

## Timonax (842)

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# 842 Timonax

## Ken Dowden (Birmingham)

BNJ	Timonax	Timonax
Historian Number:	842	

<b>842 F 1 - SCHOL. APOLL. RHOD. 4, 321/2</b>	<b>meta[[ id="842" type="F" n="1"]]</b>
<b>Subject: genre: local history</b> <b>Historical Work: <i>Skythika</i></b> <b>Source date: 1 c BC - AD 1 c?</b> <b>Historian's date: 1 c BC?</b> <b>Historical period: 1 c BC?</b>	<b>Translation</b>
τῆς δὲ Σκυθίας ἔθνη νε Τιμῶναξ ἀναγράφει ἐν ᾧ Περὶ Σκυθῶν.	Timonax records that there are 55 peoples in Skythia in <i>On the Skythians</i> 1.

## 842 F 1 Commentary

Counting the Skythians is a challenge from the beginning: already Herodotos (4.81) states that there are conflicting views. However, anyone wishing to display learning about this part of the world will list tribal names – whether Indo-Iranian or (cf. on *BNJ* 35 F 2 s.v. ‘2. The major peoples of Aristetas’) Turkic or colorful descriptive names (e.g., ‘cannibals’, cf. on *BNJ* 845 F 1 on §4). This then leads to the possibility of a tribe count, depending on which tribes one is going to accept as Skythian. The tribal names do indeed proliferate, as was observed long ago by K. Neumann, *Die Hellenen im Skythenland* (Berlin 1855), 226: ‘Ungeachtet ihrer geringen Zahl waren die Skythen nach dem übereinstimmenden Zeugnis verschiedener Schriftsteller in mehrere Horden zersplittert’.

We should not receive the number 55 as data, or as a factual count of tribes in Hekataios (*BNJ* 1 F 185-90, F 193, F 215) or Herodotos. This is, if you like, an ‘epideictic fact’: if it sounds amazing but not wholly impossible, then the author has succeeded in his purpose. Amazement (*thauma*) is part of the paradoxographic mentality.

A very similar number is given by Ps.-Skymnos, *To King Nikomedes* 932 discussing Phasis (cf. F 2): for him, Phasis is a Greek town to which peoples come speaking 60 different languages. The dedication of this work to King Nikomedes (II) of Bithynia leads to a date for this work of about 135 BC (H.A. Gärtner, ‘Scymnus (2)’, *BNP*). Though its scope is the whole world, it does here point to a real interest of the kings in the Black Sea area in Skythians, with whom they had to deal in war and peace. Poseidonios *BNJ* 87 F 32 deals with the wars of Mithridates (VI Eupator, of Pontos) in this area in the last decades of the 2nd century BC. Skythia is not, as it might be for audiences of Herodotos, a theoretical area.

<b>842 F 2 - SCHOL. APOLL. RHOD. 4, 1217/9a</b>	<b>meta[[ id="842" type="F" n="2"]]</b>
<b>Subject: genre: local history</b> <b>Historical Work: <i>Skythika</i></b> <b>Source date: 1 c BC - AD 1 c?</b> <b>Historian's date: 1 c BC?</b> <b>Historical period: mythical times</b>	<b>Translation</b>

<p>Τιμωνάξ ἐν ἄ τῶν Σκυθικῶν ἐν Κόλχοις φησὶν Ἴάσονα Μήδειαν γῆμαι, Αἰήτου αὐτῷ ἐγγυήσαντος. ὁ δ' αὐτός φησι·</p> <p>« δείκνυνται δὲ παρὰ τὸν παράπλου ἐνδὸν τοῦ Πόντου κῆποι τινες Ἰασόνιοι καλούμενοι, καθ' ὧν τὰς ἀποβάσεις αὐτὸν ποιήσασθαι, καὶ κατὰ τὴν Αἴαν γυμνάσια καὶ δίσκοι καὶ τῆς Μηδείας θάλαμος, καθ' ὃν ἐνυμφεύθη ποτέ, καὶ πρὸς τῆ πόλει ἱερὸν ἰδρυμένον &lt;ὕπ' &gt; Ἰάσονος, καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἱερὰ πολλά. »</p>	<p>Timonax, in <i>Skythika</i> 1, says that it was amongst the Kolchians that Jason married Medeia, and that Aietes gave her away to him. The same author says:</p> <p>‘And alongside the coastal sailing route inside the Black Sea there are some gardens pointed out called the ‘Jasonian’, at which he is said to have disembarked. And in Aia one can see the gymnasium, discuses and the bed-chamber of Medeia, which is where once she was brought as a bride, and next to the city a shrine founded by Jason, and many sacred sites over and above this.’</p>
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## 842 F 2 Commentary

*Skythika* is a necessary emendation for the manuscript's *Sikelika* (cf. F 1, F 3), perhaps by subliminal confusion with the Sicilian historian Timaios.

The *problema* (cf. on *BNJ* 56 F 1b ‘problem-based researches’) posed by the opening of this fragment is: where did Jason marry Medeia? In the absence of an ancient *Argonautika* (evidenced at *Odyssey* 12.70), the earliest surviving account is at the end of Hesiod, *Theogony* (992-9), though this whole area (881-1020) cannot have belonged to Hesiod's original poem (M.L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford 1966), 397-9) and probably dates to the 6th century BC. According to these lines, then, Jason brought Medea from her father Aietes to Iolkos ‘and made her his buxom bride’. He married her in Iolkos, it would seem, though a different assumption prevails in Euripides' *Medeia*, namely that there had been no formal marriage between them (Medeia sees it as one only rhetorically, at 606, 1388). According to Apollonios, they are married in a cave (prefiguring that of Dido and Aeneas in Vergil's *Aeneid*) amongst the Phaeacians, which seems to continue a tradition of their marriage on Kerkyra, reinforced by local tradition and ritual, seen in Timaios *FGrH* 566 F 87-88, and perhaps deriving from the maybe 8th-century *Naupaktika* of Eumelos of Corinth (M.L. West, ‘*Odyssey* and *Argonautica*’, *CQ* 55 (2005), 39-64, at 57; L. Preller, C. Robert, *Die griechische Heldensage*<sup>4</sup> 2.3.1 (Berlin 1921), 864; for date, M.L. West, ‘Eumelos’: A Corinthian epic cycle?, *JHS* 122 (2002), 109-33, at 109).

But Timonax finds these versions (if, as argued below, Apollonios antedates him) inconsistent with local place naming around the Black Sea and therefore rewrites the mythology to match this ‘historical’ data. There are all sorts of foundations that imply they were already married and did not make a hasty exit from Aia, showing that Aietes must have agreed to the marriage. Crucially, there is the bridal chamber. And gardens now blossom to welcome the newly-weds, gently recalling the fertility of Mt Ida as Zeus and Hera conduct their sacred marriage in *Iliad* 14.

The Argonauts were ‘commemorated’ in various Propontis and Black Sea placenames, ensuring that what were in early times outposts of Greek civilisation found a place on the cultural map provided by mythology. See Preller-Robert, *Heldensage* 2.3.1, 830-47. The most frequently mentioned is the ‘Jasonian Cape’, today's Yasun Burnu, roughly 180 km W of Trabzon, near the ancient Side (modern Fatsa, cf Phabda at Strabo 12.3.16): e.g., Xenophon, *Anabasis* 6.2.1 (where the Argonauts are said to have anchored, but the whole passage is thought an interpolation), and Strabo 12.3.17. Apollonios' Argonauts are around here just before 2.1009, possibly at 2.994 to judge by the neighbouring geography of Thermodon and Themiskyra.

‘Gardens (*Kepoi*) of Jason’ are not otherwise known. However, there was a place opposite Pantikapaion (Kerch), near Phanagoreia (at the mouth of the Hypanis (Bug)) called *Kepoi* (Diodoros

20.24.2, Strabo 11.2.10). Perhaps this was the place meant by Timonax. By ‘Aia’, strictly a wholly fictional eastern ‘land’ (epic *aia*) of which Aietes (‘man of Aia’) is the king, is meant a city in the land of Kolchis (‘Aia the Kolchian’ at Herodotos 1.2.2, 7.193.2 (wrongly secluded by Hude), 7.197.3; Apollonios 2.417; and the river, ‘Phāsis the Kolchian’ at Herodotos 4.45). Scholia tell us that Aia is the city, Kolchis the land (e.g., Scholia on Kallimachos, *Aitia* 1 (*P. Berol.* 11521), F 7.7; *Scholia* on Apollonios 2.413-418c). The city, or rather *emporion* (Strabo 11.2.17), of the Kolchians was actually called Phāsis (Erich Diehl, ‘Phasis (2)’, *RE* 19.2 (1938), 1892-5); no substantial remains of the pre-Byzantine Greek settlement have been found (Iris von Bredow, ‘Phasis (2)’, *BNP*; G. Gamkrelidze, *Researches in Iberia-Colchology* (Tbilisi 2012), available at [http://museum.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=95&info\\_id=11990](http://museum.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=95&info_id=11990) [2 Jan 2014], 56), though it was supposedly founded as a colony ‘by Themistagoras of Miletos’ (Mela 1.108). There appears to have been a town of some significance from the 3rd century BC onwards (Gamkrelidze, *Colchology*, 55, cf. the authors mentioning it listed at 51-2). Its location is fairly clearly that of Poti in Georgia (Gamkrelidze, *Colchology*, 52, 58). As for Themistagoras, his name (‘he who proclaims what is right’) is suspiciously ideal for an oikist (colony-founder) and he himself is otherwise completely unknown and unmentioned in the whole of surviving Greek literature. I wonder if Timonax was the person who talked about him, in the *Skythika*. Mela certainly goes on briefly to mention local sights (the temple and grove of Phrixos, cf the contents of this fragment) and a fundamental of Skythian geography (mountains which rise here and stretch until eventually they join the Rhipaian mountains), as well as listing quite a number of Skythian tribes (cf F 1).

Thus Timonax’s *Skythika* reached all the way to the Caucasus, to modern Georgia. It would explain why this fragment was in Book 1 if we regarded this as coming from an introduction dealing with mythic times. Alternatively, having enumerated the tribes of Skythia (F 1), he might have begun at the East and worked westward. The latter would be an unusual order from a Herodotean point of view, but not if it was focalised from the perspective of a Pontic Greek.

<b>842 F 3 - SCHOL. APOLL. RHOD. 3, 1236</b>	<b>meta[[ id="842" type="F" n="3"]]</b>
<b>Subject: genre: local history</b> <b>Historical Work: <i>Skythika</i></b> <b>Source date: 1 c BC - AD 1 c?</b> <b>Historian’s date: 1 c BC?</b> <b>Historical period: mythical times</b>	<b>Translation</b>
Φαέθων] ὅτι ὁ Ἄψυρτος καὶ Φαέθων ἐκαλεῖτο, ὡς φησι Τιμωνάξ ἐν β΄ Σκυθικῶν.	<b>Phaëthon]</b> because Apsyrtos was also called Phaethon (3.245), as Timonax says in <i>Skythika</i> 2.

## 842 F 3 Commentary

Apollonios has just described Aietes as putting on a helmet gleaming like the rays of Helios when he first rises (3.1228-30); he is about to mount his chariot and ‘Phaethon’ holds it ready for him before mounting it himself too and acting as charioteer (1236 καὶ αὐτός ‘himself too’ i.e. Phaethon, 1239 σφιν ‘them’, namely Aietes and Phaethon). Previously, at 3.245, Apollonios has told us this is Apsyrtos’ nickname among the youth of Kolchis. This forms part of a pattern of association of Apsyrtos with the unfortunate Phaethon (NB 4.219-225, and 4.596-600 where the place of Phaethon’s fall still smoulders), here serving to enhance Aietes’ association with the rising sun and to point forward to the fate of this driver of the solar chariot. From the distinctive use of this theme it appears that the motif may be original with Apollonios and Timonax may have been reading Apollonios rather than vice-versa (see also Biographical Essay). For discussion of Apollonios’ use of the theme, see C.S. Byre, ‘The Prometheus and Phaethon Episodes in the *Argonautica* of Apollonios Rhodius’, *AJP* 117 (1996), 275-83. It looks as though Timonax has missed the subtlety of Apollonios’ inter- and

intratextuality and reduced it to the wooden point of a *grammatikos*: he is called Phaethon because that is his (other) name.

Why is Apsyrtos at issue in Book 2 of the *Skythika*? The obvious explanation would be that Timonax was at that point discussing Tomoi (modern Constanța in Romania), whose name appears to a Greek to mean ‘choppings’ and therefore was related to the myth of the death of Apsyrtos (eg, Ovid, *Tristia* 3.9.5-6).

## 842 Biographical Essay

If Timonax were attested by [Plutarch] or Ptolemy Chennos, he would be instantly added to the list of bogus authors beloved of scholars since R. Hercher (see on *BNJ* 56 F 1b). As it is, his writing of *Skythika* and its manner is very close to this type of material. I have argued that such authors really did exist and, unless the scholiast has this information from a wholly lost part of Ptolemy Chennos, Timonax may indeed have existed, providing some limited confirmation for the reality of such authors.

Provided Timonax’ remarks about ‘Aia’ and its monuments are not wholly imaginary, the town would not seem in a position to host those monuments until the 3rd century BC or later (see on F 2). Timonax is therefore not a source for Apollonios, as supposed by Carl Robert (L. Preller, C. Robert, *Die griechische Heldensage*<sup>4</sup> 2.3.1 (Berlin 1921), 800) cited by R. Laqueur, ‘Timonax’, *RE*\_6A.2, 1305. Timonax is in fact implicitly correcting Apollonios (cf his probable use of Apollonios in F 3), just as others, notably in the 1st century BC and AD, corrected Homer (see my remarks on Diktys, *BNJ* 49 Biographical Essay). It would be better therefore to allow some time for Apollonios to become canonised before bringing Timonax into existence. His attitude to mythical tradition (F 2) and to ‘problems’ (F 1) suggests he belongs, like Dionysophanes (*BNJ* 856), Antipater of Akanthos (*BNJ* 56) and so many others to the new mythography of the 1st century BC – 1st century AD (see also K. Dowden, ‘Reading Diktys : the discrete charm of bogosity’, in M. Paschalis, S. Panayotakis, G. Schmeling (eds), *Readers and Writers in the Ancient Novel* [*Ancient Narrative*, Suppl. 12], Groningen, 2009, 155-68).

It was a rare choice to write specifically on Skythia (the authors so doing are *BNJ* 841-844) and it could have been occasioned by a growing interest in that part of the world at the end of the 2nd century BC (see on F 1). The enumeration of tribes (F 1) naturally belongs to the beginning of the work; and either Kolchis or mythical times positioned F 2 in Book 1. By Book 2 he may have been talking about Tomoi (F 3). An East to West sweep of the Scythian seaboard would then be complete. His manner appears to be that of a *grammatikos*, reading his texts (Apollonios) and noting the reflection of those texts in the landscape and its monuments. Myth was early history and therefore capable of correction (F 1).

As our knowledge of him derives from the Apollonios scholia (which therefore suggests that he cannot be later than the 1st century AD, cf my remarks on Dionysophanes 856 F 2 *ad fin.*), we only know about his views on Argonautic mythology and the seaboard. There may have been many books and the inland regions must have been a large part of the discussion. Mela may preserve some trace of that (see on F 2).

## 842 Bibliography

R. Laqueur, ‘Timonax’, *RE*\_6A.2, 1305.