

Physical Geography

Deposits of the Rioni River Estuary and Localization of the Town of Phasis

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ABSTRACT. It is supposed on the basis of analysis of geological and geomorphologic material that the town of Phasis might have been located on the left bank of the river Rioni, 5-6 km east of the water-distributing junction.

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On the basis of ancient written sources (Starbo, Arrian, Agathias) part of scientists locates the Black-Sea-coastal town of Phasis of ancient and Byzantine periods within the borders of the present-day town of Poti, situated at the estuary of the river Rioni [1]. However, detailed archaeological investigations, accompanied by geological drilling, have not revealed any traces of cultural layers on the territory of the present-day town of Poti. Accordingly, some researchers exclude the presence of traces of the town of Phasis on the above mentioned territory [2]. It is supposed also that from time to time the town of Phasis, as a settlement located on the seashore, changed its location as a result of displacement of the coastal line. In particular, the location of the town of Phasis in the 5th-6th centuries B. C. is pointed out inland at 8-9 km distance from the coastal line, and in the 2nd-6th centuries - at 5-5.5 km [3]. Considering all the above mentioned facts some researchers do not exclude the possibility of the presence of traces of the town of Phasis on the bottom of Lake Paliastomi or the Black Sea [3, 4].

Scarcity and inaccuracy of references to the location of the town of Phasis found in ancient written sources, on the one hand, and improper interpretation of geological-geomorphological and palaeogeographical facts of the area of the Rioni river estuary with their complete disregard in some cases, on the other, obscure the problem of localization of Phasis.

First of all it is necessary to take into consideration the boundaries of peatbogs developed in the area under discussion. It is noteworthy that from the north, east and south the mentioned swamps (Nabada, Shavtskala, Imnati, Maltakva) and Lake Paliastomi along a considerable distance are contiguous to reclaimed areas of the town of Poti and are characterized by a continuous, 5-12 cm thick peat horizon, seen in the vertical profile. It is established that a continuous process of peat accumulation has been under way in these bogs over the past 5000-6000 years [1]. Proceeding from this, in the 5th-6th centuries B. C. (supposed time of the foundation of Phasis) and in the following period the places of location of peatbogs had been covered with peat layers. Considering this, the presence of traces of settlements of ancient and Byzantine times in this region should be excluded.

The presence of archaeological material of the same period in Lake Paliastomi is also excluded as the bottom of the latter is formed of lacustrine sapropel (organic slime and muddy sands), accumulation of which on the lake bottom has been occurring continuously over the past 3400-3600 years [1, 5]. Therefore, Lake Paliastomi had emerged 8-10 centuries before the foundation of the town of Phasis and search for traces of the latter on its bottom seems to be hopeless. Archaeological material being in conditions of primary setting may be found only within

the 150-200 m thick bottom strip situated along the west lakeside (seashore side) of Lake Paliastomi. The mentioned part of the lake bottom seems to have become covered by water later. This is indicated by the fact that this part of the bottom is not built of sapropel of lacustrine origin.

The waterfront along the Kolkheti lowland seaboard had not shifted inland significantly from the coastal line during the last 3400-3600 years. The strip of sand dunes, developed along the coastal line 100-300 m away from it, which is dated to 3400-3600 years using archaeological and radiocarbon dating methods, may serve as irrefutable argument for this [1]. The strip of sandy dunes is not represented in the coastal zone of the central part of the town of Poti extending 3.5 km along the coast. This narrow neck of coastal land represents the old delta of the Rioni river, over the surface of which the river flowed over the past 2500-3000 years. The specified part of the coastal land, as the estuary of a formerly large and high-water level river characterized by a changing regime of morphodynamic processes development, underwent significant surface deformations and certain shift of the seashore inland or towards the sea. Such regime of

morphodynamic processes development was conditioned by the peculiarities of the hydrological regime of the Rioni (frequent water flows, etc.) and distribution along the seashore of solid drift (sand, silt) brought by the river to the coastal zone.

Thus, considering the results of lithologic-stratigraphic and radiocarbon analyses of the relief and the rock constituting it, the following areas of the region of the Rioni estuary can be assumed to have had relatively favorable conditions for colonization: 1) the strip of sandy dunes, creating a continuous belt from the north-west side of Lake Paliastomi (source of the river Kaparchina) up to the estuary of the river Supsa and from the northern part of the town of Poti (the area of the swamp Nabada) up to the estuary of the river Khobistskali; 2) during the last 2000-2500 years the 2.5-3 wide land strip, situated between the river Rioni and Shavtskala peatbog, 5-6 km up to the stream from the water-distributing junction constructed on the river Rioni was distinguished by a less dynamic development of morphodynamical processes. The mentioned territory could be regarded as a most likely area of localization of the town of Phasis.

ფიზიკური გეოგრაფია

მდინარე რიონის შესართავის და მიმდებარე ტერიტორიების თანამედროვე ნალექების შესწავლის მნიშვნელობა ქალაქ ფასისის ლოკალიზაციის პრობლემისათვის

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(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიკოს ზ. ტატაშვილის მიერ)

მდ. რიონის შესართავის და მიმდებარე ტერიტორიის ამგებელი თანამედროვე ჭაობური, ტბიური, სანაპირო-ზღვიური და სხვა ნალექების კომპლექსური შესწავლის საფუძველზე ნაშრომში გამოთქმულია მოსაზრება, რომ ქ. ფასისის მდებარეობის ადგილი, შესაძლოა, მდ. რიონის მარცხენა ნაპირის გასწვრივ, ამ მდინარეზე არსებული წყალგამანაწილებელი კანაქიდან აღმოსავლეთით 5-6 კმ მანძილზე ყოფილიყო.

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