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The treatise by Constantine Porphyrogenitus 'De Administrando Imperio' on the Chersonesos participation in the 3rd–4th centuries' wars: military tactical aspect

Vadim V. Khapaev 

Sevastopol State University,
33, Universitetskaya str., Sevastopol, 299053, Russia

✉ khapaev007@mail.ru

Abstract. The article is devoted to the study of the military tactical aspect of the four wars in the late third — first half of the fourth century in which the Chersonesos polis fought on the side of Rome. Information about these wars is presented in Chapter 53 of the treatise 'De Administrando Imperio' written by Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. It has been shown that this extract is an organic part of the treatise and was inserted there deliberately as an example of Chersonesites valour, cunning and loyalty to Rome, which was useful for the young Emperor Romanus II who was the addressee of the narrative. It has been established that the use of a mobile detachment of carts armed with light throwing artillery for ambush operations during the 'Battle of Bosphorus' in 291 was an innovation in military affairs, which attracted the attention of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Other aspects of this battle correlate with the instructions of the treatise 'De re militari' by Vegetius Flavius. The victorious participation of the Chersonesos troops in the next two battles (on the Danube and at Kapha) gave Chersonesos confidence in their abilities and made it possible to expand the possessions of their state to the borders of the Kerch Peninsula for the first time in history. The single combat between archon of Chersonesos Pharnacus and the Bosphoran king, which decided the outcome of the confrontation in the fourth war, is not fictional and has numerous counterparts in both Greco-Roman and subsequent Byzantine history.

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Трактат Константина Багрянородного «Об управлении империей» об участии херсонеситов в боевых действиях III–IV веков: военно-тактический аспект

В.В. Хапаев 

Севастопольский государственный университет, Севастополь,
Российская Федерация

✉ khapaev007@mail.ru

Аннотация. Изучается военно-тактический аспект четырех войн конца III — первой половины IV века, в которых на стороне Рима участвовал Херсонесский полис. Информация о них изложена в главе 53 наставления византийского императора Константина Багрянородного «Об управлении империей». Показано, что этот отрывок является органической частью трактата и помещен в него намеренно, как образец сочетания доблести, хитрости и верности херсонеситов Риму, что было полезным для адресата повествования — юного императора Романа II. Установлено, что использование мобильного отряда вооруженных легкой метательной артиллерией повозок для засадных действий в ходе «Битвы при Боспоре» 291 г. было инновацией в военном деле, что и привлекло внимание Константина Багрянородного. Остальные аспекты этой битвы коррелируют с наставлениями трактата «De re militari» Флавия Вегеция. Победное участие херсонесских войск в двух следующих сражениях — на Дунае и при Кафе придало херсонеситам уверенности в своих силах и позволило впервые в истории расширить владения полиса до границ Керченского полуострова. Поединок архонта Херсонеса Фарнака с Боспорским царем, решивший исход противостояния в четвертой войне, не является вымыслом и имеет многочисленные аналогии как в предшествующей греко-римской, так и в последующей византийской истории.

Ключевые слова: Херсонес, Боспор, Константин Багрянородный, войны, тактика, хироволистры, поединок

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Introduction

The final (and most extensive textually) Chapter 53 of the treatise by Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (911/945–959) ‘*De Administrando Imperio*’ includes five ancient narratives that seem to have no relation to the main content of this work. The treatise is an instruction on how to pursue the foreign policy of the empire. It was written by Constantine VII (or under his direct supervision) for his elder son, co-ruler (from 6 April 945) and successor, Romanus II (959–963). Therefore, the treatise mainly contains recommendations that are relevant for the middle of the 10th century on how to deal with various foreign policy issues. Traditionally, the text is considered to be written in 948–952 [1. P. 5], or later, in 953–959. According to A.S. Shchhavelev, the work was most likely completed by the emperor in 955 and presented to Romanus II as a gift for his marriage with Theophano [2. P. 701].

In several chapters, the author provides historical reviews. They are usually edifying and have political relevance for their time. Such is Chapter 14 “Of the genealogy of Mahomet” (*De Admin.* 14) which is intended to show that he was a false prophet and a pagan. In the context of centuries-long wars between the Romans and the Muslims, it served as a motivation to continue the confrontation. The next chapters (15–22) represent the history of the Arabs and their conquests (In a very distorted Roman interpretation) and are also intended to inform the future autocrat about who he will have to deal with both in war and in peace.

In Chapter 53, which is the most extensive in the treatise, the subject seems to be different. Its original title is ‘*Ἱστορία περὶ τοῦ Κάστρου Χερσῶνος*’ or “*De castro Chersonis historia*” in Latin translation [3. P. 202]. M.V. Bibikov and L.I. Grazainskaya translated it into Russian as ‘*Povestvovanie o kreposti Kherson*’ [1. P. 9, 246–247]. In this case, the translation of the word ‘*Ἱστορία*’ (which appeals to the ancient Roman semantic content of the term) as ‘*povestvovanie*’ [narration] does not reflect the essence of the chapter. Had it contained a description of the Cherson fortress based on contemporary impressions of the author, it would have been a narrative. But Chapter 53 deals mostly not with Cherson of the 10th century but with its distant ancient past, that is, it sets out the brightest historical events of the polis.

In Chapter 53 the author turns to the topic of Cherson for the eleventh time. Before, Cherson and the Chersonites were mentioned in Chapters 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 22, 37, and 42. In total, according to my calculations, the words ‘Cherson’ and ‘Chersonites’ are mentioned 106 times in the treatise, including 68 times in Chapter 53 (*De Admin.* 53). No single toponym, no single locality including Constantinople itself are mentioned in the treatise ‘*De Administrando Imperio*’ so often. The emperor’s enormous, high-priority, if one might say so, attention to Cherson is quite obvious in the treatise.

In the final chapter the author reviews extensively the ancient history of Cherson (still Chersonesos back then), choosing the confrontation between the Chersonesites and the Bosphoran Kingdom as a cross-cutting theme of the narration.

Despite the uniqueness and immense information value of the ancient stories of Chapter 53, since the first publication of the treatise “On the Governance of the Empire” by Johannes Meursius [3], a Dutch historian, philologist and antiquary, in Leiden in 1611, they have not been the subject of scientific study for a long time. Only one of them — about the daughter of Lamachos Gykia who saved Chersonesos — was perceived, at least in the first quarter of the 19th century and later, as a truthful episode of the ancient history of the Crimea and became the property of the educated public.

Christian Stier, a correspondent of the St. Petersburg newspaper *Severnaya pchela* and the magazine *Syn otechestva*, visited the ruins of Chersonesos and published a report in 1827. He wrote, ‘*Wasn't this the place where the palace of the famous Gykia was located? Constantine Porphyrogenitus told about her heroic deeds in his letters.*’ [4. P. 245] This narrative was the first to be subject to scholarly analysis: British scholar R. Garnett published the results of his research in 1897 [5].

The first four narratives (it is them that are of greatest interest to us since they contain information about hostilities) did not receive such attention, although R. Garnett called them historical in the same publication [5. P. 102].

Apparently, that was due to the fact that Theodor Mommsen, a respected scientist of the second half of the 19th and early 20th century, the world’s only Nobel Prize-winning historian, author of the classic *History of Rome* (also famous for his Anti-Russian sentiment and demonstrative disregard for Slavic ethnic groups [6]) gave a sharply negative assessment of Constantine Porphyrogenitus’ review of ancient Chersonesos history. In fact, he completely disavowed this information: ‘*The Chersonese tales in the late Constantinus Porphyrogenitus (De adm. imp. 53), do not, of course, come into account. The bad Bosporan king Sauromates... who with the Sarmatians wages war against the emperors Diocletian and Constantius, as well as against the Chersonese faithful to the empire, has evidently arisen from a confusion of names between the Bosporan king and people; and just as historical as the variation on the history of David and Goliath, is the despatch of the mighty king of the Bosporans, Sauromates, by the small Chersonesite Pharnaces.*’ [7. P. 270. Note 72]

T. Mommsen did not undertake the study of the information presented by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, but he discouraged researchers from analysing the military aspect of the Chersonesos–Bosporan wars described in the ‘Story of the City of Cherson.’

Following T. Mommsen, many authors who turn to the plots of the Chersonesos–Bosporan wars, still consider them tales [8], [9. P. 47–48], [10]. And those who proceed from their authenticity usually bypass the descriptions of the battles, apparently considering them ‘fantastic stories’ and ‘miracles’ [11], [12], [13. C. 33–40], [14]. However, as will be shown below, there is nothing ‘miraculous’ or implausible in these narratives. The authors who recognize the fact of the Chersonese–Bosporan wars as reliable see their main task in the search for archaeological evidence proving

that those wars actually took place, as well as the participation of the Chersonese detachment of ‘devoted ballistarii’ in the fighting against the Goths on the Danube under the command of Emperor Constantine I the Great.

Such artefacts have actually been discovered and their number is increasing [15. P. 269 etc.], which is why researchers are becoming more and more confident that the first four episodes of the ancient history of Chersonesos described by Constantine Porphyrogenitus are not fantastic stories, but they are a reflection of historical reality. But the reflection itself is still referred to as fictionalized [15. P. 269], which denies the Byzantine emperor and his Cherson source the right to authenticity.

Let us analyse the credibility of this source. To begin with, let us consider the correctness of the assumption that the ‘Story of the City of Cherson’ is a mechanical alien insert [1. P. 450]. Let me remind in what form the text of the treatise reached us. It has been preserved in four variants. Three of them are the 16th century copies from a single medieval manuscript. This single manuscript known as Codex Parisinus gr. 2009 was created in the second half of the 11th century [16. P. 16–23]. According to A.S. Shchhavelev’s calculations, it was written in the period between 1059 and 1073 or between 1081 and 1088 by order of the caesar (junior emperor, co-ruler of basileus) John Doukas (1059–1088). In the first case, the copy of the probably secret unique protograph which was stored in the Palace Library could have been ordered by the caesar for his own study. In the second case, it was used as a teaching aid for the future emperors Michael VII and Constantine X, and the copy was ordered by their tutor. On the folio 211 there is a colophon with the names of both the customer and the scribe — Michael named Roizaita (Ροϊζαΐτου), caesar’s associate [17. P. 681–683]. It is clear that it was impossible to entrust the copying of a top-secret document to an ordinary scribe.

A.S. Shchhavelev believes that the text of the treatise has two authors. The first one is Emperor Constantine VII himself; the second author is his trusted confidant (a ‘ghost-writer’). The researcher suggested that it was Theodoros, Archbishop of Cyzicus, a city on the Marmara Sea shore 85 km away from the capital. This assumption is based on the fact that the emperor and the bishop conducted an active correspondence, and Theodoros was a co-author of the emperor’s public speeches [17. P. 687–690].

According to A.S. Shchhavelev, both hypothetical authors had a hand in writing Chapter 53 that interests us. The ‘first author’ (the emperor?) indicated at the end of the text what to do with the Chersonites in case of their rebellion or disobedience (De Admin. 53.530–535). And the ‘second author’ (the archbishop?) added the information about the sources and grades of oil in the Kuban (‘in Khazaria’) (De Admin. 53.493–529) [17. P. 694, 698].

Historians have never raised the question who decided to insert in the treatise the extensive historical extract about the confrontation between Chersonesos and Bosphorus. But I dare assume that it was Constantine VII who was the main

editor of the text anyway, even of those parts that he had not written himself. As A.S. Shchhavelev pointed out, the inquisitive emperor might begin to write down a significant part of the information included in the treatise for himself early in his life [17. P. 697]. Numerous mentions of Cherson 11 chapters of 53 indicate that this city (not only its history but also its significance for the empire) interested the basileus all his life. He might have ordered the copy of the local Chersonese chronicle long before writing the treatise ‘De Administrando Imperio,’ and the narratives in Chapter 53 were his favourite stories, given their fascination and expressiveness (which is not typical for the main text of the treatise). The emperor shared with his son the story of the confrontation between the Chersonesites and the Bosphorans just as we share our favourite books with our loved ones.

Despite his emperor status, Constantine VII did not have as much information as it might seem about the world around him to pass on to his successor. American researcher I. Shevchenko noted that the information included in the treatise was actually the maximum amount of information that the emperor and his hypothetical co-author managed to collect, and they considered each fact very significant and exclusive [18]. In the aspect of political planning in the 10th century, the importance of the events that took place on the Crimean Peninsula in antiquity will become clear after analysing the content of the fragments under study.

The Battle of Bosphorus (the first narrative)

In all four narratives under study, the Bosphoran kings are called Sauromates. Therefore, their identification with genuine historical characters is debatable. M.B. Shchukin logically assumed that the compiler of the chronicle cited by Constantine VII used the word ‘Sauromate’ as the title of the Bosphoran king (similar to the Roman title ‘caesar’) rather than as a proper name [19. P. 446]. It is possible that the author of the original source sought to emphasize the barbaric nature of the Bosphoran rulers during their confrontation with Rome and Chersonesos. Below is the identification of the Bosphoran kings mentioned in Chapter 53 in accordance with the tradition established in historiography.

In 291, in alliance with the Sarmatians and Goths, the Bosphoran king Sauromates (apparently, Theothorses (285–309) is meant [1. P. 451. Note. 3]) started a war with the Roman Empire to seize its territories in the Caucasus and north-east Asia Minor up to the Halys River (today Kyzyl-Irmak). To oppose him, the Emperor Diocletian sent an army under the command of Constans, whom researchers unanimously identify as Constantius Chlorus, the future tetrarch [11. P. 206–208]. The Romans failed to resist the onslaught. Constantius appealed to the emperor to send the Chersonesites against Bosphorus while the king and his large army were not there and make Theothorses return to the Crimea (De Admin. 53.1–20).

The chief magistrate and primate head of Chersonesos (‘crowned and primate head’, i.e. ‘the first’) at that time was Chrestus, son of Papias. The Chersonesites

gathered together to help ‘*the men of the neighbouring forts*’ (De Admin. 53.28–29) (possibly the barbarians of the South-western Crimea controlled by them), constructed military chariots, placed the so-called arbalests (‘chirovolisters’) in them and moved to the city of Bosphorus, which was already the name of Pantikapaion at that time. At night, after reaching the vicinity of the Bosporan capital, they laid ambushes to disguise the artillery and its combat crews, and a handful of them began to attack the city walls in the morning. By the third hour in the afternoon, the Chersonesos field army made a show of flight, lured the Bosporans into an open area to pursue them and, with a skilful manoeuvre, brought them under fire from hidden arbalests. The enemy army was destroyed, and the Chersonesites captured the defenceless Bosphorus and other cities of the kingdom (De Admin. 53.21–40).

‘*Putting none to the sword thereafter save those who had fought*’ (De Admin. 53.40–41), the Chersonesites held on to Bosphorus and guarded it. After some days, Chrestus, the leader of the winners, issued an ultimatum to Theothorses’ wives: either their husband concluded peace with the Romans and returned to Bosphorus or the wives of the king and all the Bosporans would be killed. The king who found himself stranded accepted the terms of the Chersonesites. This greatly upset the Roman commander Constantius who had bought peace from Theothorses for a lot of money. But the cunning Chersonesos ambassadors suggested that the Romans should threaten the Bosporan king further, demanding the return of all Roman prisoners and renouncement of the promised payment, or the Chersonesites would not return Bosphorus to the king otherwise. Theothorses was forced to accept these conditions as well. The Chersonesites returned the kingdom to him after all Roman prisoners and territories had been liberated. They fulfilled their promise, and the king got Bosphorus undestroyed and unlooted. For this, Emperor Diocletian granted the Chersonesites’ former pledges of freedom, and Constantius Chlorus became his co-ruler (tetrarch) two years later. During negotiations with Diocletian, the Chersonesites repeatedly stressed that they willingly obeyed him, calling him the lord and themselves his subjects (De Admin. 53.41–119). At the same time, they requested to confirm the pledges of freedom, independence and immunity from tribute as a reward, which was granted to them (De Admin. 53.110–115).

This extract contains two consecutive narratives: one of them military tactical, another military diplomatic. Both emphasize the Chersonesites’ skill to achieve their goals through cunning. The author notes that the citizens put these qualities at the service of Rome.

There is no consensus in historical science on whether the Chersonesites attacked Bosphorus alone or together with the Roman garrison stationed in the city, and on who the ballistarii in chariots were, the Chersonesites or the Romans. Some researchers consider them to be the Chersonesos militia, mentioning the privileges that Constantine the Great granted to the Chersonesos ballistarii after their victorious participation in the battle with the ‘Scythians’ on the Danube (the second narrative of Chapter 53) (De Admin. 53.119–157) [20], [21]. Their opponents

rely on inscriptions of the 4th and 5th centuries found in Chersonesos in which Roman emperors are praised and ballistarii are mentioned as Roman soldiers led by Roman military leaders. The researchers claim that these were imperial troops sent to the city. As for the information presented by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, it is considered to be the result of politically biased editing of ancient texts undertaken in the 10th century to emphasize the antiquity of Chersonesos-Cherson devotion to the imperial authorities as well as the emperors' favour to this city and granting it liberties. In fact, the ballistarii were Roman, but they were stationed in Chersonesos on a permanent basis [22], [23], [8], [24].

There is also a compromise point of view, which seems the most plausible: initially, a Roman artillery unit was introduced and permanently stationed in Chersonesos, and then it was recruited from local natives [25. P. 178].

In 291 when these events took place, the Romans were undoubtedly part of the ballistarian troops. According to French researcher C. Zuckerman, at the end of the 3rd century a Balistarii Dafnenses unit was stationed in Chersonesos. It was subordinate to the magister militum of Thrace [26]. C. Zuckerman is sure that there were no local natives in this unit as they were militiamen (according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus), and the artillery militiamen do not exist: *'It looks as incongruous as the rocketeer militia in our time.'* [8. P. 553] M.V. Shchukin's objection to him looks the most reasonable: *'I do imagine this, a few smart commanders and instructors are enough to teach recruits how to press the right buttons.'* [19. P. 445]

How unusual was what the Roman-led Chersonesos ballistarii did under the walls of Bosphorus (former Pantikapaion)? The answer to this question is found in the instructions of the Roman military historian and theorist Vegetius Flavius who lived at the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries. He is the author of the treatise *'De re militari'*, which was popular in the Middle Ages and is also known as *'Epitoma Rei Militaris'* (*'The Military Institutions of the Romans'*). The treatise is based on the analysis of centuries-old Roman military experience. Its study makes it clear that there was nothing innovative (even more fabulous) in luring the Bosphorans into an ambush. Vegetius instructed: *'But if he [the commander — V. Kh.] knows himself inferior, he must avoid general actions and endeavour to succeed by surprises, ambuscades and stratagems. These, when skilfully managed by good generals, have often given them the victory over enemies superior both in numbers and strength'* (Vegetius. III.9). Since the Bosphoran state was much larger than the Chersonesos one, even taking into account the withdrawal of part of the Bosphoran forces with the king *'Sauromate'* to Anatolia and the hypothetical participation of the Romans in the campaign against Bosphorus, there were apparently fewer attackers than defenders. In such conditions, the Romans could hardly keep a full-fledged military unit in Chersonesos. Rather, there really were a few commanders and instructors.

Vegetius rates very highly the effectiveness of ambushes as a way to defeat the enemy: *'A rash and inconsiderate pursuit exposes an army to the greatest danger possible, that of falling into ambuscades and the hands of troops ready for their*

reception. For as the temerity of an army is increased and their caution lessened by the pursuit of a flying enemy, this is the most favourable opportunity for such snares' (Vegetius. III.22). This passage describes what happened under the walls of Bosphorus so accurately that one might assume that Vegetius knew about this battle. But this, surely, is not provable.

The Roman military theorist instructs his readers to carefully choose the time for trapping the enemy when he is least attentive and most relaxed: *'The most essential part of the Art of War, not only in sieges, but in every other branch, is to study and endeavour to be thoroughly acquainted with the customs of the enemy. It will be impossible to find opportunities of laying snares for them, unless you know their hours of repose, and the times when they are least on their guard: these opportunities offer sometimes at noon, sometimes in the evening, or night, when the soldiers of both sides are at their meals, or dispersed for the necessary purposes of rest or refreshment. This once ascertained, the besiegers designedly suspend their attacks at those times, in order to increase the remissness and negligence of the enemy: and when they perceive it come to a proper height by their artifice in encouraging it by impunity, they suddenly advance their machines, or fix their ladders, and storm the place.'* (Vegetius. IV.27)

The second question that arises in relation to this epic battle is the weapon that decided the outcome of the battle, chirovolisters (arbalests). According to Vegetius, the late Roman field army possessed hand-held arrow-throwers (chirovolisters) firing like a crossbow. Vegetius called them 'hand ballista' (carroballista). Those who fought with them were tragularii (Vegetius. II.15). The placement of chirovolister (hand ballister) on chariots was standard for the set of legion weapons: *'In the first place every century has a balista mounted on a carriage drawn by mules and served by a mess, that is by ten men from the century to which it belongs. The larger these engines are, the greater distance they carry and with the greater force. They are used not only to defend the entrenchments of camps, but are also placed in the field in the rear of the heavy armed infantry. And such is the violence with which they throw the darts that neither the cuirasses of the horse nor shields of the foot can resist them. The number of these engines in a legion is fifty-five'* (Vegetius. II.25).

These military 'carts', as M.V. Shchukin called them [19. P. 444], appeared long before Vegetius and even before the Chersonesos-Bosporan wars. They were depicted twice (together with the servants) in 113 AD on Trajan's Column in Rome. Moreover, they were used in Dacian wars in the Northern Black Sea region very close to the place of the events under study [27].

Along with large ballisters, the typical set of weapons of the fortress garrison included hand ballisters (Vegetius. III.3). In a standard infantry field formation, hand ballisters and their servants were placed in the fifth line together with slingers (Vegetius. III.14). Hand ballisters were named scorpions in the Roman army: *'The manubalistæ, because they kill with small and slender darts, were called scorpions.'* (Vegetius. IV.22)

There were hand ballisters of larger calibre and increased power. They were also placed in military waggons. They were originally invented to fight against enemy's war elephants (Vegetius. III.24). But apparently, they were also effective against horses on which the brave men made sorties from besieged fortresses.

But if the ambush and hand ballisters in waggons were not something new in the history of wars, what was the Chersonesos chronicler proud of and why did it attract the attention of Constantine's VII? Apparently, the matter is the creation in Chersonesos (or relocation to the city) of a separate mobile ballistarian unit that used and honed unique specially developed tactical techniques. The Chersonese unit of 'devoted ballistarii' that was mentioned for the first time in relation to the battle of 291 under the walls of Bosphorus, later existed for centuries: Constantine Porphyrogenitus writes about it in the present tense (De Admin. 53.155–161). So, it may have existed in the middle of the 10th century. There are numerous mentions of it in the epigraphic monuments of the 4th and 5th centuries [24. P. 359–362].

The Battle of the Danube (the second narrative)

The unique combat skills and valour of the 'devoted ballistarii' from Chersonesos aroused interest and were highly appreciated by Constantius Chlorus' son, Constantine the Great, in the war against the 'Scythians' (Goths?) on the Danube. This happened during one of the barbaric attacks on the Danube border under Constantine in 323 or 332 [19. P. 444] (there are no dates in the treatise 'De Administrando Imperio'). *'On the death of Constans, his son Constantine became emperor at Rome, and when he came to Byzantium, and certain of those in Scythia revolted against him, he called to mind what had been said by his father Constans concerning the affection of the Chersonites and their alliance, and he sent envoys to the country of the Chersonites, with instructions that they should go to the country of the Scythians and fight those who had revolted against him... The Chersonites gladly obeyed the imperial mandate and with all zeal constructed the military waggons and the arbalests and arrived at the Ister river and, having crossed it, arrayed themselves against the rebels and routed them.'* (De Admin. 53.124–135)

A military tactical aspect is not included in the story about the participation of the Chersonesites in the war for Emperor Constantine on the Danube. Its main content is the following detailed description of the mercies given to Chersonesos by the emperor for military valour: ratification of eleutheria (already granted by Diocletian as is mentioned in the first narrative), a golden statue with imperial cloak, 1000 military rations (provisions), supplies for arbalests. It is further emphasized that 'even to this day' (i.e. by the time of writing the text of the treatise or chronicle that he quotes) the Cherson stratiotes serve in the ballistarian unit (De Admin. 53.125–161). The main idea here is to emphasize the newly manifested valour and devotion of the Chersonites to the emperor and the empire.

The Battle of Kapha (the third fragment)

In the third episode dated between 329 and 340, the king of Bosphorus Sauromates, the grandson of Sauromates, the son of Criscoronus, who marched against the Romans, decided to take revenge on Chersonesos for the defeat in the previous war. After gathering an army of subjects who lived along the Azov Sea shores (Sarmatians and Goths?), he made war upon the Chersonesites. being at that time primate of Chersonesos, Byscus son of Supolichus moved his troops to meet the enemy. The battle between them took place near the borders of Bosphorus, ‘in the region of Kapha,’ not far from ancient Feodosia (De Admin. 53.162–173). Many hoards with coins of the Bosporan kings found in the territory between Sudak and Feodosia are the evidence of the military activity of this time there. The latest of coins were made during the reign of Rhescuporis V (VI), i.e. before 341 [28].

The battle ended with the victory of Chersonesos. Chersonesites set up boundary stones in the region of Kapha, and the Bosporan king swore not to violate the new border between the two states (De Admin. 53.173–179). The only phrase in this story that makes sense to analyse from a military tactical point of view is the following: ‘*Chersonites... arrayed themselves in opposition and met Sauromatus outside... and they fought with him... and defeated Sauromatus and drove him off.*’ (De Admin. 53.167–175). Ballistarii are not mentioned here, but there is an obvious evolution in the combat tactics of the Chersonese army if compared with the first episode. In the first battle (under the walls of Bosphorus), the Chersonesites, whose forces were smaller, used ambush tactics to gain an advantage both by suddenness and by using mobile throwing artillery from the ambush (perhaps the first in history). On the Danube, they acted as part of a large imperial field army so boldly and decisively that their efforts may have been the decisive factor in the victory. This resulted in the ‘flurry’ of favours and rewards including the golden statue of the emperor. Therefore, in the campaign ‘in the region of Kapha’ shortly after the Danube campaign (the combat composition of the unit was apparently the same), the Chersonesites acted boldly and decisively in order to defeat the enemy in a general field battle and expand the Chersonesos boundaries to the borders of the Kerch Peninsula. Chersonesites got such an opportunity for the first time in the almost thousand-year history of the polis. And they took advantage of it by demarcating the border and taking an oath from the Bosporan king not to violate it. That is, they deterred the Bosporans from direct or indirect control of the entire Crimean peninsula.

Such a drastic change in the balance of military forces in Crimea in favour of Chersonesos raises the inevitable question: did they do it on their own or with the support of the Roman troops? Although the Romans are not mentioned in the Constantine Porphyrogenitus’ treatise as allies of Chersonesos, the epigraphic and archaeological monuments indicate that the Roman troops took part in the

battle of Кафа. In such a way they returned like for like to Chersonesites who had rescued the Romans on the Danube. The presence of Roman troops and their generals in Chersonesos at that time is evidenced by numerous Latin inscriptions [29. P. 343–345]. One of them, dedicated to a Roman general whose name is illegible, is especially eloquent. This unknown military leader *‘was marked by the devotion [of the troops]... ensured [the safety?] of (Chersonesos) community... destroyed [the enemies of the Roman people] and (Chersonesos) community.’* [30. P. 70, no. 20]

The expansion of the Chersonesos borders and the ‘pacification’ of Bosphorus corresponded to the strategic interests of Rome. So, it is not surprising that the Romans erected two fortifications on the new border of the two states in formally ‘independent’ Taurica [31]. As for the local population, they preferred to move from the dangerous coastal zone higher into the mountains [32. P. 51].

The combat of Pharnacus with ‘Sauromates’ (the fourth narrative)

About 15 years after these events had taken place, another Bosphoran king ‘Sauromates’ (Rhescuporis V (VI)?) invaded the Chersonesos territory with his army, disregarding the oath previously given by the Bosphorans not to violate the established boundaries that *‘none of the Bosphorians should ever attempt to pass beyond them for purposes of war’* (De Admin. 53.183–184). An army under the command of Pharnacus son of Pharnacus arrayed against them. Both armies met in the region of Кафа and took up positions on the hills. IN the same way as it was during the siege of Bosphorus, the leader of the Chersonesites decided to resort to cunning. Pharnacus was of small stature while Sauromates was tall and gigantic. Nevertheless, Pharnacus offered him to fight in a single combat instead of a field battle, so as *‘to avoid the destruction of an infinite multitude’* (De Admin. 53.191–192).

The Chersonesos commander had no doubt that being confident of an easy victory, the king would agree. And so it turned out. The cunning Pharnacus ordered his army to pronounce one simple shout ‘Ah! Ah!’ all together when the combat began and Sauromates had his back towards the Chersonesos soldiers. He hoped that the enemy would involuntarily turn his face to the rear and the plating of his helmet would open a crack through which Pharnacus would smote Sauromates with his lance. The plan succeeded, the Bosphoran king was defeated, his head was cut off, and the victory went to Chersonesos. Pharnacus dismissed the multitude of the Bosphoran army, and a part if it was taken prisoner. Most of the captives were soon released by the Chersonesites, and a small part was settled within the Chersonesos possessions *‘to do agricultural work’* (De Admin. 53.193–234). They are assumed to be Alans, and the place of their settlement was the valley of the Belbek River [33].

The Chersonesites moved the boundary line to the east to the town of Kazek on Chauda cape. As a result, only half of the Kerch peninsula remained under the Bosphoran rule. The new boundaries were marked by boundary stones, but the

former ones in Kapha region remained, and in the 10th century the ancient boundary signs were preserved on both borders (De Admin. 53.224–227). Finishing this story, the author states: *‘From that time, then, the rule of the Sauromati in Bosphorus was ended.’* (De Admin. 53.233–234). He probably means the end of the former Tiberian-Julian dynasty. In fact, until the reign of Tiberius Julius Duptun, a Hun by origin, at the turn of the 5th and 6th centuries the names of the Bosporan kings remain unknown [34. C. 241–242].

As shown above, this ‘David and Goliath’ single combat aroused the scepticism of Theodor Mommsen. That is why it was left out of historiographical analysis. But let us ask whether single combats of military leaders to replace battles were so rare or not. After all, military affairs are precedent. In military history, there are many examples when someone strives to repeat and repeats the feat that has already been accomplished and glorified. Any educated Greek or Roman knew about the legendary combat between Achilles and Hector. No less famous thanks to Plutarch was the combat of 289 BC between Pyrrhus, the king of Epirus, and Pentavchus, the Macedonian archon (Plutarch. Pyrrhus. VII). Quintus Curtius Rufus reports on the combat between Arius Satibarzanes, the satrap of the Persian province, and Erigyus, a commander of Alexander the Great; this combat decided the outcome of the battle between Persians and Macedonians. The Roman historian emphasizes that Erigyus was a grey-haired old man and deliberately took off his helmet to ‘boast’ his advancing years. And it so happened that Erigyus was the winner. Confused by the death of their commander, the barbarians went into the service with the king having previously received guarantees from him. (Rufus. X.1.42) As we can see, the Bosporans whose king died in combat behaved in the same way as the Persians from Rufus’ story did.

The examples cited above are not unique. Both Hellenic and Roman historical tradition frequently mentions the heroes who prevented or ended battles by winning a single combat. Moreover, the winner is initially weaker than the loser in most narratives, and he is usually portrayed by ancient authors as a hero [35. P. 148–151]. In the later Roman history such events also happened. The most famous one took place during the civil war in the empire (apostasia), it was the combat in the Battle of Amorium (March 24, 979) between two famous generals, Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phocas [36. P. 8].

Thus, there was nothing unusual either in the actions of the Chersonesos archon Pharnacus, son of Pharnacus or in the willingness of the Bosporan king to take up the challenge. Both of them followed the numerous examples of valour on which they were raised. The only difference is that the Chersonesos archon, like his predecessor in the Battle of Bosphorus, combined valour and cunning; this brought him victory. Constantine Porphyrogenitus’ treatise contains much advice for the successor on how to act combining strength, valour and cunning. Apparently, these qualities of the Chersonesos leaders impressed Constantine VII so much that he used their example to teach his son how to govern the empire.

Conclusion

1. In Chapter 53 of the treatise 'De Administrando Imperio,' the extract from the ancient Chersonesos chronicles is not a mechanical insertion. It has a clear didactic character and was placed in the work on the personal instructions of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Through the stories about the opposition between Chersonesos and Bosphorus, the student (young emperor) comprehended the idea that cunning combined with bravery, courage and devotion to the fatherland always wins. This instruction was very valuable for a Roman basileus. Constantine Porphyrogenitus followed it himself both in the struggle for power and in governing the empire.
2. The narratives of the first four episodes about the Chersonesos–Bosporan confrontation there is nothing fabulous, fantastic, implausible, or fictional. The actions of the Chersonesites in the Battle of Bosphorus correspond to the instructions from Vegetius Flavius' treatise written shortly after the events described by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Chersonesites turned to ambush actions performed by combined mobile detachment of ballistarians. It was then a novelty and attracted the attention of both the chronicler and the emperor.
3. The military tactical and military diplomatic efforts of the Chersonesites during and after the Battle of Bosphorus were appreciated by Caesar (later Augustus) Constantius Chlorus as they helped him to cope with the invasion of Theothorses and to become an emperor. For him, the help of the Chersonesites was so important and valuable and the service they rendered so unexpected that he told his son Constantine about it. The founder of New Rome remembered this information and, in turn, tried out the valour of the Chersonesos ballistarii in the battle with the barbarians on the Danube where they apparently played a decisive role in the victory again, since the reward for this service was extremely generous.
4. These victories made the Chersonesites so confident in their military superiority over Bosphorus that in the next war they decided on an open field battle where they won an undoubted victory, although probably not without the assistance of grateful Romans.
5. Replacing the battle with a single combat of leaders in the next Chersonesos–Bosporan war was quite typical for ancient warfare. Both Hellenic and Roman history shows many such examples. So, the credibility of the fact presented by Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his Chersonesos source is beyond any doubt.

The Chersonesos–Bosphorus wars correspond to the late-antique military tactical paradigm. But the valour and military cunning that Chersonesites demonstrated was outstanding even for the ancient times and attracted the attention of the crowned author. Constantine Porphyrogenitus valued the possession of Chersonesos-

Cherson so much that at the end of Chapter 53 he instructed his son how to pacify the inhabitants without using military force if they ever ‘*revolt or decide to act contrary to the imperial mandates.*’ (De Admin. 53.512–513)

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Information about the author:

Vadim V. Khapaev — PhD in History, Associate Professor at the Department of General History and World Culture, Sevastopol State University, Sevastopol, e-mail: khapaev007@mail.ru. ORCID: 0009-0008-0535-9617. SPIN-code: 8142–9627.