

SOME NOTES ON THE NAME(S) OF CHERSONESUS TAURICA

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Rezumat: *Articolul tratează problematica denumirilor diferite ale Chersones-ului Tauric, pe care Pliniu cel Bătrân le menționează în lucrarea sa „Historia Naturalis” (IV, 85: Heraclea Cherronesus, libertate a Romanis donatum; Megarice vocabatur antea). În această frază, unii istorici observă trei denumiri independente pentru oraș – Heraclea, Cherronesus și Megarice. Articolul de față dovedește că Heraclea și Megarice apar în textul lui Plinius nu ca nume separate, ci ca denumiri menite să arate conexiunea între Chersones și metropolele sale, și să facă distincția între acesta și alte colonii cu acest nume. Aceeași specificare a originii orașului pare a fi mențiunea unei anume Heraclea, altfel necunoscută, alături de numele orașului Callatis în vestul Mării Negre, menționat de Pliniu (IV, 44: Thracia ... urbes habet, Histropolin Milesiorum, Tomos, Callatim, quae antea Cerbatis vocabatur, Heracleam ...).*

Abstract: *The article is devoted to the possible names of Tauric Chersonesus that Pliny the Elder mentions in his “Natural History” (IV, 85: Heraclea Cherronesus, libertate a Romanis donatum; Megarice vocabatur antea). In this phrase, some historians see the presence of three independent names of the city – Heraclea, Cherronesus and Megarice. The article proves that Heraclea and Megarice appear in Pliny’s text not as separate names but as definitions aimed to show the connection between Chersonesus and its metropolises and to distinguish it from the other cities with this name. The same definition of the origin of the city seems to be the mention of a certain, otherwise unknown, Heraclea together with the name of the city of Callatis in the Western Black Sea region that is mentioned by Pliny (IV, 44: Thracia ... urbes habet, Histropolin Milesiorum, Tomos, Callatim, quae antea Cerbatis vocabatur, Heracleam ...).*

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In antiquity, renaming of cities and settlements was widely practiced in connection with various circumstances – relocation of a city to another place, refoundation of an old settlement, naming in honor of a ruler, change of ethnic environment of a city, etc. One of the most famous renamings is the one when the ancient Byzantium (Βυζάντιον, possibly, from the Illyrian or Thracian *B(e)uzas*) founded by Megara in the 7th century BC on the shores of the Bosphorus began in the 4th century AD to be called *New Rome* (*Nova Roma*, Νέα Ῥώμη)¹, then *Constantinople* (*Roma Constantinopolitana*, Κωνσταντινίου πόλις, Κωνσταντινούπολις)², then, already in the 5th century, often simply Πόλις (hence the name Πόλυ for modern Greeks, and *Stambul* for Turks), and all this metonomasia had a serious historical, socio-political, ideological, or cultural basis³.

In the Black Sea region, many ancient cities changed their names and sometimes more than once. Following the coastline of the Black Sea according to the principle of periplus, counterclockwise, starting with the Thracian Bosphorus, one might find metonomasia in the names of the following cities⁴: at the southern Black Sea coast these are Sesamon, Kytoros, Kromna, Tieon > Amastris, Amisos and Evpatoria > Pompeiopolis, Abunoteichos > Ionopolis, Kerasus > Pharnakeia, Comana > Matius. The next region where the renaming was recorded is the northeast of the Black Sea, with Dioscurias > Sebastopolis. Further in the northern Black Sea region there are Phanagoria > Agrippaea, Chimerion or Cerberion > Cimmerium, Panticapaeum > Bosphorus and Caesarea, Theodosia > Ardabda, Megarika > Heraclea > Chersonesus (?), Miletopolis > Borysthenes > Olbiopolis > Olbia, Ophiussa > Tyra, Kerbatis > Callatis, Messa > Anchialis, Anthius > Apollonia > Sozopolis.

Reasons for naming and renaming of cities could be very different, as memory of the mother colony (Megarika, Heraclea (?) – Chersonesus; Melitopolis – Olbia); transfer of a city to a new place (Dioscurias – Sebastopolis; Borysthenes – Olbia, Ophiussa – Tyra); change of ethnic environment (Theodosia – Ardabda); transformation of an epithet into a name (Olbia [polis] – “Happy [city]”); etymologization of mythical names (Chimeria – Cimmeria); renaming in honor of the Roman rulers (Amis and Evpatoria – Pompeiopolis, Kerasus > Pharnakeia, Dioscurias – Sebastopolis, Phanagoria – Agrippaea, Panticapaeum – Caesarea).

Along with those cases when at the foundation of a Greek colony the local, “barbarian”, name of a settlement is replaced by a new Greek name (Kerbatis – Callatis, Messa – Anchialis), there are also reverse cases when a city changes its Greek name into a “barbarian” one, which reflects new geopolitical realities (Greek Theodosia – Alanian Ardabda). At the same time, it should be noted that the names of some Greek cities retained their native name throughout their history (Panticapaeum, Borysthenes, Tomi, Odessos, etc.).

¹ This is how the founder of the city, Emperor Constantine, ordered to name the new city (Augustin, *Civ. Dei*, V, 25).

² Moreover, even Byzantine medieval authors often called Constantinople *Byzantium* and its inhabitants *Byzantians* (Βυζάντιοι).

³ See more about the names of Constantinople: GEORGACAS 1947, p. 347–367.

⁴ The main data on renaming occur in the geographical works of Strabo, Mela, Pliny, Arrian, Pseudo-Arrian.

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In this paper I will touch upon the problem of the name of only one Greek city in the Northern Black Sea region, namely Chersonesus, founded in the 5th Century BC by Heraclea Pontica from the southern coast of the Black Sea. This problem, in my opinion, has not yet been satisfactorily resolved.

To begin with, this Greek name duplicates the name of the entire Crimean Peninsula (Chersonesos Taurica⁵), having the same meaning, namely "Peninsula". How should one explain such dubbing (the city of Chersonesus on the Chersonesus peninsula)? There seem to be two possible explanations. According to one of them, the main city of the area takes the name of this area. Obviously, going to the Chersonesus (Taurian) peninsula, known by this name already from the time of Herodotus, colonists from Heraclea Pontica gave the same name also to the colony established there. The coincidence of a name of the peninsula and the city on it is a common occurrence in Greek toponymy. For example, on the Thracian peninsula Chersonesus there was also a city with the same name; we come across the same two Chersonesos (a city on the peninsula) in the eastern part of the northern coast of Crete, between Knossos and Olus⁶.

The second explanation proceeds from the fact that since the colony itself was founded on a small peninsula in Crimea (according to Strabo VII, 4, 2 – μικρὰ Χερρόνησος), it received the name "Peninsula" from the real geographical location of the settlement, regardless of the name of Great Chersonesus (according to Strabo VII, 3, 18 – μεγάλη Χερρόνησος). Both factors might have played their role in assigning this name to Chersonesos.

Ancient tradition has brought to us other possible names for Chersonesus. We know about them only from one passage of Pliny the Elder (second half of the 1st century AD) who wrote the following about this city (NH IV, 85): "*Heraclea Cherronesus, libertate a Romanis donatum; Megarice vocabatur⁷ antea*". Understanding of the history of the name(s) of Cherronesus (Chersonesos) depends on the translation of this text. Usually, it is translated as if there are three names mentioned in this phrase. Such are the Russian translations by I.P. Tsvetkov and B.A. Starostin⁸.

The English translation by H.L. Rackham should be at once discounted, since the translator, evidently confused by numerous "Chersonesos" (there were at

⁵ I.N. Khrapunov demonstrated that *Chersonesus Taurica* was in antiquity and Middle Ages designation only of the Crimea Peninsula and never of the city itself (KHRAPUNOV 2006, p. 571–584).

⁶ BRANDIS 1899, p. 2251.

⁷ The best manuscripts (cod. Vaticanus Latinus 3861 from the 9th or 11th century and Parisinus Latinus 6795 from the 9th–10th or 11th Centuries, Leidensis Lipsii VII from the 10th–11th centuries) give here the reading *Megaricae vocabantur antea*, which is difficult to explain and understand. Only cod. Florentinus Riccardianus 488 of the 10th–11th centuries gives the reading *Megarice*, but it also has *vocabantur*, which is again difficult to explain. The edition of Jan–Mayhoff retains the reading *Megaricae vocabantur*.

⁸ "Ираклея-Херсонис, которому дарована свобода римлянами; он раньше назывался Мегарикой..." (transl. by I.P. Tsvetkov); "Гераклея-Херсонес, получившая от римлян [статус] свободного города; раньше она называлась Мегарикой" (transl. by B.A. Starostin).

least three of them – the Crimean Peninsula, “Great Chersonesos”, the Heracleian Peninsula, “Small Chersonesos”, and the city of Chersonesos on this peninsula), wrote the following: “The Heracleian Peninsula, a place on which Rome has recently bestowed freedom; it was formerly called Megarice”, having in mind that *Heraclea Cherronesus* was a name not of the city but of the Heracleian Peninsula⁹. The German translation reads like this: “Herakleia Cherronesos, von den Römern mit der Freiheit beschenkt; sie wurde früher Megarike genannt” (transl. by G. Winkler).

The result was the opinion that Pliny speaks here of three different names of the city – *Megarica*, *Heraclea* and *Chersonesos* – that, supposedly, were replacing each other depending on the political conjuncture. Moreover, the chronology of this change of names (5th–4th centuries BC) was also suggested¹⁰. It seems, however, that Pliny was not pointing to a change of name, but was specifying it.

My translation is as follows: “On the coast [of Taurica, starting] merely from Carcine, [there are these] cities: Taphrae on the very isthmus of the peninsula, next Heracleian Chersonesos to which the Romans granted freedom; earlier it had been called Megarian [Chersonesos]”.

In my opinion, Pliny called the city not *Heraclea* (substantive), but *Heracleian* (adjective), and in Greek it should have sounded like Ἡρακλεία Χερρόνησος¹¹. This, on the one hand, helped to distinguish this city from other Greek colonies with the same name (Chersonesos existed in Africa, Spain, on Crete, Knidos, in Thrace¹²), on the other hand, it indicated the metropolis of the city. As is known, Chersonesos was a colony of Heraclea Pontica, founded in its turn by Megara¹³. This explains the second definition of the new city of Heracleotes – *Megarice* (Μεγαρική πόλις – an adjective too). Apparently, those scholars are right who suppose that Chersonesos was named by Pliny “Megarian” because he had used a

⁹ See the convincing criticism of this translation: SAPRYKIN 1995, p. 32–33: “the translation... is radically wrong”. The same error is in the translation of R.A. MASON (2008, p. 344: “Heracleian Chersonesos” with the commentary on the p. 361: “Heraclea Chersonesos is the peninsula on the southwestern part of the Crimea on which the city of Chersonesos stood”).

¹⁰ See, for example: SAPRYKIN 1994, p. 40–43; SAPRYKIN 1995, p. 25–38. See his conclusion on p. 38: “... The first ‘ancient’ name of Chersonesos – Megarice was used for a very short time. The city which was founded in 425 BC and not later than 424–422 BC changed its name first to Heracleia and then to Chersonesos. This short period of bearing the name ‘Megarice’ has been confirmed, although there is a lack of evidence for this in the works of ancient authors excepting Pliny the Elder”.

¹¹ It is possible that G. Winkler also felt this when he translated the Latin *Heraclea* into German as *Herakleia*.

¹² See a review of the ancient towns with the name Chersonesos: BRANDIS 1899, p. 2251–2269. Pliny himself was aware of the need to distinguish between identically sounding toponyms; see, for example, *NH* III, 100: “The towns inland from Taranto (Tarentum) are Uria, which has the surname of Messapia to distinguish it from Uria in Apulia (cui cognomen ob Apulam Messapiae)” (transl. by H.L. Rackham). In III, 103 Uria is also mentioned in Apulia. So, the city of Uria has *cognomen*, as is customary in the names of people, in order to distinguish between objects whose names have the same sound.

¹³ For more details see: SAPRYKIN 1986.

source containing a list of the Black Sea colonies in comparison with metropolises¹⁴.

Pliny in his testimony definitely reproduces Greek toponyms, and his *Heraclea* and *Megarice* are adjectives (the first one in the Latin form *Heracleus*, -a, -um corresponding in gender to Cherronesus, -i f, while the second one in a pronounced Greek form, also in the singular feminine¹⁵), but by no means independent toponyms¹⁶. As a parallel, I will give the designation of another Chersonesus, the Thracian one: it (both as a peninsula and as a city on it) was often called ἡ Θρακική (or Θρακία, or Θρακῶος) Χερσόνησος (compare the Cretan Chersonesus – Χερσόνησος ἡ Κρητῶν)¹⁷.

This is also evidenced by another passage from Pliny where he names Chersonesus descriptively as “a city of Heracleotes” (NH IV, 78: *Cherronesum Heracleotarum oppidum*), thus indirectly testifying that it was called not *Heraclea*, but *Heraclean*.

Strabo, telling about Chersonesus, also speaks of the “apoikia of Heracleotes” (VII, 4, 2): “As one sails out of the gulf (of Tamyrales) ... one sails along the coast, there is a great cape which projects towards the south and is a part of the Chersonesus as a whole¹⁸; on this cape is situated a city of the Heracleotae, a colony of the Heracleotae who live on the Pontus, and this place itself is called Chersonesus (ἐφ’ ἧ ἴδρται πόλις Ἡρακλεωτῶν ἀποικος τῶν ἐν τῷ Πόντῳ, αὐτὸ τοῦτο καλουμένη Χερσόνησος...)” (transl. by H.L. Jones)¹⁹.

S.Yu. Saprykin in his English-language article on other names of Chersonesus, probably based on the not entirely accurate English translation of Strabo by H.L. Jones, argues that, according to Strabo, Chersonesus was “a polis of the Heracleotes”²⁰ and not “a polis of the Chersonesites”²¹, while the Greek text only says that “on the cape there is a city – a colony of the Pontic Heracleotes”, and this definition is a common place in the description of Chersonesus by other ancient authors. To support his theory of the existence of *Heraclea* as a name of

¹⁴ See, e. g. BRANDIS 1899, p. 2265.

¹⁵ SKRZHINSKAY 1977, col. 65 supposes that *Megarice* of Pliny is a reflection of Greek adjective Μεγαρική (πόλις, ἀποικία).

¹⁶ No wonder, Brandis, commenting on this text by Pliny, calls the city *Chersonesos Herakleotike* (BRANDIS 1899, col. 2257). See his emphatic conclusion (*Ibid.* col. 2265): “Daß aber Ch[ersonesos] je den Namen Megarike gehabt habe, daran ist nicht zu denken; ebensowenig hieß sie jemals Herakleia”. Cf. the opposite, no less categorical, point of view of S.Yu. Saprykin: “There can be no doubt that ‘Megarice’ is the ancient name of Heracleia’s *apoikia* in Taurica” (SAPRYKIN 1995, p. 36). See also DANOFF 1962, col. 1105: after Pliny “soll diese Stadt ursprünglich Megarice geheißen haben”; MASON 2008, p. 344: “its original name was Megarice”.

¹⁷ See, e.g. BRANDIS 1899, col. 2242.

¹⁸ I. e. Crimea.

¹⁹ More accurate translation is by S. Radt: “Halbinsel, auf der eine Pflanzstadt der Herakleoten am Pontos liegt, die eben diesen Namen, Chersonesos, trägt...”, cf. RADT 2003, p. 285.

²⁰ The Russian translator of Strabo, F.G. Mishchenko, translates this text in the same way: “На этомъ мысъ расположенъ городъ Гераклеотянъ, колонія живущихъ на Понтѣ; называется онъ также Херсонесомъ”.

²¹ SAPRYKIN 1995, p. 29.

Chersonesus, Saprykin cites the Russian translation by G.A. Stratanovsky – “which is *also* called Chersonesos”. I would say that this ‘also’ refers, as in my translation, not to the name *Heraclea* but to the fact that Strabo just called the entire Crimean Peninsula *Chersonesos*²².

Note that Strabo distinguishes between the two “Chersonesos” – a peninsula and a city – and points to a small peninsula, on which the city is located (Chersonesus was founded on the peninsula between Karantinnaya and Pesochnaya bays).

As is known, *Heraclea Pontica* had another colony in the Black Sea region – this is *Callatis* (modern *Mangalia*) in *Dobrudja*. And this is what Pliny writes about it (NH IV, 44): „*Thracia ... pulcherrimas in ea parte urbes habet, Histropolin Milesiorum, Tomos, Callatim, quae antea Cerbatis vocabatur, Heracleam. Habuit et Bizonem ...* – “Thrace ... has in this area most beautiful cities: *Histropolis*, [the colony] of the Milesians, *Tomos*, *Heraclea* *Callatis* that was formerly called *Kerbatis*; it [*sc. Thrace*] once had *Bizone* too...” (translated by the author).

In H. Rackham’s edition and translation we read at the end of this passage: *Callatim quae antea Cerbatis vocabatur. Heracleam habuit et Bizonen...* – “*Collat* (*Callatis*), formerly called *Cerbatis*. It formerly had *Heraclea* and *Bizone* ...”, i. e., *Heraclea* is separated from *Callatis* and merged with *Bizone*²³.

In the German edition and translation by G. Winkler, this text looks different: *Callatim, quae antea Cerbatis vocabatur, Heracleam. habuit et Bizonen ...* – “*Kallatis*, das früher *Kerbatis* hieß, *Herakleia*. Es hatte auch ... *Bizone*”. *Heraclea* here continues the list of cities after *Callatis* and is separated from *Bizone*.

Pliny’s editors, tearing the word *Heracleam* from *Callatim* and considering it a separate member of the list (as in the German edition), or even connected to *Bizone* (as in the English and Russian editions), have for many decades been puzzling over which, unknown from other sources, city of *Heraclea* was situated in *Dobrudja* next to *Callatis*²⁴. It seems to me that if we read this text in the same way as in the case of *Tauric Chersonesus*, that is, if we understand *Heracleam* not as a separate item in the list but as an epithet (*cognomen*) to *Callatim*, indicating the city’s metropolis, the problem of the unknown *Heraclea* in the Western Black Sea region is removed.

²² See the translation by G.A. Stratanovsky: “Если плыть дальше вдоль побережья, следует выдающийся в море на юг большой мыс, который составляет часть целого Херсонеса. На этом месте расположен город гераклейцев (колония гераклейцев на Понте), который также называется Херсонесом”. As we can see, Stratanovsky’s translation repeats the translation by H.L. Jones.

²³ I.P. Tsvetkov translates in the same way: “Истрополь, Томи и Каллатия, прежде называвшаяся Кербатидою. Здесь же лежали Ираклея и Визона, поглощенная разверзшеюся землею...”

²⁴ See, e.g., PATSCH 1912, p. 436, I n. 27: “Eine noch nicht lokalisierte griechische, vielleicht von *Heraklea Pontica* begründete, später bedeutungslose Kolonie an der mösischen Pontusküste zwischen *Callatis* (*Mangalia*) und *Bizone* (*Kawarna*)” with reference to Pliny. There is no *Heraclea* at this place in the Barrinton Atlas of Ancient History (see Map N 22); the DNP ignores this *Heraclea*. A few days before his departure from us, my friend and colleague Alexander Avram, in response to my questioning what Pliny could mean, mentioning *Heraclea* next to *Callatis*, wrote back to me: “Lieber Alexander, *Heraclea* ist ein unidentifizierter Ort im kallatianischen Territorium”.

If we take into consideration that among multiple Greek cities founded by the Ionian Miletus in the Black Sea region only two were founded by the Dorian Heraclea (Pontica), emphasizing its role in the founding of Chersonesus and Callatis does not seem superfluous²⁵. I would like to note that in antiquity there are few cases when a colony receives the name of the metropolis, which would have happened if *Heraclea* had been the name of “Chersonesos”.

In general, Pliny's characterization of each geographic region included, as K. Sallmann has established, several structural elements²⁶. Among them, one might single out data of antique character (for example, the cities of Pyrra and Antissa near Meotis once plunged into Pontus Euxinus – II, 206), legends of the founding of cities (Panticapaeum was founded by the Milesians – IV, 87), and reports of renaming of various cities (Olbia – formerly Miletopolis and Olbiopolis – IV, 83; Cimmerium – formerly Cerberion or Chimerion – VI, 18). We owe most of the information on renaming of cities to Pliny. So, only in Book IV of “Natural history” dedicated to geography Pliny gives a huge number of names of cities, rivers, islands and other geographical objects that were previously called differently (see IV, 5, 9, 11, 12, 14, 20, 26, 27, 29, 33, 41, 46, 54, 57, 64, 67–70, 72, 73, 76, 82, 93, 102).

Pliny's use of epithets (*cognomina*) *Megarian* and *Heracleian* with the name of the city of Chersonesus obviously corresponded to all those elements characteristic of his “Natural History” and reflected the memory of the mother colony.

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²⁵ See Strabo XII, 3, 6: Ἡ μὲν οὖν Ἡράκλεια πόλις ἐστὶν εὐλίμενος καὶ ἄλλως ἀξιόλογος, ἣ γε καὶ ἀποικίας ἐστελλεν (ἐκείνης γὰρ ἢ τε Χερρόνησος ἀποικος καὶ ἡ Κάλλατις)... – “Now Heracleia is a city that has good harbors and is otherwise worthy of note, since, among other things, it has also sent forth colonies; for both Chersonesus and Callatis are colonies from it” (transl. by H.L. Jones); Cf. Pseudo-Arrian. PPE 103 (74): Κάλλατις Ἡρακλεωτῶν ἀποικία κατὰ χρῆσμον γενομένη – “Kallatis was founded by the Herakleotai, who followed an oracle”.

²⁶ SALLMANN 1971, S. 192–236.

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