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NICHOLAS SEKUNDA

The Date and Circumstances of the Construction of the Fortifications at Phalasarna

The ancient city of Phalasarna lies on the western coast of Crete at the point where Cape Vouxa ends and merges with the main body of the island. Though Phalasarna was not one of the most significant Cretan cities, it lay in a position of great strategic importance. To the North-West of Phalasarna on the Greek mainland lay Lakonia, and in between lay the smaller island of Antikythera and the larger island of Kythera. Phalasarna also possesses a very impressive set of fortifications. It is the purpose of this small article to investigate the date and circumstances of the construction of these fortifications, bearing in mind, above all, the strategic significance of Phalasarna's location. This treatment is to be considered as a preliminary one, as it is my intention to turn to a much fuller treatment of the problem in the near future.

The ceramic evidence supplied by the fill of the Round Tower at Phalasarna indicates that the fortifications were constructed around 335–330 BC¹, in other words during the period of Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire. It seems reasonable to look within the historical events of this period for a context for the construction of the fortifications of Phalasarna.

When Alexander moved east, he left most of mainland Greece pacified, and at least nominally allied with him. His forces consisted of part of the Macedonian army, and allied contingents from most of the Greek states that were in alliance with him. The latter contingents serving, in effect, as 'hostages' for the good behaviour of the states that had sent them. The Lakedaimonians stood outside this alliance, however, and there existed a constant danger that they would attempt to overturn the *status quo* in mainland Greece. Furthermore, large numbers of exiles

1. E. Hadjidaki, *Hellenistic Ceramics from Phalasarna Found from 1986-1990*, *AncW* 31.1(2000)54-73 at p. 55.

and individuals hostile to the Macedonian cause joined the Persian army as mercenaries.

One of these individuals was Aristomedes of Pherai (Berve 128). The significance of Aristomedes and his family in the fortification of Phalasarna and Antikythera will become clearer later in this article. Aristomedes is found commanding some 20,000 Persian infantry on the left wing of the Persian army at the battle of Issus in 333 BC (Curt.3.9.3; Arr. *Anab.* 2.8.7). He is mentioned first in Persian service in a fragment of Didymus, which, according to Errington, must refer to events of the summer or autumn of 340 BC². The family seems to have been dislodged from Pherai when Philip of Macedon consolidated his power in Thessaly, according to Diodorus (16.69.8) by ‘expelling the tyrants from the cities’ late in the summer of 344 BC³. In his speech *On Halonnesos* (7.32), perhaps delivered early in 342, Demosthenes (7.32) states that Philip has robbed the Pheraians of their independence and has placed a garrison in their citadel. Elsewhere (8.59; cf. 9.12) he implies that Philip mounted an attack on the walls of Pherai. Presumably Aristomedes’ family was one of those which held power in Pherai before 344.

Down to the battle of Issus Persian strategy had mainly been devoted to opposing Alexander in the field. After this battle, however, renewed effort was made to reinforce the attempts of the Persian fleet still operating in the Aegean to conquer back islands and cities in the Aegean, and to try to bring support to any Greeks wishing to rise against Alexander. The main evidence for the Persian counter-offensive has been gathered by Burn⁴.

Ultimately one part of the Persian fleet reached the Hellespont. Curtius (4.1.36) tells us that Aristomenes had been sent by Darius to recover the coast of the Hellespont. A fleet of the Macedonians, which had been summoned from Greece, defeated Aristomenes, and captured and sank his ships. This battle is not mentioned in any other historical source.

Following this, Curtius (4.1.37) says that Pharnabazus, commander of the Persian fleet, having extracted money from the Milesians, and put a garrison into the city of Chios, sailed with a hundred ships to Andros and from there to Siphnos. These islands also he occupied with garrisons, besides fining them.

2. R.M. Errington, *Macedonian ‘Royal Style’ and its Historical Significance*, JHS 94(1974) at p. 27.

3. Thus H.D. Westlake, *Thessaly in the Fourth Century B.C.*, London 1935, p. 192.

4. A. R. Burn, *Notes on Alexander's Campaigns 332-330 BC I. The Persian Counter-Offensive 333-2*, JHS 72(1952)81–91.

The sequence of events is likely to have been confused by Curtius. Arrian (2.13.4) tells us that Pharnabazus and Autophradates had been waiting at Chios; after installing a garrison at Chios they sent part of their fleet to Cos and Halikarnassos, while they themselves put to sea with the hundred best-sailing ships and arrived at Siphnos. There they were met by Agis king of the Lakedaimonians with a single trireme; he came to ask them to give him funds for the war and to send as many ships and men as possible to him in the Peloponnese. Arrian (2.13.5) continues 'Just at this moment came the news of the battle of Issus'. Therefore these events can be placed in 333 BC, probably around October⁵, and it is likely that the defeat of Aristomenes in the Hellespont came much later.

Pharnabazus then returned to Chios with 12 triremes and 1,500 of the foreign mercenaries, fearing that the Chians would rebel on the news of the defeat (Arr. *Anab.* 2.13.5).

Agis got thirty silver talents from Autophradates and ten triremes and despatched Hippias to take them to his brother Agesilaos at Tainaron. He ordered them to tell Agesilaos to pay the crews in full and sail as quickly as possible to Crete to settle things there (Arr. *Anab.* 2.13.6). The identity and nationality of the individual named Hippias is unknown. P. Poralla lists him as no. 388 in his *Prosopographie der Lakedaimonier* (1913) but with a question-mark.

Agis himself remained for the present there at Siphnos among the islands, but later joined Autophradates at Halikarnassos (Arr. *Anab.* 2.13.6).

According to Diodorus (17.48.1,–2) at some point Agis engaged the services of those mercenaries who had escaped from Issos, eight thousand in number 'and sought to change the political situation in Greece in favour of Darius'. This seems to be referring to the war against Antipater in 330, and so is looking forward in time. Diodorus (17.48.2) then says that Agis received ships and money from the Persian king and sailed to Crete, where he captured most of the cities and forced them to take the Persian side. The success of the Lakedaimonian campaign against Crete is supported by Curtius (4.1.40) who tells us that the Cretans first sided with one party then the other, and had their country occupied by garrisons now of the Spartans, now of the Macedonians.

So it was late in 330 BC that an element of the Persian fleet, the ten triremes given to Agis along with the thirty silver talents, first sailed south, initially to Tainaron, and then subsequently to Crete. One Aristomenes son of Aristomedes, a Thessalian from Pherai, is found making a dedication to Apollo

5. P.A. Brunt, *Arrian I* (Loeb ed., Cambridge Mass., London 1976) p. 481.

Aigileus, together with the Athenian Nikon son of Kephisodoros, in a dedicatory inscription found on the island of Antikythera (ancient Aigilia) which is now in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (IG V (1) 948). The island of Aigilia lies between Kythera and Crete, on the way to Tainaron.

The narrow rocky island of Antikythera has an area of only 8 square miles, rises to a height of 1,230 feet in the south-west, and is agriculturally sterile but for the cultivated inner valleys. The only important port is Potamos, one and a quarter miles south east of Cape Kephali at the northern tip of the island. The island had a population of only 322 according to the 1928 census⁶.

One is forced to ask why an important Pheraian and an important Athenian both found themselves on this remote and insignificant island.

I believe it would be reasonable to suggest that the individual called Aristomenes son of Aristomedes named in the dedication from Antikythera should be identified with the Aristomenes who is attested as the Persian fleet commander defeated at the Hellespont, and that this individual, the son of one Aristomedes, is furthermore a close relative of the Aristomedes of Pherai who commanded part of the Persian army at Issos. He may have been the son of Aristomedes of Pherai, but some other family relationship is also possible. The family relationship between these individuals bearing the names Aristomedes and Aristomenes has already been suggested by Habicht⁷. If this suggestion is correct, then it in turn suggests the presence of the Persian fleet at Antikythera at some point shortly after the battle of Issus in 333 BC.

The presence of Aristomenes and the Persian fleet on Antikythera, then, gives us a possible historical occasion not only when the walls at Phalasarna were constructed, but also when Antikythera was first permanently occupied from Phalasarna and its fortifications were constructed. We have archaeological evidence, from bronze coins of Phalasarna and sling bullets inscribed with the name of the Phalasarnians found on the island, that ancient Aigilia (Antikythera) lay within the territory of ancient Phalasarna. This evidence is presented in detail in the present issue of *HOPOS* by the article: *Η επιγραφή IG VI, 948 και οι ενεπίγραφες μολυβδίδες από τα Αντικύθηρα*. We also have no archaeological evidence that there was any occupation on Antikythera before around 335 BC. As has also been mentioned at the beginning of this short article,

6. *Naval Intelligence Division, Geographical Handbook Series: Greece, Volume III Regional Geography* (1945) p.183.

7. In V.Milojčić – D.Theocharis, *Demetrias I*, Bonn 1976, p.188

the archaeological evidence also points to a date of 335–330 BC for the construction of the fortifications at Phalasarua. Putting all these archaeological considerations together, it seems reasonable to connect the dedication of Aristomenes at Antikythera with the settlement and fortification of that island by the Phalasaruians, and the construction of the fortifications at Phalasarua itself. The construction of the fortifications may have been at least partially funded by the thirty talents of silver given to Agis, but further money could have been later contributed to Phalasarua directly by the commanders of the Persian fleet. The financial outlay necessary to construct these two fortifications would have been considerable: very considerable for a city of the size of Phalasarua, and so it would be reasonable to look for an outside sponsor who provided the necessary funds. These funds may have taken the form of silver bullion or already struck coins. Whatever the source and form of the silver supplied for the construction of the walls, the initial fourth-century issue of silver coinage by Phalasarua can perhaps also be connected with the construction of the fortifications at Phalasarua and Antikythera.

Aristomenes himself need not necessarily have commanded the small force of ten triremes which sailed south from Siphnos in late 333. He could have sailed south later with a more substantial force, but it certainly gives us a *terminus non ante* date. As has already been mentioned above, the date when Aristomenes was defeated at the Hellespont is unknown. Berve (126) dated the defeat to the spring of 332 BC, but in my opinion there is no real way of dating the incident, which could have occurred significantly later.

According to Arrian (3.6.1–3) it was only in 331BC that Alexander sent a fleet to the west to counter the successes of the Persian fleet. This occurred when Alexander returned from Egypt to Tyre, where his fleet had already arrived and was waiting for him. On learning that there was a political movement against him in the Peloponnese, he sent Amphoterus to help the Peloponnesians who were loyal in regard to the Persian war and were not giving ear to the Lakedaimonians. Orders were also given to the Phoenicians and Cyprians to send to the Peloponnese a hundred ships in addition to those he was despatching under the command of Amphoterus. Curtius (4.8.15) tells us that Amphoterus, commander of the fleet, was sent to free Crete, not to help the friendly Peloponnesians, ‘for many parts of that island were beset by the arms both of the Persians and of the Spartans, with orders above all to clear the sea of the pirate fleets; for it was a prey to corsairs, who made war on both kings’.

Eventually open war did break out in Greece. This probably happened in the

early summer of 331, when Alexander heard news of its outbreak at Tyre, and was still going on towards the end of that year when Alexander sent money back for the war, either after the battle of Gaugamela in October 331, or from Susa in December 331. The precise date of the defeat and death of Agis at the battle of Megalopolis cannot be established with certainty, but the battle had been fought before April 330 at the latest⁸.

This did not necessarily mean the end of war on Crete. Diodorus (17.111.1–2) tells us, in the course of his description of the events leading up to the Lamian War, that at the end of Alexander's reign, following his order that his satraps should disband their armies, all Asia was overrun with soldiers released from service and supporting themselves by plunder. They started to assemble at Tainaron, where they were joined by 'such of the Persian satraps and generals as had survived, bringing their funds and their soldiers, so that they constituted a joint force'. At least a part of these remnants of Persian forces could have maintained themselves on Crete.

8. R.A. Lock, *The Date of Agis III's War In Greece*, *Antichthon* 6(1972)10-27, at 18-19, 26.