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# SKYLAX OF KARYANDA

(ACTIVE C.520–C.518 BC)

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing in the second half of the 5th century BC, Herodotos (4. 44; 1 below) describes how King Darius of Persia organized an expedition into India under one Skylax,<sup>1</sup> a citizen of Karyanda in the semi-Hellenic region of Karia, to whom the *Suda* (13) attributes four writings, one of which should be the lost prose narrative of his long voyage.<sup>2</sup> The testimonia and fragments selected here are those relevant to this, the historical Skylax;<sup>3</sup> the surviving 4th-century *Periplous* (*Circumnavigation*) must be detached from his name, and its author is known as Pseudo-Skylax (see Chapter 7).

Beyond that, however, matters are not simple. Of the *Suda*'s attributions, the fourth, the criticism of Polybios, must, if genuine, be the work of the 1st-century BC Skylax of Karyanda whom Cicero mentions (*De divinatione*, 2. 42), and who is more likely to have been a 'mathematician and musician' than his archaic-period counterpart. It is uncertain who wrote the second work, about a king of Mylasa, though recent opinion assigns it to the earlier Skylax.<sup>4</sup> The first and third works, *Periplous of Places outside the Pillars of Herakles* and *Circuit of the Earth*, must now be considered.

Sources including Aristotle (2) cite 'Skylax' or 'Skylax of Karyanda' for information about India, others for the Greek world. The 'outside' in the title of the *Suda*'s first work could refer to the far west, but no evidence links the Herodotean Skylax with the Atlantic, while in the pseudonymous *Periplous* only the last few pages refer to the coast of that ocean. Some editors change 'outside' to 'inside' to make the reference fit the surviving *periplous*; but 'outside' is also consistent with a voyage in the seas and oceans east of Africa—one reason is that 'Libyē' or Africa was thought to be much smaller than it really is—and the surviving *Periplous* does not venture east of the Levant; so

<sup>1</sup> Σκύλαξ, literally 'puppy' or 'cub'; often rendered today in its Latin form, 'Scylax'; also Skulax (EANS), Skilaks (Serbian, Croatian), Skylaks (Polish), Scilace (Italian), Escilax (Spanish), etc.

<sup>2</sup> For a more extended discussion of the *Suda* entry, see Shipley 2019, 4–8. The evidence for Skylax is summarized by Dueck 2012, 10 and 53–4, who notes the Persian context.

<sup>3</sup> For an alternative reconstruction with facing Spanish trans. and notes, see González Ponce 2008b, 155–77.

<sup>4</sup> Schepens 1998. See also Kaplan 2009 ~ Kaplan 2019.

*Suda's* first work could be the real Skylax's record of his Indian explorations. The title of the third, *Circuit of the Earth*, could refer to either work or to neither, but perhaps suits approximately enough the surviving *periplous*.

The most judicious reconstruction assigns the *Periplous of Places outside the Pillars of Herakles* to Herodotos' Skylax; and recent scholarship has made a case that in this work he wrote only about the East, not the Mediterranean or the West. It has been argued persuasively that Philostratos of Athens (first half of the 3rd century AD) drew upon Skylax, directly or indirectly, for his partly fictionalized account of the wandering sophist Apollonios of Tyana (early 1st century AD) and his journey into India.<sup>5</sup> This suggestion rests upon four supports. First, the one explicit citation of Skylax by Philostratos (8)—a rare enough example. Second, Philostratos' comparisons of passenger boats on the sea-coast to those of the Etruscans (*Life of Apollonios*, 3. 50) and of Taxila to Nineveh (2. 20), both of which are anachronistic and suggest an archaic source. Third, but only suggestively, the repeated relating of phenomena in the East to those of the Greek world: the Caucasus ending as far west as Karia (2. 2. 1); the comparison of the vegetation of Mt Nysa with that of Mt Tmolos in Lydia (2. 8); of the breadth of the river Hyphasis to that of the Istros (3. 1); of small vines in the Ganges valley to those of Lydia and Maionia (3. 5. 2); of the diet of flocks in the land of the Fish-eaters to that in Karia (3. 55); the mention of the Karmanoi not salting their fish as is done in the Pontos (3. 55 again); the comparison of the rocks at the Nile Cataract to Mt Tmolos (6. 23); and of the rapids to the rivers Marsyas and Maeander (6. 26). Finally, and more tentatively still, the presence of hippopotamuses in the Nile (plausibly from our Skylax)<sup>6</sup> and the ruined character of Egyptian Thebes, destroyed by the Persian king Kambyses in the late 6th century BC (6. 4).

All this allows us to infer the scope and themes of Skylax's work. If the comparisons noted above are correctly identified as his, it is striking that nearly all of them refer to Asia Minor, which may have been a major focus of the *Circuit of the Earth*. For the *Periplous of Places outside the Pillars of Herakles*, they allow us to characterize his route from Babylon to the east side of India, possibly as far as Taprobane (Sri Lanka),<sup>7</sup> and the date of his journey: Panchenko places his arrival at Babylon in 520, and his departure from there in summer 518.<sup>8</sup> Skylax may reappear in Herodotos' account of the Ionian Revolt some twenty years later, in which a captain of this name is maltreated by the Persian commander Megabates (5. 33); the identification is possible, though this second Skylax is said to be a citizen of Myndos, another Karian city, rather than Karyanda. Be that as it may, the record of the voyage to India was a 'first' as far as the Greeks were concerned, and its impact upon Greek awareness of the Indian Ocean was far more extensive than was the impact of the

<sup>5</sup> Panchenko 1998; Panchenko 2002; Panchenko 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Panchenko 1998, 230.

<sup>7</sup> For details, Panchenko 2002, 9, citing a further eight passages from books 2–3 of VA. For Taprobane, see Ch. 34 Markianos 1, §§35–6.

<sup>8</sup> Panchenko 2002, 10–11.

later, desk-based treatise incorrectly preserved under Skylax's name. Although the work may not have been widely circulated,<sup>9</sup> it was well enough known to be cited several times.

#### SELECTED FURTHER READING

Brillante, S. (2020), *Il Periplo di Pseudo-Scilace: l'oggettività del potere*. Hildesheim–Zürich–New York. [Appeared too late to be taken into account fully.]

\*González Ponce, F. J. (2008), *Periplo de Hanón y autores de los siglos VI y V a.C.* Zaragoza. [Pp. 155–77.]

\*Kaplan, P. (2019), 'Skylax of Karyanda (709)', in *BNJ*<sup>2</sup>.

Panchenko, D. V. (1998), 'Scylax' circumnavigation of India and its interpretation in early Greek geography, ethnography and cosmography, I', *Hyperboreus*, 4. 2: 211–42.

— (2002), 'Scylax in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius of Tyana', *Hyperboreus*, 8. 1: 5–12.

— (2003), 'Scylax' circumnavigation of India and its interpretation in early Greek geography, ethnography and cosmography, II', *Hyperboreus*, 9. 2: 274–94.

\*Schepens, G. (1998), '1000 (= 709) Skylax of Karyanda', in *FGrH* iv A 1, 2–24.

Shipley, D. G. J. (2019), *Pseudo-Skylax's Periplus: The Circumnavigation of the Inhabited World*, 2nd edn. Liverpool. [Esp. introduction.]

— (2021), 'Scylax (Σκύλαξ, ὁ) of Caryanda', in C. A. Baron (ed.), *The Herodotus Encyclopedia*, iii (Hoboken), 1300–1.

#### TEXTS

##### 1 Herodotos 4. 44: *Skylax's voyage*

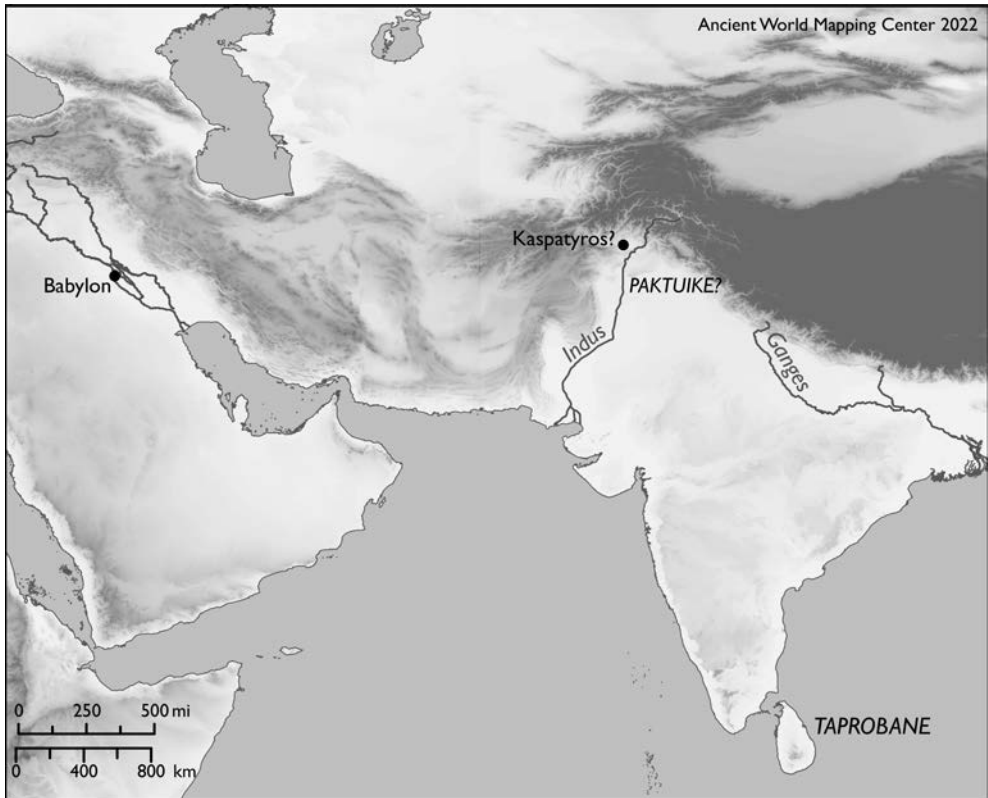
The greater part of Asia was discovered by Darius. As the Indos river is the only other river (*besides the Nile*) that supports crocodiles, wishing to know where this river discharges into the sea he sent a number of men in boats whom he trusted to tell the truth; and among them Skylax, a man of Karyanda.<sup>10</sup> (2) Starting from the city of Kaspatyros and the Paktuic land, they sailed by river towards the dawn and the risings of the sun (*pros ēō te kai hēliou anatólas*) into the sea;<sup>11</sup> and sailing through the sea towards the west they arrived in the thirtieth month at that place from which the king of the Egyptians sent off the Phoenicians I mentioned earlier to circumnavigate Libyē.<sup>12</sup> (3) After these men had made their circumnavigation, Darius both overthrew

<sup>9</sup> Roller 2015, 47–8.

<sup>10</sup> It is often assumed that Skylax led the expedition; it may be so, but Herodotos does not say so.

<sup>11</sup> If Panchenko 1998 (modified by Panchenko 2003) is right, they travelled down the Ganges rather than the Indus, and went on to Sri Lanka. S. R. West 2012 notes that this was proposed by Blakesey 1854, i. 463 n. 138, and Myres 1953, 39–40; she doubts it, as Persian conquests were less extensive than suggested, but it may be questioned whether the idea depends on this: Hdt.'s informants may have exaggerated.

<sup>12</sup> See Hdt. 4. 42 for the story of the pharaoh Necho launching a circumnavigation of Africa.



MAP 2.1. Skylax: area covered by his travels.

the Indians and exploited this sea. Thus all of Asia, except the parts towards the rising sun, has been found to be of a similar nature to Libyē.<sup>13</sup>

## 2 Aristotle, *Politics*, 7. 13. 1, 1332b 12–27: *Kings in India*

Since each civic association is made up of rulers and the ruled, let us consider this: whether the rulers and ruled must be different men, or the same for life; for it is clear that education, too, must be consistent with this distinction. So if one group were as markedly different from the other as we believe the gods and the heroes are different from humans—having, first, vast superiority of body; second, of soul—so that the pre-eminence of the rulers were indubitable and evident to the ruled, then clearly it would be better that the same men should always rule and the same always be ruled, once for all. But since this is not easy to grasp, nor is it possible for the kings to be so different from the ruled as Skylax says is the case among the Indians,<sup>14</sup> it is evident that for many reasons it is essential that all alike should periodically associate in ruling and being ruled.

<sup>13</sup> A passing reference to Hdt.'s passage is at Strabo 2. 3. 4, C98; see Poseidonios 2 below.

<sup>14</sup> Skylax stresses the vast social distance between kings and subjects in India.

**3 Strabo** 12. 4. 8, C566: *Bithynia*

That Bithynia is settled by the Mysians is attested first by Skylax of Karyanda, who says that around Lake Askania dwell Phrygians and Mysians.<sup>15</sup>

**4 Strabo** 13. 1. 4, C583: *the Troad*

‘the Troad . . . but Skylax of Karyanda begins from Abydos.’<sup>16</sup>

**5 Strabo** 14. 2. 20, C658: *Karyanda*

In between (*Myndos and Bargylia*) is Karyanda: a lake, an island, <and a city> of the same name settled by the Karyandeis (*men of Karyanda*). From here came Skylax, the ancient writer.

**6 Harpokration** s.v. *hypo gēn oikountes: Dwellers underground*

‘Living underground’: <Antiphon in the *On Concord*.> He might be referring to the people called Trogodytai by Skylax in his *Periplous*,<sup>17</sup> and the people named Katoudaioi by Hesiod in (*the*) 3rd (book) of *Catalogue*.

**7 Athenaios** 2. 82, 70a–c: *The artichoke (in India?)*

*kynara* (artichoke): . . . Hekataios of Miletos in his *Periegesis of Asia* . . . also says the *kynara* grows around the river Indos. And (*either*) Skylax or Polemon<sup>18</sup> writes, ‘The land is damp from springs and channels, and in the mountains grow *kynara* and other plants’. Also in the following words: ‘From here the mountain extended on this side and that side of the river Indos, high and thick with wild vegetation and the thistle-*kynara*’.<sup>19</sup>

**8 Philostratos**, *Life of Apollonios*, 3. 47: *Bizarre peoples*

(*Iarchas, Apollonios’ interlocutor, said that*) the Pygmaioi lived underground and were situated beyond the Ganges, living in the way that everyone has reported; but that the people (*called*) Skiapodes (*Shadowfoots*), or Makrokephaloi (*Longheads*), or whatever the compositions of Skylax have celebrated, lived nowhere else on Earth, nor even among the Indians.

**9 Markianos**, *Preface to Pseudo-Skylax*<sup>20</sup>

(1) Skylax of Karyanda is a very ancient man; and since most of the places in the inhabited world of ours, and in the sea within the Pillars of Herakles, were still unknown to the majority of people, he undertook to write up a voyage round

<sup>15</sup> As Ps.-Skylax does not mention L. Askania or the Phrygians, Strabo must be citing the archaic Skylax of Karyanda (SK).

<sup>16</sup> The *Periplous* of Ps.-Skylax does begin with the Troad immediately *after* Abydos (§§94–5); the same appears to have been true of SK.

<sup>17</sup> This must be SK, as the C4 *periplous* does not include E. Africa or name the Trogodytai.

<sup>18</sup> Polemon of Ilion (active in C2e) was a writer of *periēgēseis*.

<sup>19</sup> For the *kynara*, see also Hekataios 87–9.

<sup>20</sup> Markianos’ preface stands before the text we know as Pseudo-Skylax (Ch. 7 below), which in the principal MS has its author named as Skylax of Karyanda. M. is aware of Herodotos’ report about the real Skylax, and correctly places Skylax in the period before Alexander and links him to Darius (evidently Darius I/II of Persia in C61–C5e).

the inhabited world. (2) For all the places of the eastern land Alexander the Macedonian made familiar to humankind, while the parts belonging to the western nations (*were made so*) by the bravery of the Romans, which seized them in warfare. . . .<sup>21</sup> (6) Ailios Dios, in the 1st book of *On Alexandria*, says that Skylax addressed his invention to Darius.

**10 Markianos, *Epitome of Menippos*, 2:<sup>22</sup> *Sea distances***

I write these things having encountered many circumnavigations. . . . For those who seem to have researched these matters with reasoning<sup>23</sup> are [*... list of names ...*]. Then again there are Skylax of Karyanda<sup>24</sup> and Botthaios;<sup>25</sup> for both of these men used the daily sailings, not the stades, to show the sea distances.

**11 Stephanos of Byzantion κ 102: *Karyanda***

Karyanda: a city and a lake of the same name, near Myndos and Kos. Hekataios refers to it as Karyanda. . . . From here came Skylax the ancient prose-writer.

**12 Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *De thematibus*, 1. 2: *Scope of Skylax's work***

. . . the *thema* (province) called the Armeniakon . . . neither does Strabo mention such a nomenclature . . . , nor even Skylax the Karyandene.<sup>26</sup>

**13 *Suda* σ 710: *Skylax's writings***

Skylax of Karyanda: Karyanda is a city in Karia near Halikarnassos. Mathematician and man of letters. (Wrote) (1) *Circumnavigation (Periplous) of Places outside the Pillars of Herakles*; (2) *The History of Herakleides King of the Mylasians*; (3) *Circuit of the Earth*; (4) *Response to the History of Polybios*.<sup>27</sup>

**14 Tzetzes (Ioannes), *Chiliades*, 7. 621–36: *Bizarre peoples***

There is a certain book of the Karyandaian Skylax  
which writes that around India people are born  
whom they call Skiapodes, also the Otoliknoi.  
The Skiapodes have extremely wide feet,  
and at the midday time they fall to the ground  
and raise up their feet to make shade for themselves.  
The Otoliknoi, possessing huge ears,  
likewise shade themselves in the manner of parasols.

<sup>21</sup> For §§3–5, see under Ps.-Skylax, Ch. 7 below, B 6.

<sup>22</sup> For full text, see Ch. 21 no. 6.

<sup>23</sup> *meta logōn*, lit. 'with words', with 'accounts', or 'with reasons'.

<sup>24</sup> M. is, of course, comparing the text of what we call Ps.-Skylax against other *periploi*, but this passage confirms that late antique scholars were aware that Skylax of Karyanda wrote a *periplous*. Nothing is known of the units of distance employed by SK; it is PS who sometimes uses days and nights of sailing (but M. has forgotten that PS also gives many distances in stades).

<sup>25</sup> Nenci 1953 emends to 'Hekataios'; followed by Orth 2011a.

<sup>26</sup> This form of the *ethnikon* is otherwise unattested. On this passage, see further Ch. 17 (*Nik.*), n. 14.

<sup>27</sup> See introduction to chapter.

Skylax also writes ten thousand other things,  
 630 about Monophthalmoi (*One-eyed Folk*) and Henotiktontes (*Single-birthers*)<sup>28</sup>  
 and monsters and ten thousand other sights.  
 These things he declares true, in no way fabricated.  
 From lack of experience, I believe these things false;  
 but ten thousand others say they belong among true things,  
 that one sees such things, and yet more novel, in real life;  
 thus Ktesias and Iamboulos . . . [*list of authors continues*]

<sup>28</sup> Some scholars (see Kaplan 2019 on his F 7b) alter this to Enotokoitai (*Sleep-in-Ears*), cf. Eratosthenes 17 (from Strabo), but for the idea of giving birth but once in a lifetime see Hdt. 3. 108. 4 (referring to lionesses).