

SUMMARIA DISSERTATIONUM INAUGURALIUM

Eos CVIII 2021

ISSN 0012-7825

DOI: 10.34616/e.2021.181.193

THE BOSPORAN KINGDOM AND ROME*

by

MICHAŁ HALAMUS

The Bosporan Kingdom is a good example of an ancient multicultural state, where inhabitants of the Greek *apoikiai* (colonies) had to function hand in hand with both the local non-Greek societies (e.g. Maeotians, Taurians, Sindians) and the nomadic peoples of Iranian stock, who roamed throughout the vast regions of the Eurasian Steppe and who also inhabited the Cimmerian Bosphorus territory. The heterogeneity of the local population played an important role in the functioning of the Bosporan Kingdom. However, external political and cultural influences were not without significance. The Northern Black Sea area, due to its geographical isolation, was on the outskirts of the *oikoumene* throughout the centuries. However, limited impact of stronger political organisms, starting with the Achaemenid Empire and Athens, can be traced. Nevertheless, the strongest influence on the functioning of the Bosporan Kingdom and remaining Greek centres in the region belonged to the invading nomadic tribes. At every stage of Bosporan history, at least one of these major peoples – Scythians, Sarmatians, Goths or Huns – played a significant part.

The end of the second c. BCE and the first half of the first c. BCE saw changes in the Bosphorus as the kingdom, together with adjacent territories, was subjugated by Mithridates VI Eupator. Becoming a part of the vast Pontic State went hand in hand with entering the broader international political arena and it also meant becoming an enemy of Rome. The fall of Eupator did not signal the

* This paper is a summary of a PhD thesis that has been completed as part of the Project “The Eastern Mediterranean from the 4th century BC until Late Antiquity”, within the framework of the International PhD Projects Programme of the Foundation for Polish Science and the Maestro grant “Greek City in the Hellenistic and Roman Age and the Territorial Powers” funded by the National Science Centre (UMO-2014/14/A/HS3/00132). The work has been supervised by Professor Krzysztof NAWOTKA (University of Wrocław, Institute of History) and was defended on July 6, 2020. The PhD thesis was reviewed by Professor Leszek MROZEWICZ (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) and Professor Mariusz MIELCZAREK (Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology in Łódź).

end of his legacy. Bosporan rulers from the Pontic/Sarmatian dynasty developed a pattern with regard to self-representation, showing themselves as loyal friends of Rome. However, they simultaneously legitimised their position by referring to the past glories of Mithridatic tradition and by using Iranian elements in their official propaganda, which was directed mostly towards their local subjects. However, the role played by the Iranian world (in the broad sense of the word) – nomads of Iranian stock and the Pontic kingdom – in Bosporan history and its attitude towards Rome was not necessarily as crucial as ROSTOVITZEFF and his followers proposed¹.

The main goal of the doctoral dissertation was to examine the position of the Bosporan Kingdom within Roman imperial policy and the attitude of the ruling elite of Bosporus towards the Empire. The chronological time frame of the study is defined by the beginning of Mithridates Eupator's rule at the end of the second c. BCE, and the end of the third c. CE. Nevertheless, my intention was to also present the interstate and historical contexts of the processes under discussion, which had their roots in the centuries preceding Eupator.

Moreover, the issues that are discussed concerning Roman–Bosporan relations can be placed into two categories depending on the perspective. The Bosporan perspective can be broadly understood as its attitude towards the Empire. Phenomena that were significant in shaping that attitude were: (1) Mithridatism – referring to Eupator's anti-Roman heritage; (2) Sarmatisation – the growing influence of the non-Greek element within Bosporan society; (3) official propaganda of the Bosporan rulers – titlature visible in the epigraphic and numismatic material used to underline loyalty to Rome or the legitimization of power; and last but not least (4) the motivations of Bosporan *reges socii* to remain under Roman supervision – whether a fear of military intervention went hand in hand with a willingness to remain under Roman protection and to be subdued.

From the Roman point of view, however, Bosporus was just one brick in the wall of their whole client state system. Most of these political bodies ceased to exist, as they were incorporated into the provincial administration throughout the first c. CE. To look more closely at the factors which allowed the Bosporan Kingdom to avoid that fate, I have decided to juxtapose this northern Black Sea state with other kingdoms functioning in, as MILLAR called it, the two-level sovereignty system². Among many client states, the cases of Nabataea and Armenia are very helpful in the assessment of the Roman attitude towards the Bosporan Kingdom. Besides the meaning of the Hellenisation, the role of the indigenous dynasties and geographical localisation, the importance of a given state can be judged by its strategic localisation³. The significance of Armenia for Rome's

¹ ROSTOVITZEFF 1922; GAJDUKEVIČ 1949; GOLUBCOVA 1951; HEINEN 2001.

² MILLAR 2004: 229–230.

³ See HALAMUS 2018.

Parthian policy shows clearly that the role of Bosphorus, although truly significant, should be understood as being only of local importance.

A work which is certainly worth mentioning is *Greeks and Scythians* written by a British archaeologist, MINNS, who presented the archaeological material from the Northern Black Sea area in a comprehensive way before others did⁴. Nevertheless, it was the book by ROSTOVTZEFF, published in 1922, which influenced the shape of ancient Black Sea studies to a large extent⁵. The Russian scholar was forced to leave his country in 1918 due to the Bolshevik Revolution. According to ROSTOVTZEFF, the Northern Black Sea region had its own unique characteristics – it was a mixture of Hellenism and the Oriental, namely Iranian, world. This approach was fairly innovative at that time and can be seen as a precursor of modern ideas of hybridisation⁶. Another concept which played an important role in ROSTOVTZEFF's narration was the idea of Eurasia – a territory which, thanks to its geographic conditions, was ideally placed for establishing vast empires. Thanks to that idea, Scythians, Sarmatians, Goths, Huns and finally Slavs, were seen as protoplasts of the future Russian Empire.

Interestingly, although ROSTOVTZEFF was ostracised after leaving Russia as a member of bourgeoisie, some of his ideas were not. They were useful in presenting the roots of the Soviet Union as a totalitarian multinational state dominated by the Slavic culture. Naturally, all that had to go hand in hand with principles set down by Marxism. An example of how these ideas were used to create the historical narration can be found in a paper by ŽEBELEV concerning the Mithridates Eupator and the rebellion of Saumaces in the Bosporan Kingdom⁷. According to that scholar, Saumaces was not a noble Scythian, but a slave leader, who led rest of the oppressed masses to fight against their Greek oppressors. The Thaw after Stalin's death made the exchange of ideas between East and West less difficult, although the ideologies still played an important role in studies of the history of the northern Black Sea area⁸.

According to HEINEN, notions of Euroasia and Graeco-Iranian civilisation strongly shaped the approaches of other scholars like GOLUBCOVA and GAJDUKEVIČ⁹. However, the latter decided to remove some of these ideas from the German translation of his book – for example Slavic culture as a successor of the previous Iranian-nomadic civilisation. Moreover, HEINEN points out that the belief about the importance of the Bosporan Kingdom for Roman imperial policy

⁴ MINNS 1913.

⁵ ROSTOVTZEFF 1922.

⁶ MEYER 2011; VLASSOPOULOS 2013.

⁷ ŽEBELEV 1938.

⁸ GRAHAM 1961.

⁹ See GAJDUKEVIČ 1949 and 1971; GOLUBCOVA 1951; cf. HEINEN 2001: 365–369.

and the idea of the anti-Roman Mithridatism are aftermaths of the previously mentioned approaches. Most of HEINEN's remarks are accurate, although it should be underlined that whether it was anti-Roman in principle or not, Mithridatism was a real thing and certainly influenced the history of the Bosporan Kingdom.

The second chapter is devoted to the Roman client states in the East. Firstly, it was necessary to discuss the background of that phenomenon by looking more closely at the implementation of the traditional Roman network involving *cliens*, *amicus* and *patronus* on an interstate level¹⁰. Simultaneously, I pointed at the gradual development of the Empire and such co-occurring circumstances as hostage taking, the willingness to receive a proper education in the capital or to establish useful social connections. In the later part of this chapter, attention is paid to the number of client states and *reges amici et socii*, as their position could have been ambiguous and depended on the various factors, namely: an individual's political acumen, the policy of a particular emperor or the geostrategic importance of a given territory.

The remaining parts of the chapter focus on Nabataea and Armenia. A closer look at their history helps in better understanding of the Bosporan situation, which is discussed in the following chapters. Although issues like the socio-cultural composition and politics of the local dynasties were not insignificant, while discussing long-term imperial policy it is geostrategic importance that should be assessed as well. Trade routes, land borders with the empire, types of potential enemy a given kingdom bordered – all these matters might have influenced the level of Roman interest.

The next chapter focuses on the history of the Bosporan Kingdom before Mithridates VI Eupator. The unification under the Archaeanactids and the later expansion under the Spartocids went hand in hand with constant interaction with the non-Greek peoples inhabiting the northern Black Sea region. The subjugation of several adjacent tribes is reflected in the titulature of the Spartocid rulers, who presented themselves as both Greek archons and barbarian kings. The close relationship that existed between the Bosporan ruling house and the Scythian elites is particularly evident in the second half of the second c. BCE. This closeness was mainly due to intermarriage and the revolt led by Saumacus, who was a member of the Scythian elite rather than a slave¹¹.

The fourth chapter discusses the role of Mithridates VI Eupator in the history of the Bosporan Kingdom, and presents in detail the moment when it permanently entered into the Roman orbit. Before this happened, Rome gradually expanded its power over the Hellenistic states in Asia Minor. Finally, it met with fierce resistance from the Pontic King. An analysis of Eupator's mixed Graeco-Iranian

¹⁰ Cic. *Deiot.* 1, 3, 8–12; *De off.* I 35; *Sest.* 9; Joseph. *AJ* XV 6, 6; Liv. XXXIX 47, 10; Tac. *Hist.* II 81; Suet. *Aug.* 60, 1; *RGDA* 31–33.

¹¹ ŽEBELEV 1938: 9–33; GRAHAM 1961: 194–201; GAJDUKEVIČ 1949: 304 and 1971: 317–318.

background, his official propaganda and his willingness to conduct imperial policy may clarify the phenomenon of his legend in the later history of the Bosphorus. One of the key issues is to point at the foundation of that legend and to define the role of the ruler's propaganda, his political relations with Greeks and non-Greeks, and also the reforms he carried out. The significance of Eupator's activities for the northern Black Sea area – the Cimmerian Bosphorus especially – can be fully appreciated when looking at the evidence concerning political activity in the region in the mid-second c. BCE. The absence of the Bosporan state in the treaty ending Pharnaces I's Pontic War¹², with the simultaneous presence of the other Pontic states, can indicate the poor state of the Kingdom. Although this is in fact an *argumentum ex silentio*, it is hard not to connect the later appearances of the Cimmerian Bosphorus in literary sources with Mithridates Eupator's activity¹³.

To properly examine the goals and research objectives of this thesis, it is advantageous to follow the political history and socio-cultural functioning of the Bosporan Kingdom throughout ca. seven centuries. However, it is the Roman period that is of the greatest significance. Therefore, both the fifth and the sixth chapters focus on the external and internal situation of the Bosporan Kingdom from the times of Pharnaces II (63–48/47 BCE) onwards. As it has already been mentioned, the first *bellum Bosporanum* against Mithridates III (ca. 45–49 CE), marked the end of the occasional tensions between Rome and its *amici et socii*. Chapter five challenges the idea that Mithridatism was anti-Roman in principle, and tries to discuss the possibility that the main political goal of the Bosporan rulers when they first began functioning under “two-level sovereignty” was to become a recognised *amicus et socius* rather than fighting for full independence. This also refers to the later period of the Roman–Bosporan *status quo*, discussed in the sixth chapter. To achieve my objectives, besides investigating the limited literary evidence, I looked more closely into the titulature and symbols on coins and inscriptions. The appendix presents a detailed list of 135 texts mentioning Bosporan rulers throughout the centuries which were closely examined in the second section of the sixth chapter.

Therefore, the main research hypothesis is that some of the theories presenting the Bosporan Kingdom as a militarily and politically strong state – which despite its vivid anti-Roman traditions remained Rome's loyal ally for ca. 350 years – are exaggerated. Initially no special links existed between Mithridates VI Eupator and the Sarmatian peoples inhabiting the northern Black Sea area. However, alliances and further actions of his descendants led to the creation of ties between the royal house and the indigenous societies of non-Greek descent¹⁴. Bosporan

¹² Polyb. XXV 2.

¹³ App. *Mith* 107; Cass. Dio XXXVII 3, 12–14; Strabo VII 4, 4.

¹⁴ App. *Mithr.* 15; 19; 69; Strabo XI 5, 8.

rulers, unlike most of the Roman “friendly kings”, came from a local dynasty that was established before the Roman presence. That presence should not be strongly linked with the Parthian Empire, which was periodically able to carry out dynamic policy in the East, engaging other client kingdoms to a far greater extent. Instead, it was local strategic significance that strengthened the bonds between Rome and the Bosphorus, as the remainders of that alliance together with the subsidies that were occasionally received¹⁵, survived the Gothic invasions of the mid-third c. CE¹⁶.

In the third and the sixth chapters there are separate sections concerning the epigraphic curves of the Bosporan Kingdom throughout its history, which is reflected in no less than 2286 inscriptions carved in stone and on various metal objects¹⁷. The outcome from the Kingdom has been juxtaposed with that from Chersonesus. That comparison may be interesting as these two neighbouring political organisms, although functioning in the same environment, had different political systems – one was a democratic *polis*, and the other a centralised territorial state. The purpose of this research was to check whether the epigraphic habits of Chersonesus and the Bosporan Kingdom correspond with the historical context of the region. However, it was also important to point at some individual characteristics belonging to these neighbouring political units, namely, the peaks occurring at various times during the Roman period and changes in the composition of the curve which reflected differences in the political systems¹⁸.

The conclusions are presented in the final part of the dissertation. Thanks to his bold foreign policy regarding the northern Black Sea area at the end of the second c. BCE, Mithridates VI Eupator significantly impacted the history of the Bosphorus. The subjugation of the region went hand in hand with fighting the Scythian and Sarmatian tribes, whose aggressive action directed against Chersonesus was – at least officially – the main reason for the entire expedition. However, once defeated, the nomads became allies of the Pontic king and served in his army during the wars against Rome. Besides his military endeavours, Eupator introduced other reforms that permanently reshaped the socio-political landscape of the Bosporan Kingdom. These reforms mirrored previous measures adopted in Mithridates’ ancestral domains. For example, thanks to Aspurgus’

¹⁵ Luc. *Alex.* 57; Zosim. I 31.

¹⁶ Amm. Marc. XXII 7, 10.

¹⁷ Most of the inscriptions can be found in the Packard Humanities Institute database (<https://epigraphy.packhum.org>) and the new online database IOSPE – Inscriptiones antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini Graecae et Latinae (<http://iospe.kcl.ac.uk>), vol. III and V. Furthermore, traditional corpora are included: *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani* [= CIRB]; *Inscriptiones antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Pontis Euxini Graecae et Latinae*, vol. I, 2nd edn.; *Inscriptiones Tyriae, Olbiae, Chersonesi Tauricae*; *Latinskie nadpisi Khersonesa Tavricheskogo*; *Novye Epigraficheskie Pamiatniki Khersonesa* and individual volumes of *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*.

¹⁸ See also HALAMUS 2020: 102–117.

rescript dated to ca. 15 CE, we know that “Eupator’s law” was enacted in the city of Gorgippia¹⁹. Thanks to this law, the Greek *polis* was able to seize properties that had been left by citizens with no heirs.

As MAREK and MCGING pointed out²⁰, Mithridates’ determined resistance, combined with several aggressive military operations, resulted in the acceleration of the Roman conquest of the East. This observation can also be applied to the Bosporan Kingdom, which thanks to the Pontic King entered the Roman sphere of influence – initially (70 BCE) as one of the dominions controlled by Machares, and later (63 BCE) as a separate client state. It was not only another alliance that was formed in 63 BCE; Bosporan affairs were also directly shaped by the Romans for the first time. Pompey allowed Pharnaces to remain as king, although he limited his power to the Cimmerian Bosporus except for the city of Phanagoria, which was rewarded for starting the rebellion against Eupator²¹.

Pharnaces II remained faithful to the provisions of the treaty for about a decade. In an inscription that was probably carved during this period, he is referred to as φιλορῶμαιος (friend of the Romans)²², but other evidence, both numismatic and epigraphic, reveals that he did not abandon his father’s Pontic/Achaemenid heritage. Furthermore, he decided to use the hostilities between Pompey and Caesar as a cover for invading Asia Minor in order to take control over his paternal dominions. After being defeated at Zela, Pharnaces managed to return to the North, although he was soon killed by his former deputy and now usurper, Asander. The Pontic line, however, was continued by Eupator’s granddaughter Dynamis, whom Asander married.

The rule of Asander and Dynamis prompts a lot of questions due to the scarcity of source material and the ambiguity regarding their attitude towards Rome. One such question concerns the chronology of their rule, which is discussed in detail in chapter five. This discussion reveals that numismatic evidence appears to be the most reliable form of material. In my opinion, it is accurate to assume that Asander’s official reign began as early as 49/48 BCE; thus Dynamis would have minted her gold staters (as the sole ruler of the Kingdom) from 21/20 BCE.

While dealing with these chronological issues, one needs to look at the geopolitical context of the Black Sea area during the second half of the first c. BCE. According to SAPRYKIN, who is convinced of Roman omnipotence, Asander waited before demonstrating his supreme position in the Kingdom due to the absence of Caesar’s acceptance²³. In my opinion, however, the bold and risky

¹⁹ SEG XLVI 940; BLAVATSKAYA 1965; SAPRYKIN 1996; cf. HEINEN 2001; 2006.

²⁰ MAREK 2009: 35–37; MCGING 2009: 211–213.

²¹ App. *Mith.* 110; Plut. *Pomp.* 41, 5.

²² SEG LVII 704.

²³ SAPRYKIN 2002, 58–73.

actions undertaken by Asander – his rebellion against Pharnaces and his defeat of Mithridates of Pergamum – show that fearful lingering was not a method he valued most. Moreover, in the forties BCE, the northern Black Sea area might have been of secondary importance to the Romans; we should bear in mind that they did not respond to Burebista's decimation of the Western Pontic coast.

Despite the odds, Asander managed to retain power over the Bosphorus. Later, he also adopted the title of φιλορῶμαιος, which was accompanied by the Pontic/Achaemenid βασιλεὺς βασιλέων μέγας (great king of kings)²⁴. However, the application of both pro-Roman and Mithridatic elements in official propaganda is clearer in the case of queen Dynamis. These actions were meant to highlight her legitimate claim to the Bosporan throne and to strengthen her position in the Kingdom. Although Asander and Dynamis presented themselves as friends of Rome, their position was uncertain, because Roman plans to replace the ruling dynasty in the Bosphorus did not end with Mithridates II's failed expedition, as they were rekindled by Augustus.

The episode of Polemo I lasted for about eight years (from 14 to 8 BCE). A closer look at some of the ongoing events from this turbulent period may be helpful when discussing Roman–Bosporan relations. First, the case of Scribonius demonstrates once again how the scarcity of sources can sometimes lead to the creation of disputable theories. PARENOV and SAPRYKIN discussed the possibility of Scribonius being Augustus' agent, who was sent to Bosphorus several years before Asander's death in order to prepare for the change of monarch or even to annex the client state²⁵. Furthermore, PARENOV follows some of ROSTOVTZEFF's ideas, according to which Marcus Agrippa himself invaded the Bosporan Kingdom to help install Polemo I on the throne. He then took Dynamis and the underage Aspurgus to Rome. Unfortunately, there is little evidence in the source material to support these interesting hypotheses. In my opinion, this kind of narration – placing the Bosphorus in the middle of important historical events and processes without sufficient evidence – can be observed in relation to the Kingdom's history as a whole and is somehow connected with ROSTOVTZEFF's idea of South Russia.

The circumstances concerning Aspurgus' coming to power are also debatable. In my opinion, however, a recently discovered inscription from Gorgippia dated to 6/7 CE, which refers to him as both king and φιλορῶμαιος, sheds new light on these events. First, the titulature used indicates that Aspurgus' supreme position in the Kingdom was already established. Hence, this provides some support for the claim that the series of gold staters that were issued between 9/8 BCE and 7/8 CE should be associated with Aspurgus rather than Dynamis or an unknown Roman governor. Moreover, I reject COŞKUN's assumption that Asander should

²⁴ *CIRB* 30.

²⁵ PARENOV 2007: 292–295; cf. SAPRYKIN 2010: 161–169.

not be treated as Aspurgus' father²⁶. Indeed, Strabo's Aspurgians were probably a Sarmatian faction that supported Aspurgus²⁷, although it is extremely unlikely that Asandrochos, to whom Aspurgus referred to as his father, was not the same person as Asander, king of the Bosphorus.

During his long reign, Aspurgus managed to expand his kingdom and, perhaps even more importantly, to consolidate his position as *amicus et socius*. Furthermore, Aspurgus is the first Bosporan ruler who used both titles indicating friendship with the Romans and Caesar – φιλόκαισαρ καὶ φιλωρώμαιοσ²⁸. This definite pro-Roman propaganda, just as in the case of his alleged mother Dynamis, went hand in hand with references to Pontic/Achaemenid titulature and other gestures, such as naming one of his sons Mithridates. These actions should be seen as being aimed at emphasising the legitimacy of his rule over the Kingdom. Despite becoming the king of the Bosphorus by defeating the Roman favourite Polemo II, Aspurgus remained within the “two-level sovereignty” system as a role model of a client king²⁹. His pro-Roman attitude and his acceptance of the Roman client state system can be seen not only in his propaganda that appeared in inscriptions and on gold coinage, but also in his actions. The rule over the Kingdom stayed in the hands of the local ruler, although, thanks to Aspurgus' marriage with the Thracian princess Gepaepyris, the two ruling houses merged. This joining of ruling houses was typical amongst Roman client dynasties³⁰.

In my opinion, HEINEN's critical approach to the view that “Mithridatism” was anti-Roman is generally correct³¹. Oftentimes references to alliances with Rome went hand in hand with Pontic/Achaemenid titulature and symbolism. Attributing Eupator's anti-Roman attitude to all his descendants was part of a broader theory, according to which the northern Black Sea area in antiquity had its own Graeco-Iranian culture and a separate sense of identity. This idea can find some justification in terms of art or intercultural contacts³², but it should be rejected when discussed in terms of interstate policy. The latter, when juxtaposed with twentieth century ideologies, may lead to the false assumption that Pharnaces II, Asander, Dynamis, Aspurgus and Mithridates III were guardians of Graeco-Iranian civilisation against Roman imperialism³³.

²⁶ COŞKUN 2019.

²⁷ Strabo XI 2, 11.

²⁸ *CIRB* 40.

²⁹ MILLAR 2004: 229–237.

³⁰ SAPRYKIN 2002: 167–174.

³¹ See HEINEN 2001 and 2006.

³² See MEYER 2013.

³³ HEINEN 2001: 368–369.

However, HEINEN seems to underestimate the meaning of this phenomenon regarding the internal affairs of the Kingdom, not only in the first period, but also after the *bellum Bosporanum* (ca. 45–49 CE). It is justified to state that from the first century CE onwards, the local ruling dynasty legitimised its position by referring to the past glories of the Mithridatic tradition. Rome’s meddling in local politics forced Bosporan rulers to draw support from their Asiatic subjects in order to strengthen their position and retain power. Therefore, Mithridatism can be seen as a tool that might have been helpful in keeping the status of a Roman client. It seems that the conscious emulation of Iranian customs and languages endeared the rulers to the Sarmatians, who used the royal support to elevate their status in the Bosporan Kingdom.

The pacification of Mithridates III and the installation of Cotys I on the Bosporan throne saw the beginning of a new chapter in relations between Rome and the Kingdom. For about two centuries, Tiberii Iulii, members of the Bosporan hereditary dynasty, remained subordinate to the emperors, eagerly using pro-Roman titlature and symbols in their inscriptions and coinage. As mentioned above, Cotys I was the first Bosporan king – that we know for sure – to use the *tria nomina* in his official titlature.

From among all of the inscriptions mentioning Bosporan rulers from the times of Cotys I onwards, 82 (out of 95) have some sort of pro-Roman titlature. The last of them belongs to king Teiranus (275–279 CE)³⁴. The title of high priest of the imperial cult occurs in royal inscriptions on 13 occasions under six different rulers – starting with Cotys I and ending with Rhescuporis III (211–227 CE). As BLAVATSKYI rightly noticed, the existing evidence does not suggest that the imperial cult, as performed by the king, had a significant impact on Bosporan society³⁵.

The longevity of the Roman–Bosporan alliance was beneficial for both sides. Bosporan kings occasionally fought against local non-Greek tribes and kept them away from Greek harbours, something which finds confirmation in one of Sauromates II’s inscriptions³⁶. The text praises the ruler for defeating the barbarians and making the sailing routes to Pontus–Bithynia safe again. Moreover, Bosporan *amici et socii* could have been useful sources of information concerning the situation in the steppes and could also have acted as potential intermediaries between Rome and the nomads. Perhaps this kind of “urgent news” was carried by the envoys mentioned by Pliny the Younger³⁷. For the Tiberii Iulii, supporting Rome may have had various benefits. As rulers of the Greek cities, it was crucial for them to remain allied with the Empire, thanks to which free trade

³⁴ *CIRB* 36.

³⁵ BLAVATSKYI 1985: 191–195.

³⁶ *CIRB* 1237.

³⁷ Plin. *Ep.* X 63, 64, 67.

and contacts with other parts of the Graeco-Roman world were possible. Conflict with adjacent barbarians sometimes required direct military support. Such support might have been sent during the reign of Sauromates II under the second *bellum Bosporanum* (ca. the end of the second c. CE). Additionally, it is possible that Bosporan kings received some sort of financial support in order to increase the efficiency of their actions towards non-Greek peoples. Passages from Lucian (with information about σύνταξις, a yearly tribute carried by Bosporan envoys) and Zosimos possibly support this hypothesis³⁸.

Nevertheless, in terms of its overall importance within Roman imperial policy, the Bosporan Kingdom should be seen as an outpost that was significant in terms of local Pontic issues. As SARNOWSKI rightly stated, the Roman presence in the Crimea was rather limited in character³⁹. However, two direct interventions took place in the first c. CE. Interestingly, while describing the events of the first *bellum Bosporanum*, Tacitus mentions Bosporans equipped in the Roman fashion⁴⁰. This information shows that Roman military presence might have influenced Bosporan warfare, at least to a certain extent. On the other hand, however, it must be stated that the main and dominant trend in Bosporan military organisation during the Roman period was Sarmatisation⁴¹.

Having an allied kingdom in the eastern part of the peninsula was certainly an advantage, as it limited the necessity of direct engagement. Being a Roman ally combined with having the presence of imperial troops on the peninsula apparently worked well for both Chersonesus and the Bosporan Kingdom. The relatively good situation of these political organisms seems to be reflected in the epigraphic curve, as it grows throughout the first c. CE to reach its peak in the second c. Then it decreases rapidly in the third c. CE, which should be connected with the barbarian invasions and the worsening situation in the steppes. However, a comparison of the epigraphic evidence clearly demonstrates differences in the political systems. Whereas the activity of Chersonesean democratic bodies is well documented, Bosporan inscriptions attest to a centralised and non-democratic way of governing.

One of the main purposes of this dissertation was to present the Bosporan Kingdom as an interesting multicultural state on the outskirts of the *oikoumene*, bound by a long-lasting alliance with the Roman Empire. However, through comparing it with other regions and client states, it is possible to weigh the actual importance of the Bosporan Kingdom within Roman imperial policy. The history of the states situated between Parthia and Rome, especially Armenia, shows that they were crucial to the Empire's eastern policy, whereas Danubian provinces,

³⁸ Luc. *Alex.* 57; Zosim. I 31, 1–3.

³⁹ SARNOWSKI 1988: 147–151.

⁴⁰ Tac. *Ann.* XII 15–22; MIELCZAREK 1999a: 5–9.

⁴¹ MIELCZAREK 1999b: 98–102.

especially Moesia, were responsible for defending the Empire against the steppe barbarians⁴². Therefore, one should be extremely cautious when discussing the meaning of the Bosphorus as a buffer both against Parthia and the steppe nomads. Instead, the Bosporan Kingdom with its distant location, local ruling dynasty and strong nomadic elements, played the role of a useful outpost. Unlike Nabataea, which shared most of these features, it never became a province. However, this desert state had land borders with territories controlled directly by Rome and was crossed by important trade routes, which apparently was enough for it to be incorporated by Trajan.

Institute of History, University of Wrocław
michal.halamus@uwr.edu.pl

ORCID: 0000-0002-7087-5414

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BLAVATSKAYA 1965: T.V. BLAVATSKAYA, *Reskripty carya Aspurga* [“Rescripts of King Aspurgus”], *Sovetskaya Archeologija* IX 1965, fasc. 2, pp. 197–209.
- BLAVATSKYI 1985: V.D. BLAVATSKYI, *O kulte rimskich imperatorov na Bospore* [“On the Roman Imperial Cult in the Bosphorus”], in: IDEM (ed.) *Antichnaya archeologija i istorija* [“Ancient Archaeology and History”], Moskva 1985, pp. 191–195.
- ÇOŞKUN 2019: A. ÇOŞKUN, *The Date of the Revolt of Asandros and the Relations between the Bosporan Kingdom and Rome under Caesar*, in: M. NOLLÉ et al. (eds.): *Panegyrikoi Logoi. Festschrift für Johannes Nollé zum 65. Geburtstag*, Bonn 2019, pp. 125–146.
- GAJDUKEVIČ 1949: V.F. GAJDUKEVIČ, *Bosporskoe Tsarstvo* [“The Bosporan Kingdom”], Moskva–Leningrad 1949.
- 1971: V.F. GAJDUKEVIČ, *Das bosporanische Reich*, Berlin 1971.
- GOLUBCOVA 1951: E.C. GOLUBCOVA, *Severnoe Pritchernomore i Rim na rubezhe naschey ery* [“The Northern Black Sea Area on the Verge of the Common Era”], Moskva 1951.
- GRAHAM 1961: H. GRAHAM, *Soviet Classical Scholarship and the Black Sea Region*, *CJ* LVI 1961, pp. 194–202.
- HALAMUS 2018: M. HALAMUS, *Annexing the Near East and Long-Lasting Bosporan Autonomy*, *Eos* CV 2018, pp. 221–238.
- 2020: M. HALAMUS, *The Epigraphic Curve in the Northern Black Sea Region: A Case Study from Chersonesus and the Bosporan Kingdom*, in: K. NAWOTKA (ed.), *Epigraphic Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean in Antiquity*, New York 2020, pp. 102–117.
- HEINEN 2001: H. HEINEN, *Die mithradatische Tradition der bosporanischen Könige – ein missverständlicher Befund*, *Studia Phoenica* XVI 2001, pp. 355–370.
- 2006: H. HEINEN, *Antike am Rande der Steppe. Der nördliche Schwarzmeerraum als Forschungsaufgabe*, Wiesbaden 2006.
- HØJTE 2009: J.M. HØJTE (ed.), *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom*, Aarhus 2009.
- MAREK 2009: Ch. MAREK, *Hellenisation and Romanisation in Pontos-Bithynia: An Overview*, in: HØJTE 2009, pp. 35–46.
- MCGING 2009: B.C. MCGING, *Mithridates VI Eupator: Victim or Aggressor?*, in: HØJTE 2009, pp. 203–216.

⁴² MROZEWICZ 1982: 79–82; 2013: 436–442.

- 1986: B.C. MCGING, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates Eupator*, Leiden 1986.
- MEYER 2011: C. MEYER, *Iranians and Greeks after 90 Years: A Religious History of Southern Russia in Ancient Times*, *Ancient West & East* X 2011, pp. 75–159.
- 2013: C. MEYER, *Greco-Scythian Art and the Birth of Eurasia. From Classical Antiquity to Russian Modernity*, Oxford 2013.
- MIELCZAREK 1999a: M. MIELCZAREK, *O piechocie bosporańskiej w II wieku n.e. Kilka uwag o treści malowidła ściennego z grobowca odkrytego w Kerczu w 1872 roku* [“On the Bosporan Infantry in the 2nd c. CE. Some Remarks Concerning a Tomb Painting Found in Kertch in 1872”], in: K. FILIPOW (ed.), *Księga jubileuszowa Muzeum Wojska 1968–1998* [“Anniversary Book of the Army Museum 1968–1998”], Białystok 1999, pp. 5–9.
- 1999b: M. MIELCZAREK, *The Army of the Bosporan Kingdom*, Łódź 1999.
- MILLAR 2004: F. MILLAR, *Emperors, Kings, and Subjects: The Politics of Two-Level Sovereignty*, in: IDEM, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East*, ed. by H.M. COTTON, G.M. ROGERS, vol. 2: *Government, Society, and Culture in the Roman Empire*, Chapel Hill–London 2002, pp. 229–248.
- MINNS 1913: E.H. MINNS, *Scythians and Greeks: A Survey of Ancient History and Archaeology on the North Coast of the Euxine*, Cambridge 1913.
- MROZEWICZ 1982: L. MROZEWICZ, *Roman Military Settlements in Lower Moesia*, *Archeologia* XXXIII 1982, pp. 79–105.
- 2013: L. MROZEWICZ, *Resettlement into Roman Territory across the Rhine and the Danube under the Early Empire (to the Marcomannic Wars)*, *Eos* C 2013, fasciculus extra ordinem editus electronicus, pp. 424–442.
- PARFENOV 2007: V.N. PARFENOV, *Zagadka Skriboniya* [“Scribonius’ Riddle”], *Problemy Istorii, Filologii, Kultury* XVII 2007, pp. 291–298.
- ROSTOVITZEFF 1922: M.I. ROSTOVITZEFF, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, Oxford 1922.
- SAPRYKIN 1996: S.J. SAPRYKIN, *Pontijskoe tsarstvo. Gasudarstvo Grekov i Varvarov v Pritchernomorie* [“The Pontic Kingdom. The State of Greeks and Barbarians in the Black Sea Area”], Moskva 1996.
- 2002: S.J. SAPRYKIN, *Bosporskoye tsarstvo na rubezhe dvukh er* [“The Kingdom of Bosphorus on the Verge of Two Epochs”], Moskva 2002.
- 2010: S.J. SAPRYKIN, *Zagadka Skriboniya?* [“Scribonius’ Riddle?”], in: S.J. SAPRYKIN *et al.* (eds.), *Vostok, Evropa, Amerika v drevnosti. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov XVI Sergeevskikh chteniy* [“East, Europe, America in Antiquity: Collection of Scientific Papers of the 16th Sergeev Readings”], Moskva 2010, pp. 159–173.
- SARNOWSKI 1988: T. SARNOWSKI, *Wojsko rzymskie w Mezji Dolnej i na północnym wybrzeżu Morza Czarnego* [“Roman Army in Lower Moesia and the Northern Coast of the Black Sea”], Warszawa 1988.
- VLAȘSOPULOS 2013: K. VLAȘSOPULOS, *Greeks and Barbarians*, Cambridge 2013.
- ŽEBELEV 1938: S.A. ŽEBELEV, *Poslednij Perisad i skifskoe vosstanie na Bospore* [“The Last Paerisades and the Scythian Uprising on the Bosphorus”], *VDI* 1938, fasc. 3, pp. 49–71.