Phrixos for the Iberians after Strabo except for the playful reference in Tacitus' account. More widespread was the link between Medeia (and Jason) with the Medes (and Armenians), based on a quite transparent folk etymology, but taken seriously by Strabo and many other ancient writers regardless.⁵⁴ Be this as it may, even if my argument should not be followed and Tacitus' testimony be accepted as credible, I would emphasize that he only mentions the Oracle of Phrixos. It did not occur to him to also suggest the sea goddess Leukothea's popularity among the mountain-dwelling Iberians or Albanians.⁵⁵

All of this said, the exclusion of Tacitus from our evidence does not yet speak against Braund's location of the Leukotheion (with or without the Oracle) around Akhaltsikhe or in Atsquri. But, on closer inspection, the Mtkvari valley cannot be an option. According to Strabo, the upper course of the Kyros belonged to Armenia, whereas its middle reaches flowed through Iberia, before the lower Kyros crossed (or flanked) Albania and, after uniting with the Araxes, empties into the Caspian Sea. As a result, no part of the Kyros touched Kolchis. Strabo mentions the fortress Sarapana / Shorapani as the easternmost of the noteworthy settlements of Kolchis, whence Iberia could be accessed. There is no evidence for Kolchis having extended much farther. On the contrary, Sarapana had been under Iberian control in the 3rd century BC, as is known from a Georgian chronicle.⁵⁶ Perhaps the City of Phrixos was also located somewhere in the west-end of the plain, where it would have changed hands between the Kolchians and Iberians, possibly even more than once.⁵⁷

3. Above or beyond the Aforesaid Rivers?

Two questions remain to be asked in order to tease out some further information from Strabo's testimony: which are the 'mentioned rivers', and how exactly should

54 Strabo adds even further detail in *Geogr.* 11.13.10 (526C) and 11.14.14 (531C); also see 1.2.37 (46C), quoted above, n. 51.

55 Roller 2018, 641 conveys the contrary impression.

56 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.17 (498C) and 11.3.2, 4 (500C), cf. 11.1.5 (491C) on the upper and middle course of the Kyros; 11.4.2 (501C), cf. 11.1.5 (491C) on its lower course. And Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.17 (498C) and 11.3.4 (500C) on Sarapana and Iberia. Cf. Braund 1994, 145 and Plontke-Lüning 2001, both with reference to *Kartlis Tskhoureba* 24 (1.34).

57 Radt 2008, 256 finds it confusing that an Iberian city (attested nowhere else) is mentioned in the context of Kolchis.

we understand ‘above / beyond ... lies ...’ (ὑπέρκειται δὲ τῶν λεχθέντων ποταμῶν)? As far as I see, scholars have taken for granted that those rivers were the Phasis and its tributaries, of which Strabo names the *Glaukos* and *Hippos*. We can leave the latter’s exact identities open, as long as we agree that these must have been two of the major rivers springing from the northern Caucasus and running south.⁵⁸

Was Lordkipanidze’s choice of Vani meant to emphasize the height of the hill site?⁵⁹ The city unfolds into the outer slopes of the Lesser Caucasus, and at least its acropolis ‘hangs over’ the Kolchian plain. It would have provided a view on the nearby Phasis, but not on any of the latter’s northern tributaries (the Sulori as a southern tributary is disqualified).⁶⁰ If Vani were the location we are looking for, then the literal meaning of the prefix ὑπέρ- would have been well preserved in the contrast of the two different altitude levels,⁶¹ but the reference to the ‘mentioned rivers’ would be quite vague.

Even more problematic is the identification by Braund. Admittedly, Akhaltsikhe and Atsquri somehow lie ‘beyond’ the Phasis and its tributaries, and with its

58 The identity of the Hippos with the Tskhenistsqali (Tskhenistskhali) is widely acknowledged due to the continuity of the onomastic theme ‘Horse River’; see Kießling 1913, 1915: ‘Pferdefluß’ / ‘Čenistsqali’; Braund 1994, 300; Lordkipanidze 1996, 108f.; Braund & Sinclair 1997/2000, BA 87 and *Directory*, p. 1229; Radt 2008, 254. Prokop. *Goth.* 8.1.1.6 attests the *Hippis* (*sic*) as located in the Mocheresis, fordable by men and horses (a folk etymology?); Prokop. *Goth.* 4.14.6.45 specifies the Mocheresis as the best land of Lazika, explicitly including a part of the Rheon and the city Kotaïs / Kytaion / Kutaisi. Controversial is the Glaukos. Lordkipanidze 1996, 109 and 253–255 suggests identifying it with the Tekhuri, Kvirila, Rheon or Sulori (rejecting the latter on p. 109 n. 174). Similarly, Belfiore 2009, 173 n. 82 (following Lordkipanidze 1972) equates the Glaukos with the Tekhuri, but strangely posits (as one of two possible solutions) a location north of the Tekhuri, Tskhenistsqali and Kyros, thought to be close to Samtredia, but this is on the northern bank of the Phasis, located between the confluence of the Kvirila and the Tekhuri. Roller 2018, 641 decides for the Tekhuri, Radt 2008, 254 for the ‘Ziva’ (Tsivi?). Koestermann 1965, 323 remains uncertain in both cases (‘an Nebenflüssen des Phasis’). I have argued elsewhere that the river names Glaukos and Hippos formed part of a flexible Argonautic landscape, defining the location of Aia, just as Lykos and Kyaneos. As such, we must reckon with changing identifications over time. For an older tradition, see Plin. *NH* 6.4.13: *maxime autem inclaruit Aea, XV (milia passuum) a mari, ubi Hippos et Cyaneos vasti amnes e diverso in eum (sc. Phasim) confluunt (... et alios accipit fluvios magnitudine numeroque mirabiles, inter quos Glaucum)*; cf. Ps.-Skylax, *Asia* 81 (on the home of Medeia, without the river names). They seem to be referring to an Aia close to Senaki, which would speak for the Tsivi and Tekhuri as Hippos and Kyaneos. The name Hippos probably moved east with the identification of Kytaion / Kutaisi as the royal city of Kolchis, which yielded the Tskhenistsqali as Hippos and Rheon / Rioni as Glaukos. See Coşkun 2019c and 2020a.

59 This is not explicit in Lordkipanidze 1996, 253, since his formulation ‘oberhalb der erwähnten Flüsse’ seems to be relating to a location on the middle course of the Rioni.

60 For Vani and its acropolis, see above, n. 15.

61 See LSJ (1996, p. 1865) *s.v.* ὑπέρκειμαι ‘to lie above, ... to be placed or situated above or beyond’ with some examples. For the notion of ‘beyond’, see, e.g., Polyb. 4.29.1 for the ‘barbarians dwelling beyond the Macedonians’. For the implication of a difference of altitude (‘overhanging’ or ‘impending’), see, e.g., Polyb. 10.30.2. The ‘eyebrow emerging over the eye’ (Philostr. *Imag.* 2) aptly illustrates a certain immediacy of the contrast. Also cf. the usage of the verb in Strab. *Geogr.* 12.3.18 (548C), quoted below, n. 67.

altitude of over 1,000 m above sea level, it may, in theory, even claim to do justice to *ὑπέρ-* twice. This notwithstanding, *ὑπέγκειται* would have been a counter-intuitive word choice: the Borjomi area is blocked from the Kolchian plain by the northern ranges of the Lesser Caucasus, which reach altitudes of over 2,000 m. There was not even a theoretical sight onto the Phasis, but only potentially on the Kyros, whose bed, however, extended towards the Caspian Sea.

That Lordkipanidze's and Braund's readings imply a high degree of vagueness has an additional reason: their identification of *τῶν λεχθέντων ποταμῶν* with the Phasis and its tributaries.⁶² Before Strabo introduces the location of the Leukotheion with these words, he has already ended his short digression on the course of the Phasis from its Armenian springs to the homonymous city on the coast. He then moves on to describe the southern plains of Kolchis, which those who sail from Phasis to Amisos and Sinope will encounter. In this context, Strabo mentions some anonymous rivers twice, first to explain the smoothness of the Euxine due to their calm and sandy estuaries (which probably contrasted with the outpouring of the Phasis),⁶³ and second in their capacity as waterways towards the sea. These rivers

62 Thus explicitly Lordkipanidze 1996, 253.

63 Many uncertainties relate to the estuaries of Kolchis: how strong were the currents, especially of the Phasis and the Akampsis? In how far did such currents or sand dunes impede navigation along the coast? Sedimentation is particularly strong at the estuaries along the eastern Euxine, as satellite images from *Google Maps* demonstrate; cf. Coşkun 2019a and 2020b. Radt 2008, 254 treats the literary tradition of the sandy shores and considers a *lacuna* in the transmitted text (with Lassère 1981). Dan 2016, 250–255 regards the Phasis mouth as largely stagnant, see Hippokr. *Aer.* 15 (*pace* Philostr. *Imag.* 8 on p. 245) and early modern travel accounts. Arrian's discussion of the sweetness of the sea water near the mouth of the Phasis (*PPE* 8) may also imply the strong force of the stream. The two themes (sweetness and current into the Euxine) are explicitly connected by Prokop. *Goth.* 2.30.4.25f. More difficult to explain is his description of the Akampsis estuary in *Goth.* 8.2.1.8f. (ed. Dewing 1914–1928): Ἄκαμψιν γὰρ αὐτὸν τὸ λοιπὸν καλοῦσιν οἱ ἐπιχώριοι, τούτου δὴ ἔνεκα, ὅτι δὴ κάμψαι αὐτὸν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἀναμιχθέντα ἀμήχανά ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ ξὺν ῥύμῃ τοσαύτῃ καὶ ὀξύτητι τοῦ ῥοῦ τὰς ἐκβολὰς ποιεῖται, ταραχὴν τοῦ ῥοθίου πολλὴν ἐπιπροσθεν ἐργαζόμενος, ὥστε ὡς πορρωτάτω τῆς θαλάσσης ἰὼν ἄπορον ποιεῖται τὸν ταύτη διάπλουν: οἱ τε ναυτιλλόμενοι ἐνταῦθα τοῦ Πόντου, εἴτε Λαζικῆς εὐθὺς πλέοντες εἴτε καὶ ἐνθένδε ἀπάραντες, οὐκέτι ἐξῆς διαπλεῖν δύνανται. / κάμψαι γὰρ τοῦ ποταμοῦ τὸν ῥοῦν οὐδαμῇ ἔχουσιν, ἀλλὰ πορρωτάτω μὲν ἀναγόμενοι τοῦ ἐκείνῃ πελάγους, ἐπὶ μέσον δέ που τὸν Πόντον ἰόντες, οὕτω δὴ ἀπαλλάσσεσθαι τῆς τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἐκβολῆς δύνανται. τὰ μὲν οὖν ἀμφὶ ποταμὸν Βόαν τοιαῦτά ἐστι. 'The locals hereafter call it the Akampsis, and they so name it, obviously, because it is impossible to resist as it enters the sea, given that it discharges its stream with such force and swiftness, causing a great disturbance in the water before it, that it goes out for a very great distance into the sea and makes it impossible to coast along at that point. Those who are navigating in that part of the sea, whether sailing toward Lazike or putting out from there, are not able to hold a straight course in their voyage; / for they are quite unable to cut through the river's current, but they are forced to go out a great distance into the sea there, going somewhere near the middle of it, and only in this way can they escape the force of the river's discharge.' Translation by Dewing & Kaldellis 2014. Prokopios did not have a firm knowledge of the topography, a condition which also resulted in the confusion of the Boas / Akampsis with the Phasis in *Goth.* 2.29.3.19, 23–25; cf. Dewing & Kaldellis 2014, 138 n. 272 and p. 464 n. 740; Coşkun forthcoming b. The lack of familiarity largely results from the fact that most trade fleets avoided sailing along the coast, cutting through from Amisos or Trapezus

therefore include, from north to south, the Mogros / Supsa, Isis / Natanebi, Akinases / Kintrishi and possibly the Bathys / Qorolitsqali, to mention the most important ones between the Phasis and the first navigable river in the south-eastern corner of the Black Sea, the Akampsis / Tchorokhi / Çoruh Nehri.⁶⁴

4. The South-Eastern Corner of Kolchis with Its ‘Green Cape’

It is not entirely clear what formed the southern boundary of Kolchis, but perhaps it is naïve to surmise that its territory remained stable for centuries, when Milesian, Achaimenid, Athenian, Sinopean, Seleukid, Mithradatic, Polemonid and Roman hegemony followed one upon the other. Every single change could have influenced geopolitics and toponymy. The question is further complicated by the confused but tenacious literary tradition that the *chora* of Trapezus extended as far as Kolchis. Strabo is most explicit in this regard.⁶⁵ At any rate, it is somewhat surprising that he does not mention the Akampsis as the first navigable river on the eastern coast of the Euxine or the strategically important fortress Apsaros (Gonio) near its southern estuary. We do not hear of them either in his outline of Trapezus and the eastern-Pontic tribes.⁶⁶ While uncertainty remains, Strabo confines Kolchis by the Moschi-

to Phasis or Dioskurias / Sebastopolis, see Coşkun, 2020a and 2020b. Prokopios’ comment on the Akampsis mouth is best explained by a Greek reinterpretation (‘unbending’, ‘inflexible’) of a Caucasian name (see Lordkipanidze 2000, 12).

- 64 The suggested identifications follow Braund & Sinclair 1997/2000, BA 87R. *Qorolitsqali* is rendered *Korilistskali* in *Google Maps* (2018). Our best but still incomplete ancient source is Arr. *PPE* 7.4–8, which provides a detailed list from all the rivers merging into the Black Sea between Trapezus and Phasis: 15 stades from the fort of Apsaros to the estuary of the Akampsis, another 75 to the Bathys, further 90 to the Akinases, moreover 90 to the Isis, once more 90 to the Mogros, which merges into the Euxine yet another 90 stades before the Phasis. A bit troubled is Plin. *NH* 6.4.12: after mentioning the river *Absarrum* beside the namesake castle, he lists *flumina Acampseon, Isis, Mogrus, Bathys*. He does not seem to notice that *Absarrum* and *Acampseon* denote (at least in part) the same river. Ps.-Skylax, *Asia* 81 further mentions a Leiston, which Braund 1994, 44; 88; 184f.; 349 equates with the Akampsis, but I suggest one of the rivers to the north instead; see Coşkun forthcoming b.
- 65 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.14 (497C); 11.2.17, 18 (499C); 12.3.28, 29 (555C). Scholars have found this to be unproblematic in principle (Radt 2008, 252; Roller 2018, 704), although Strabo’s description of Deiotaros’ territory in *Geogr.* 12.3.13 (547C) has yielded major debates, beginning with Niese 1883, 579; cf. Lassère 1981, 161; Unger 1896, 249f. (μέχρι Κολχίδος καὶ τ<ῆν> μικρ<ᾶν> Ἀρμενία<ν>), followed, e.g., by Magie 1950, 1237f. and Radt 2008, 364; see Coşkun, chapter X in this volume, for a new approach. The problem may also relate to an often-overlooked cartographic inconsistency, which mislocates Trapezus further to the north-east; see Podossinov 2012. I suggest elsewhere that the confusion roots in Trapezuntine (or Sinopean) ideological toponymy, which pictured Trapezus as located *within* the territory of Kolchis, as Xen. *An.* 4.8.22 spells it out.
- 66 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.14–19 (497–499C) for Kolchis and 12.3 for Pontos, esp. 12.3.17f. (548C) for Trapezus and 12.3.18–42 (548–563C) for the non-Greek tribes in the mountainous hinterland; §§ 21–27 are mythical reflections, starting with the Amazons. The digression repeatedly addresses, if only in passing, Kolchis (§§ 18, 28 bis, 29) and the Moschian Mountains (18). The vague idea of a shared boundary is further supported by the fact that Strabo, although listing

an Mountains twice in the sections quoted above in the introduction, and once more in his treatment of eastern Pontos. After listing the Tibarenoi, Chaldaioi, Sannoi and Appaitai in the hinterland of Pharnakeia and Trapezus, he goes on as follows:

‘two mountains cross the country of these people, not only the Skydises, a very rugged mountain, which joins the Moschian Mountains above Kolchis (its heights are occupied by the Heptakometai), but also the Paryadres, which extends from the region of Sidene and Themiskyra to Lesser Armenia and forms the eastern side of Pontos.’⁶⁷

Accordingly, the easternmost extension of the Pontic Mountains (Skydises) are adjacent to the southern boundary of Kolchis (Moschian Mountains). In addition, Strabo regards both Pontos and Kolchis as also contiguous with Armenia.⁶⁸ It therefore appears that the lower course of the Akampsis formed the most natural divide between Kolchis and Pontos, whereby the land enclosed by the Akampsis and Apsaros / Acharistsqali formed the northern tip of Armenia.⁶⁹ If this division is accepted, the north-western foothills of the Lesser Caucasus reach the sea just north of the mouth of the Akampsis. Its ‘Green Cape’ (Mtsvane Kontskhi) touches the Euxine slightly north of Batumi between the Bathys (Qorolitsqali) and Chakvistskali Rivers (the latter’s ancient name is unknown).

Let us now return to our search for the Leukotheion. Following up the Kolchian coastline north of the Akampsis, the ‘Green Cape’ takes a prominent position among the outliers of the Lesser Caucasus. It rises steeply from the sea and almost immediately reaches heights of up to 220 m. This hill site some 9 km north of the city centre of Batumi has been occupied by the Batumi Botanical Garden since 1912.⁷⁰ It easily allows for views on the Chakvistskali and Kintrishi (Akinases) Rivers. A feasible alternative would be Tsikhisdziri some 8 km north, just past the plain estuary of the Chakvistskali. This is where the foothills of the Lesser Caucasus first touch the shoreline. It is thus the earliest significant elevation for those who sail southwards along the Kolchian Plain. Although the hills that rise immediately above the beach are much lower than the ‘Green Cape’ and the visibility of a

the various tribes (esp. § 18, see below), does not mention the minor Greek coastal settlements between Trapezus and Apsaros (or even Phasis): Hyssou Limen, Rhizaion, and Athenai, on which see Arr. *PPE* 3–7; Prokop. *Goth.* 8.2; Braund & Sinclair 1997/2000; Coşkun 2019a. On the history of the fortress of Apsaros, see Coşkun forthcoming b.

67 Strab. *Geogr.* 12.3.18 (548C): τῆς δὲ Τραπεζοῦντος ὑπέρκεινται καὶ τῆς Φαρνακίας Τιβαρανοὶ τε καὶ Χαλδαῖοι καὶ Σάννοι, οὓς πρότερον ἐκάλουον Μάκρωνας, καὶ ἡ μικρὰ Ἀρμενία: καὶ οἱ Ἀππαῖται δὲ πῶς πλησιάζουσι τοῖς χωρίοις τούτοις οἱ πρότερον Κερκίται. διήκει δὲ διὰ τούτων ὁ τε Σκυδίσης, ὄρος τραχύτατον συνάπτον τοῖς Μοσχικοῖς ὄρεσι τοῖς ὑπὲρ τῆς Κολχίδος, οὗ τὰ ἄκρα κατέχουσιν οἱ Ἐπτακωμηταί, καὶ ὁ Παρυάδρης ὁ μέχρι τῆς μικρᾶς Ἀρμενίας ἀπὸ τῶν κατὰ Σιδήνην καὶ Θεμίσκυραν τόπων διατεινὼν καὶ ποιῶν τὸ ἑωθινὸν τοῦ Πόντου πλευρόν. Translation adapted from Jones 1924.

68 Strab. *Geogr.* 12.3.1 (540f.C); cf. 12.3.13 (547C), where he mentions Trapezusia, Kolchis and Lesser Armenia, on which see above, n. 65.

69 This is at least compatible with Braund & Sinclair 1997/2000, BA 87R, although this map puts the names much farther to the west or east respectively.

70 See the website *Batumi Botanical Garden* for more information, though without mentioning the Leukotheion

sanctuary from the open sea would have been more limited, its heights still permit one to gaze as far as Poti, when the weather is clear.⁷¹

Either position would thus be a very good match for Strabo's description *ὑπέρεκείται δὲ τῶν λεχθέντων ποταμῶν ἐν τῇ Μοσχικῇ*, which we might translate as '(the sanctuary) lies *beyond and above* the aforesaid rivers, in the Moschian Mountain'. Especially the 'Green Cape' would have provided the sea goddess with the most impressive maritime view from within the Kolchian territory. Of course, my suggestion has to remain hypothetical as long as we do not have corroborating evidence from the ground. But even if such confirmation might never come forth, the two sites aptly illustrate what kind of location we should be looking for.

IV. ARGUMENT 3: HISTORICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE TOPOGRAPHY

The two previous sections have established the southern coastline of Kolchis as the most plausible location of the Leukotheion after reflecting on the implications of the mythological and cultic traditions as well as revisiting Strabo's topographical indications. In order to avoid circularity, I have held back an additional argument, namely that the speed of Pharnakes' campaign excludes the possibility of a detour of more than one or two days. The reconstruction of his itinerary is a matter of dispute, more so than that of Mithradates of Pergamon, which is less relevant for us. Having investigated their campaigns in more detail elsewhere,⁷² I shall here confine myself to providing concise evidence for my specific claims that Pharnakes passed by the sanctuary twice, in the summers of 48 and 47 BC, that he did not have a week or more to spare in 48 (nor the intention to loot the goddess' treasury), and that he would not have invested more than a day in 47 (when he was in need of refilling his coffers, but even more desperate to join forces with his new recruits in the eastern parts of the Bosporean Kingdom). I shall proceed by addressing previous scholarship grouped according to three different chronological choices.

a) Some historians date Pharnakes' invasion of Kolchis in close proximity to his early conquests which precede his more famous Pontic campaign.⁷³ There are

71 Archaeological remains in the area go back to the early Iron Age. The near-common opinion also locates the Byzantine fortress of *Petra (Pia Iustiniana)* at Tsikhisdziri; see Inaishvili 1991; Braund 1994, 117 with n. 190; 276 n. 31; 290–295; Braund & Sinclair 1997/2000, *BA* 87 and *Directory*, p. 1237; Tsetskhladze 2013, 294 n. 5 with further bibliography. However, I am arguing elsewhere that *Petra* is better looked for on the southern bank of the Phasis estuary, where the accounts of Arrian and Prokopios are pointing to; see Coşkun forthcoming b.

72 Coşkun 2019a and forthcoming a.

73 For around 60 BC, see Veh & Brodersen 1987, 475 ns. 590f.; Stein-Kramer 1988, 60. Mid-50s BC: Sullivan 1990, 156; Ballesteros Pastor 2017, 297; 300f. But MacDonald 2005, 45f. questions the relevance of titulature. Saprykin 2002, 34: 55/50 BC. As a theoretical argument, one might add that Appian's account of the Pontic War does not mention Kolchis and even conveys the impression that Pharnakes had sailed straight from the Bosporos to Sinope (App. *Mith.*

indeed good arguments for disconnecting the siege of Phanagoreia from the attack of his Pontic homeland, and linking it with his subjection of Tanaïs and the Scythians on the Taman peninsula. The evidence is too vague to give a precise year for this, but Pharnakes' adoption of the title 'Great King of Kings' around 55 BC provides a probable *terminus ad quem* for his wars on the eastern coast of the Sea of Azov.⁷⁴ Kolchis, however, cannot have been affected, because it continued to be ruled by Aristarchos, the appointee of Pompey. The scarce numismatic evidence we have attests him to have been in power at least until 54/53.⁷⁵ Since the Kolchians supported Pompey at the Battle of Pharsalos in 48,⁷⁶ we can further exclude any other year before 48.

b) The majority's view is that the capture of Kolchis formed the beginning of Pharnakes' Pontic campaign.⁷⁷ He marched his field army from the Bosporos – perhaps from Gorgippia or Anapa – along the eastern coast of the Euxine. His infantry and cavalry were flanked by his fleet for easy supplies, also providing swift passage of the rivers through improvised ship bridges. This support was available at least until the mouth of the Iris / Yeşil Irmak in (Armenian or Kappadokian) Pontos was reached. Instead of crossing over into the territory of Amisos, by then a Roman provincial city which resisted the king, they turned south towards the Kappadokian kingdom of Ariobarzanes III. Negotiations with the Roman proconsul Cn. Domitius Calvinus induced Pharnakes to withdraw north to the confluence of the Iris and the Lykos / Kelkit Çayı, following the latter eastwards to Nikopolis. It is in this city's territory that he first confronted and defeated the Romans and their allies. The same battle also provides us with a first chronological marker for Pharnakes' activities in Asia Minor. Cassius Dio notes that Calvinus led away his legions quickly after the combat, 'before winter approached', which means before the first snow fell. This hints at a day in later December (or later October respectively, if adjusted to the

120.591). But a comparison with the more detailed narrative of *BAlex.* 34–78 and the brief plot of Cass. Dio 42.45.3 proves that Appian is misleadingly selective; see Coşkun forthcoming a.

74 See App. *Mith.* 108.505–511; 113.555; 114.560f.; Oros. 6.5.2; *Suda*, s.v. *Kastor*; cf. Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 278f. But Gajdukevič 1971, 324 dates the siege of Phanagoreia to ca. 50 BC. Olbrycht 2001, 437 speaks of 'um 48 v.Chr.' (despite his reference to Gajdukevič). Hoben 1969, 12–14 and 15f. is undecided as to how much before the Pontic campaign Phanagoreia was besieged; likewise, MacDonald 2005, 45. Previously, I also opted for the 'Anfangsphase des römischen Bürgerkrieges' (Coşkun 2014, 135). Von Bredow 2000, in turn, dates the conquest of Phanagoreia after Pharsalos, as the other attacks. Abramzon & Kuznetsov 2011, 70 leave the time open, but relate the destruction of the city to the revolt around 63 BC.

75 The latest explicit evidence for Aristarchos is a coin dated to year 12, which Lordkipanize 1996, 293 n. 487 dates to 52/51 BC. More likely, Pompey had appointed him in late in 65, so that 65/4 should be counted as his 1st and 54/3 as his 12th year, see Coşkun, chapter X in this volume. Braund 1994, 169 is undecided between those years, but favours ca. 52/1 BC. For more general information on Aristarchos, see Coşkun 2007/19; Biffi 2010, 54f. and 72.

76 See Cic. *Att.* 9.9.2=176 SB on 48 BC; cf. App. *BCiv.* 2.51.211; cf. Yoshimura 1961, 483. The Tolistobogian king Deiotaros was the protector of Anatolia, probably including its eastern extensions; see Coşkun, chapter X in this volume.

77 See above, n. 74.

Julian calendar).⁷⁸ The next noteworthy deed of the king was the siege he laid to Amisos. The turning point of his military endeavours was the Battle at Zela, where Caesar destroyed most of his army: this was on 2 August 47 (or 21 May, Julian)⁷⁹ and led to the king's speedy escape from Pontos.

Most scholars are seduced by Appian's vague account, which summarizes the main events of the war 'at the time when Pompey and Caesar were contending against each other'.⁸⁰ This timeframe would include any time after the news of the Final Decree of the Senate (7 January 49) had reached Pantikapaion, and most likely result in early spring 49 as the beginning of the march. By this account, there would have been plenty of time to 'visit' the Leukotheion at whichever location in Kolchis.⁸¹ But as we shall see, this early departure is incompatible with a variety of other ancient sources.

c) I agree with those scholars who regard the Battle of Pharsalos as *terminus a quo* for Pharnakes' campaign. This was fought on 9 August 48 BC (7 June, Julian).⁸² More accurately, we should speak of the arrival of the news that Pompey had suffered a crushing defeat in the Bosporan Kingdom. The latter is not only implied in the abovementioned coinage from Kolchis, but also in the pro-Caesarian *Bellum Alexandrinum*. According to this war account, Pharnakes' ambassadors were trying to assuage Caesar prior to the Battle of Zela by reminding him that 'Pharnakes had refused to provide Pompey troops against Caesar'.⁸³ Cassius Dio not only repeats the king's (unsuccessful) diplomacy, but also specifies the acquisition of Kolchis as the first step of Pharnakes' campaign:

He also acquired Kolchis without any difficulty, and the entire (part of) Armenia which had belonged to Deiotaros, while the latter was absent, and he subjugated <part> of Kappadokia, and some cities of Pontos that had been assigned to the province of Bithynia.⁸⁴

78 Cass. Dio 42.46.2f.: καὶ ὁ χειμῶν προσήει. And see the next n. on the Julian calendar.

79 The Roman calendar had fallen behind the solar year by about two and a half months in 47 BC, see Groebe 1906, 814–817; cf. Judeich 1885; Gelzer 1960, 220–241; 267f.; Bennett 2004, 174; Coşkun forthcoming a.

80 App. *Mith.* 120.591: ᾧ χρόνῳ Πομπήιος καὶ Καῖσαρ ἐς ἀλλήλους ἦσαν. Also see 120.592: ἐπολέμησε δὲ καὶ αὐτῷ Καίσαρι καθελόντι Πομπήιον, ἐπανιόντι ἀπ' Αἰγύπτου. 'He fought with Caesar himself, when the latter had overthrown Pompey and returned from Egypt.'

81 See, e.g., Hoben 1969, 17f.; Stein-Kramer 1988, 60f.; Lordkipanize 1996, 292–295; Freber 1993, 81 n. 388. Goukowsky 2003, 253 n. 1109 speaks of a 'synchronism' as vaguely as Appian, leaving many questions open.

82 The date has been transmitted in the *Fasti Amiterni*, see *CIL* I², p. 244; cf. Gelzer 1960, 240 with n. 316; also see above, n. 79, for references. The battle is accepted as the *terminus a quo*, e.g., by Gelzer 1960, 235; von Bredow 2000.

83 *BAlex.* 69: *Maximeque commemorabant nulla Pharnacen auxilia contra Caesarem Pompeio dare voluisse, cum Deiotarus, qui dedisset, tamen ei satisfacisset.* Cf. 70: *Monuit autem ... legatos, ne ... nimis eo gloriarentur beneficio, quod auxilia Pompeio non misissent.* Also see Cass. Dio 42.47.3.

84 Cass. Dio 42.45.3: τὴν τε Κολχίδα ἀκονιτί προσηγάγετο καὶ τὴν Ἀρμενίαν ἀπόντος τοῦ Διοτιάρου πάσαν, τῆς τε Καππαδοκίας <μέρος> καὶ τῶν τοῦ Πόντου πόλεων τινὰς, αἱ τῷ τῆς Βιθυνίας νόμῳ προσετέταχτο, κατεστρέψατο. Greek text from Cary & Foster 1914 (cf.

The references to the ease of the conquest (ἀκονίτι)⁸⁵ and to Deiotaros' absence make it very clear that Kolchis and the Galatian part of the former Pontic Kingdom ('Armenia') were easy prey to the invader due to the Roman civil war and the engagement (or slaughter) of Pompey's allies at Pharsalos.

As a result, Pharnakes did not leave the Bosphoros prior to the middle of August 48. This limits the time span leading up to the Battle of Nikopolis to little more than three months. Such a march looks quite ambitious, but Pharnakes was apparently well prepared: he facilitated the march of his land forces by supplying and assisting them from the sea, and was also fortunate enough not to encounter any noteworthy resistance before reaching the mouth of the Iris River. Instead of laying siege to Amisos and thus halting the speed of his attack, he decided to postpone the capture of this city (and of Sinope). He rather turned south, where the Pontic hinterland, Micro-Armenia and Kappadokia lay open to him. Altogether, his foot soldiers may have covered some 1,600 km in about 100 days, which is decent, but by no means spectacular.⁸⁶ Note that, still in the 5th century BC, Herodotos surmised 30 days for the march from the Maiotis (Sea of Azov) to the Phasis river (ca. 690 km), which equals an average of 23 km per day.⁸⁷ This would have come close to the speed of Pharnakes' men until reaching the Iris valley, whereas further progress through the Pontic mountains would have been slower.

At all events, Pharnakes was trying to occupy as much of his 'inherited' kingdom as possible before Caesar might return from Egypt. A detour to Vani, let alone the Borjomi area, – for whatever riches he might have hoped to find there – is highly implausible. While Vani was of course much quicker to reach, the acropolis on the Akhvlediani's Hill has been called a masterpiece of Hellenistic fortifications, so that its siege and destruction might have taken weeks or months.⁸⁸ And yet, I hesitate to concede that he looted the sanctuary on his way along the Kolchian coast. There is no reason to doubt that he was well resourced and further hopeful of expanding his realm. Why, then, should he have harmed a sanctuary that was going to be his anyway, when he was expecting to be received, if not welcomed, as the legitimate king?

Boissevain 1898, vol. 2, 63). The translation is mine and rejects the widespread view that Cass. Dio was speaking of 'Armenia in its entirety' (τὴν Ἀρμενίαν ... πάσαν). See Coşkun forthcoming a.

85 Without these arguments, the conquest of Kolchis is normally explained as the beginning of Pharnakes' Pontic campaign, e.g., by Magie 1950, 408f.; Stein-Kramer 1988, 61; von Bredow 2000. Saprykin 2002, 45f. differs, only explaining the speedy conquests in Asia Minor 48/7 BC with the Roman civil war.

86 He may have begun his campaign in Gorgippia or Anapa. *Google Maps* calculate the current land route from Anapa to Samsun (Amisos) as 1,240 km.

87 Hdt. 1.104.1. *Google Maps* calculate 682 km for the route from Temryuk to Poti.

88 See Tstskhladze 1998, 141: 'Es kann also als bewiesen gelten, dass die Siedlung von Vani im 3. Jh. v.Chr. über eine der ingenieurtechnisch vollkommensten Fortifikationsanlagen der hellenistischen Welt verfügte.' We have no reason to believe that the acropolis was no longer functional in the (mid-) 1st century. Also see Balandier 2005, although his account focuses on the 5th and 4th centuries.

d) Against this background, I would like to suggest that the most realistic context for the pillaging of the Leukotheion would be Pharnakes' flight from Asia Minor to the Bosphoros. After his defeat by Caesar, he had lost all his stakes in Anatolia, and there was not even a realistic chance of keeping Kolchis, which had been ruled or at least controlled indirectly from Pontos over the last half-century.⁸⁹ In addition, his land army, together with most of his cavalry, were lost. As we learn from Appian, he escaped to Sinope together with 1,000 men on horseback. His situation was so desperate that he had all the horses killed before embarking on ships to sail home. The reason for this deed is unclear, but it seems that the land route appeared no longer safe to him, whereas the required number of ships and the according amount of supplies for the horses were not available in Sinope. We should further account for how exhausted the horses would have been after their flight; some of them might have died at all events. Whatever result his negotiations with Calvinus had yielded, there was no trust between the two men, for otherwise Pharnakes would at least have spared the horses.⁹⁰

Until recently, the commonly-held view was that he sailed straight from Sinope to Theodosia on the European side of the Bosphoros. There are, however, strong reasons to doubt this. He only had 1,000 men at his disposal when leaving Sinope, and these were badly equipped at that. He would scarcely have launched an immediate attack on the domains that the usurper Asandros was holding. Instead, Appian tells us that he recruited Scythian and Sarmatian reinforcements. He could not find them in the southern parts of the Crimea. Most likely, these were Aorsoi and Sirakoi, who inhabited the north of the Taman Peninsula, and they were certainly mobilized as soon as Pharnakes had heard of the revolt in Pantikapaion in spring 47.⁹¹ Accordingly, we are safe to assume that he left Sinope sailing westward along the Pontic and Kolchian coast. This is a context in which looting sanctuaries would have made sense, if only they lay on his way and would not cause any major delay. He had no hopes of ever returning to Pontos or Kolchis, but if any of their resources could be made available to support his reconquest of the Bosphoros, there was no reason for scruples.

The timeline for his return from Sinope to Pantikapaion is about three times as tight as it had been for his outbound way. After his defeat at Zela on 2 August 47 BC (21 May, Julian), he may have reached Sinope on 3 or 4 August, and set to sea one or two days later. Caesar was informed about his death in Nikomedea about the first week of September. Therefore, Pharnakes had at the utmost four weeks to sail to Anapa, Gorgippia or possibly Phanagoreia, unite with his fresh recruits, set over

89 *Pace* Braund 1994, 170, who emphasize its connection with the Bosphoros, but see n. 76 above for a different view. Braund 1997, 169 dates the sack of the temple by Pharnakes to 47 BC. I assume that he was thinking of a time between the Battles of Pharsalos and Zela.

90 *App. Mith.* 120.590–596, with Coşkun forthcoming a.

91 *App. Mith.* 120.594 on Pharnakes' recruitment of Scythians and Sauromatians; Strab. *Geogr.* 11.5.8 (506C) on the Aorsoi and Sirakoi; cf. Plin. *NH* 4.80. See Coşkun forthcoming a for details. Previously, the recruitments have either been dated to before Pharnakes' Pontic Campaign or located in the European part of the kingdom: cf. Gajdukevič 1971 323f.; Stein-Kramer 1988, 60f.; Braund 1996, 1204; Mielczarek 1999, 73; 80; Olbrycht 2001, 436–438.

to the Crimea, receive the submission of Theodosia and Pantikapaion and engage in battle with Asandros.⁹² Once again, this may appear very ambitious, but it was certainly doable, if we remember that Strabo considers the average sailing time from Phasis to Sinope to be between two or three days.⁹³ Pharnakes would have needed a bit longer, partly due to less favourable currents on his way north, partly because he had to find and potentially fight for supplies on his way. If this is accepted – and I do not see a plausible alternative that accounts for all the sources we have – then there was definitely no time to get to Vani, let alone Borjomi. But he would have regarded a wealthy sanctuary in an exposed coastal location, such as Batumi’s Green Cape, as an ‘invitation’ to help himself.

V. EPILOGUE

I started my search for the Leukotheion in order to test my reconstruction of the campaign of Pharnakes II. The two most authoritative suggestions for its location, Vani and the Borjomi area, are incompatible with the speed with which the king passed by the Kolchian coast in 47 BC. Revisiting our only source, Strabo, and reflecting on the cultic as well as topographic implications, I have concluded that we should start looking for the sanctuary in the sea-facing foothills of the Lesser Caucasus north of Apsaros and south of Pichvnari. My suggestion of the most impressive elevation that touches the sea, the ‘Green Cape’ which now hosts the Batumi Botanical Garden can, of course, only be tentative. There are other suitable candidates in its environs, such as Tsikhisdziri, whence the Kolchian Plain begins.

I foresee that yet other suggestions for locating the Leukotheion without supporting it by hard evidence from the ground will meet with hesitation. I hope, however, that my arguments maintain their merit, even if my hypothetical identification with Batumi’s ‘Green Cape’ or my alternative suggestion of Tsikhisdziri are not accepted. My study will have served its purpose well, if colleagues feel encouraged to reconsider some important facets of the ancient history of Georgia: the local character of a Leukotheion in Kolchis deserves to be appreciated in its broader mytho-historical context, including potential implications for the origin of its Greek settlers.⁹⁴ We should also look at the sites of Vani and Atsquri with a fresh view, being open to the possibilities that their history may be understood better without connections to Leukothea, Phrixos and Pharnakes.

92 App. *Mith.* 120.594f. Pharnakes obviously found only little resistance in Theodosia and Pantikapaion, because their subjection cannot be explained by a siege, for which he had neither the time nor the resources.

93 Strab. *Geogr.* 11.2.17 (498C), as quoted above. For these and other examples, cf. Dan 2016, 250.

94 See especially above, n. 34. Cf. Braund 1998, who emphasizes the scarcity of our historical sources and the need to examine more closely the mythical tradition, in order to understand better the conceptualization of Archaic Greek colonization in general (p. 287) as well as the re-invention of foundation myths throughout antiquity (p. 293). His Kolchian examples are, however, confined to the Argonauts (pp. 289, 295).

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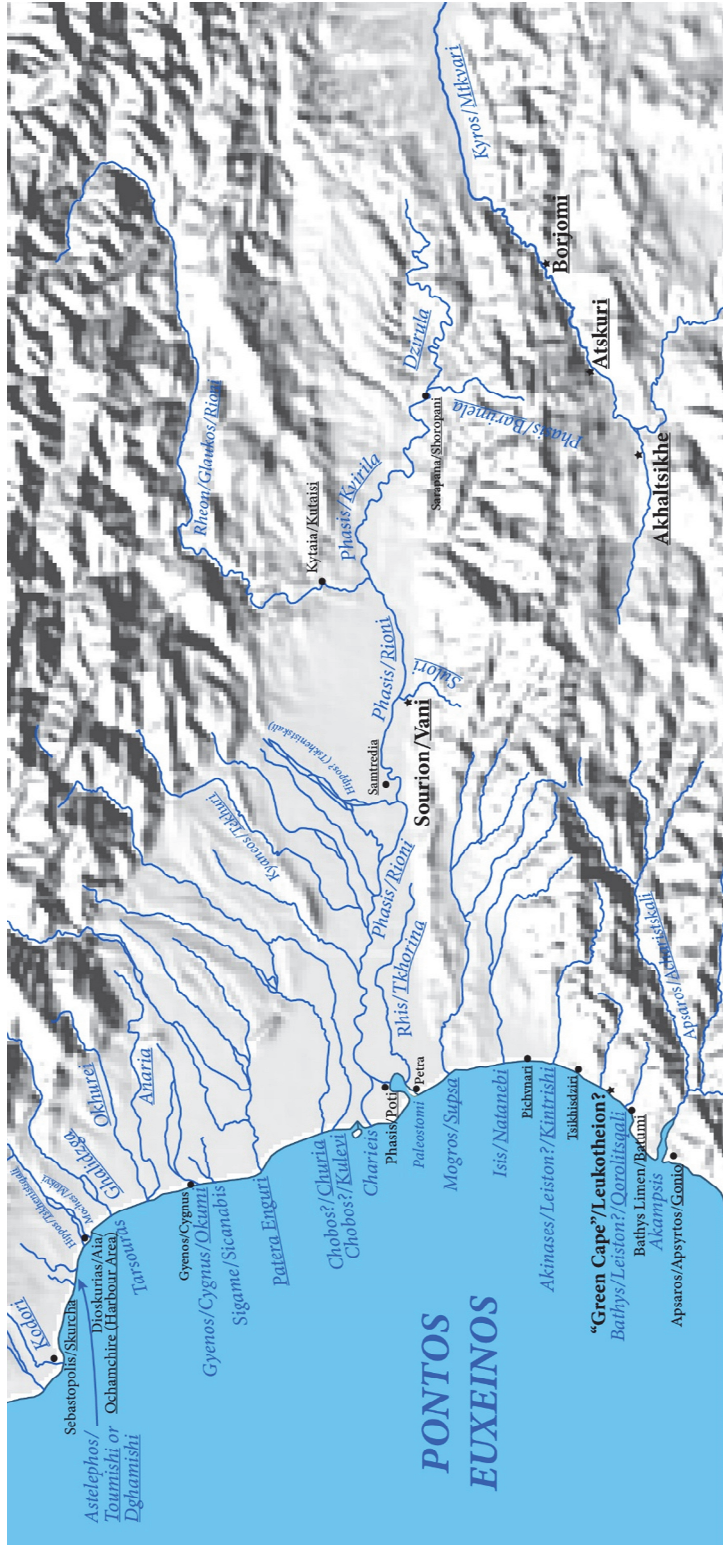
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Suggested Locations of the Sanctuary of Leukothea in Kolchis

- ★ **Proposed Locations**
 - **Other Sites**
- Sourion/Vani** Ancient Name / Modern Name
Charieis Water Feature

Authors: Altay Coşkun & Stone Chen, Waterloo ON
 Cartographer: Stone Chen, Waterloo ON
 Base Maps: The Black Sea Area Based on Arrian around 130 C. E., by Richard Talbert et al. (Ancient World Mapping Center - UNC-CH Library Access, August 26, 2008); also: Barrington Atlas, ed. by Richard Talbert, Princeton 2000; Google Maps / Earth 2019.
 Main Sources: Strabo, *Geography* (1st cent. BC/AD). Cf. Ps.-Scylax (4th cent. BC); Pliny, *NH* 6 (1st cent.); Apollon, *PPE* (2nd cent.); *Tabula Peutingeriana* (4th cent. AD); Procopius, *Wars* (6th cent. AD).
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