Wolf-warriors, the Argonauts,
and the foundation of Trebizond*

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Abstract
Trebizond (Greek Trapæus, Turkish Trabzon) is situated on the coast of the Black Sea, opposite to the actual Russian seaside resort Sochi, in the historical Pontic region or North East Anatolia (now Turkey). This paper tries to contribute to the tradition about the foundation of this city assuming a late Indo-European heritage feature playing a role as well as a deeper connection with Trebizond’s presumable second mother-city in Arcadia on the Peloponneseus. Passages incorporated containing some names and facts thought to be important are added.

Keywords: Indo-European (IE), Trapezus (Trebizond), wolfin, wolf-warriors, the Argonauts, foundations

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1. Pontos

The Pontic region was one of the sceneries of a spectacular expedition led by Iason (Jason) in which several renowned heroes also participated. Chronologically, this must have been the time of the last or the last but one generation of heroes before the Trojan War. History and myth are intertwined, nevertheless the Trojan War (better: clashes) was a historical reality: it may be put approximately into the first decades of the 12th c. B.C.1) The Pontic region was, much later, also the scenery, and Trebizond itself a stage, of the March of the Ten Thousand in 402/401 B.C. as described by Xenophon.

2. The Argonauts

Argonauts was the name of the crew of the famous ship Argo the reputation of which survived in myth and in later literary tradition. As Adrados, an eminent Hellenist put it (2005: 62; cf. Adrados 1998), the founding of the Greek colonies marked the culminations of resumption of the travels of exploration and commerce. What Adrados wants to underline is the Greek colonizing mechanism expanding both towards the West and the East, an endeavour which evidently must have been preceded by explorations. Mycenaean settlements, e.g., could be located in early Latium in Italy. In Pontus, Asia and the West, the Greeks had followed in the footsteps of the Mycenaean and the exploration myths of the Argonauts, of Heracles and Odysseus. The Odyssey described the navigations of Odysseus in the Western Mediterranean, linking the Mycenaean navigations and those of the eighth c., i.e. Homer’s epoch.2)

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1) On the historicity of this event see what C.W. Blegen, one of the excavators of Troy, writes (Blegen 1975). He identifies layer VIIa with Priam’s Troy and remarks that archaeological research shows that such an event took place around 1250 B.C. (p. 163). This does not exclude several other clashes the archaeological evidence for which belong to other layers of the Trojan site.

2) One should not forget that the Odyssey, like the Iliad, is a literary product uniting different chronological and cultural layers, and containing also ideology. Their aim was to provide basic knowledge and guide-lines for the educated people of the classical epoch, well down to Roman times. Among the various topics of the Odyssey,