HISTORICO-GEOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONS CONNECTED WITH PERICLES’ PONTIC EXPEDITION

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Pericles’ Pontic expedition is a subject that has been touched on from various angles in studies of the history of the Black Sea region in the Classical era. Among Classical scholars in our country lively discussion has even taken place regarding certain questions linked with this foreign-policy undertaking by Athens.¹ This discussion was at its height in the late 1950s and 1960s and then the debate gradually died down and, as usually happens, each of the participants stood by his or her original opinion. Yet overall this discussion deserves to be regarded as fruitful. In the course of it several points were clarified, which led to the subsequent reduction in the interest shown in this subject, although certain of its aspects continue to be examined to this day.² Attention should be paid in


particular to the work of Y.G. Vinogradov, who in recent decades has probably made the most significant contribution to the examination of this subject: he introduced into the scholarly discussions or reinterpreted most valuable source material. 3

It is possibly useful to approach this range of questions “from the other shore” so to speak, namely through the eyes of a historian of Classical Athens. It needs to be pointed out straightaway that, although Pericles’ Pontic expedition is mentioned in virtually all works devoted to the Athenian archon, the number of specialized works treating the subject with a greater or lesser degree of detail is extremely rare. 4 The factors underlying this state of affairs will be referred to later. A coherent reconstruction of this military-political enterprise with maximum detail and free of all sorts of controversial aspects would appear to be reserved for the future. All we should like to do is to voice some considerations, which will perhaps help us to establish certain details regarding the course of events and to understand better the phenomenon as such. The immediate aim of this article is an attempt to establish the route of the expedition. We shall only be able to return to that question at the end of this account: first it is essential to
