

GAIUS' POLICY IN THE BOSPORUS*

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Among the first tasks faced by Claudius on his accession in A.D. 41 was the distribution of territories among the various client kings who had proved their loyalty to Rome. Dio (60.8.1) tells us that Claudius restored Commagene to Antiochus and Iberia to Mithridates and granted the Bosphorus to another Mithridates, a descendant of Mithridates the Great, giving part of Cilicia to Polemo II of Pontus in its place: ἄλλω τέ τινι Μιθριδάτῃ . . . τὸν Βόσπορον ἐχαρίσατο, καὶ τῷ Πολέμωνι χώραν τινὰ ἀντ' αὐτοῦ Κιλικίας ἀντέδωκε. This statement has been called into question. D. Magie claims that Dio has confused Polemo II, King of Pontus, with M. Antonius Polemo, dynast of Olba in Cilicia, and that no territory in Cilicia was granted to Polemo II;¹ the other half of the arrangement, however, has not been subjected to serious scrutiny, and it has been assumed by all authorities that in A.D. 41 Claudius deprived Polemo II of an actual kingdom in the Bosphorus, and that Polemo II had received this kingdom, when, in A.D. 38, as Dio tells us (59.12.2), Gaius granted him his "ancestral domain:" τὴν πατρώαν ἀρχήν. This assumption, I believe, is unwarranted. As will be shown, the historical, numismatic and epigraphical evidence all appear to contradict the notion that Polemo II ever received a kingdom in the Bosphorus from Gaius. This might seem, on the face of it, to suggest a contradiction between this evidence and Dio's account; I hope, however, to show that if Dio's words are read carefully, such need not be the case.

First of all, it will be useful to consider briefly the relations between

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¹ *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton 1950) 548-49, 1407. See also L. H. Feldman, *Josephus in The Loeb Classical Library* (London 1965) IX.467; Smallwood, *Documents* 206, 207; R. D. Sullivan, "Important Eastern Dynasts in the Papyri," *Proceedings of the Fourteenth International Congress of Papyrologists* (Oxford 1974) 290, note 16.

Rome and the Bosphorus, and general Roman policy in the area, before the accession of Gaius. The Bosphorus had been joined to the kingdom of Pontus by Mithridates the Great; on his death his son Pharnaces was allowed to succeed to the possessions in the Bosphorus, although not in Pontus. Pharnaces was overthrown by a rebel, Asander,² who also defeated a claimant put up by Caesar³ and strengthened his position by marrying the late Pharnaces' daughter, Dynamis. Augustus dealt with Asander diplomatically rather than with force, and, recognizing a *fait accompli*, bestowed on him the title of King.⁴ Evidence of the loyalty that Asander maintained towards Rome is provided by an inscription from Panticapaeum in which he styles himself as: *μεγάλου Ἀσάνδρου φιλορωμαίου σωτήρος*.⁵ This state of affairs, very satisfactory from the Roman point of view, continued until thrown into disarray by a usurper Scribonius,⁶ who launched a revolt against Asander (who seems to have died on the eve of the battle) and then in turn married Dynamis. The situation was serious enough to engage the attention of Agrippa; believing that Roman interests were threatened he instructed Polemo I, King of Pontus, to cross the Euxine and reassert Roman authority. Scribonius was in the meantime put to death by his own people, but the Bosporans were still not willing to accept Polemo I, an outsider, and put up a stiff resistance until Agrippa arrived in person with his fleet in 14 B.C.⁷ The Bosporans yielded and the kingdom was handed over to Polemo, who duly married Dynamis.

² For Asander, see Dio 54.24.4; Lucian, *Macrob.* 17; Strabo 7.4.6, 11.2.11. A genealogy is appended at the end of the text.

³ Mithridates, son of Menodotus, of Pergamum (see Strabo 13.4.3; *Bell. Alex.* 78).

⁴ On his coins bearing the years α' to γ' he has the title of *ἄρχων*. On those from δ' to θκ' he calls himself *βασιλεύς*. See A. von Sallet, *Numismatik der Könige des Bosporus und Pontus* (Berlin 1866) 9–10; B. M. *Catalogue, Pontus etc.* xxxi and 48. A parallel for Augustus' policy towards Asander is illustrated by events in Britain. Ticondrius, King of the Atrebatas, was supported by Augustus but expelled from his kingdom some time before A.D. 7. No attempt was made to restore him; Augustus recognised his successor, Eppillus, as *Rex* (see S. Frere, *Britannia* [London 1967] 42–43).

⁵ *IOSPE* II.25 = *IGR* I.874 = *CIRB* 30.

⁶ Dio 54.24. Scribonius claimed to be a grandson of Mithridates the Great; he was probably a Bosporan who had adopted a Roman name, since it is unlikely that Dynamis would have consented to marry a Roman adventurer of no station.

⁷ The importance that the Romans attached to the region is seen in the fact that, although he did not, apparently, strike a blow, Agrippa was granted a triumph because of his success. He declined the honour, and Dio claims that it was because of this precedent that ordinary Romans were not subsequently allowed to celebrate a triumph.

The marriage was short-lived and Polemo experienced great difficulty in trying to establish his authority in his new kingdom. He was married a second time, to Pythodoris, daughter of Pythodorus of Tralles, by whom he had three children,⁸ and died on campaign in the Bosphorus in 8 B.C. Given the time limit of 14 B.C. to 8 B.C. for the marriage, three children and separation, it seems clear that the marriage to Dynamis can have lasted little over a year.⁹

Polemo died in battle against the Aspurgians, a tribe lying between Phanagoria and Gorgippia on the East of the Straits of Bosphorus and almost certainly the tribe from which the later ruler Aspurgus took his name.¹⁰ Rostovtzeff believes that after her separation from Polemo I Dynamis joined forces with Aspurgus and married him. This is speculation, but we do know that beginning in 9/8 B.C. we have a series of coins with a monogram probably of Dynamis, indicating that she was ruling in her own right.¹¹ What is most interesting about the coins, however, is that they bear the heads of Augustus and Agrippa. Clearly, yet again the Romans realized the necessity of adopting a pragmatic approach to the Bosphorus and the advantage of courting the loyalty of an existing ruler as opposed to trying to impose by force a candidate of their own. At any rate, Dynamis makes her allegiance to Augustus patent; in consecrating statues to the emperor in Phanagoria and Panticapaeum, she describes herself as βασιλίσσα Δύναμις φιλορώμαιος and the emperor as τὸν ἑαυτῆς σωτῆρα καὶ εὐεργέτην.¹² Dedicating a statue to Livia in the temple of Aphrodite she calls the emperor's wife Λιουίαν . . . τὴν ἑαυτῆς εὐεργέτιν.¹³

⁸ Strabo 12.3.29.

⁹ On the length of the marriage see M. Rostovtzeff, "Queen Dynamis of Bosphorus," *JHS* 39 (1919) 99 (questioned by Magie 1341).

¹⁰ Strabo 11.2.11, 12.3.29.

¹¹ E. H. Minns, *Scythians and Greeks* (Cambridge 1913) 595, 611; *CAH, Volume of Plates* VI.208k; V. F. Gajdukevič, *Das Bosporanische Reich* (German trans. G. Janke, Berlin 1971) Plate IV.60; *B. M. Catalogue, Pontus etc.* 49.1. The catalogue attributes the coin to Aspurgus. Bosporan history between 9/8 B.C. and A.D. 80/81 is complicated by the fact that with few exceptions Bosporan rulers in that period placed monograms, not full names, on their coins. In some cases positive identification of the monogram is impossible; however, while such identification would obviously be desirable, the lack of it does not markedly affect the value of the coins as evidence for the general character of Roman relations with the Bosphorus. I have generally accepted Minns' identifications.

¹² *IOSPE* II.354 = *IGR* I.901 = *CIRB* 1046; *IOSPE* IV.201 = *IGR* I.875 = *CIRB* 38.

¹³ *IOSPE* IV.420 = *IGR* I.902 = *CIRB* 978.

If married to her, Aspurgus did not apparently share in her rule but did succeed her (although not immediately).¹⁴ Coins bearing a monogram clearly his appear in 10/11, and, beginning in 14/15, the monograms have the addition of *B* for *Βασιλεύς*. It is probably reasonable to assume that the formal recognition as king was made by Tiberius on his accession and that Aspurgus was the first of his line to bear the names Tiberius Julius.¹⁵ Again, Aspurgus made no secret of his loyalty. His coins bear the heads of Augustus, Tiberius and Gaius. On one inscription, possibly dated A.D. 16, he calls himself *βασιλέως Ἀσπούργου φιλορωμαίου*.¹⁶ On another, he is praised for having defeated the Scythians and Tauri, and is styled as *φιλοκαίσαρα καὶ φιλωρώμαιον*.¹⁷ To judge from the numismatic evidence, Aspurgus just managed to survive Tiberius; his latest coin is dated to 37/38 and bears the head of Gaius.¹⁸

Thus when Gaius came to power the family of Polemo had not ruled in the Bosphorus for almost half a century; despite this, however, the Romans had enjoyed an apparently unbroken period of loyal support. They had seen that attempts to intervene directly in local events were met with stiff resistance, but that Roman ends could be served well by diplomatic means. To effect any change would, in the light of the Bosporan tradition of independence and allegiance to the house of Mithridates, have been bound to cause serious repercussions. This is not to say that Gaius would not have been willing to suffer them. However, when we look at the numismatic and epigraphical evidence for events in the Bosphorus during this period we find no hint whatsoever of any repercussions; in fact, the evidence points to a continuation of the *status quo*.

¹⁴ Aspurgus' coins date from A.D. 10/11 (*B. M. Catalogue, Pontus etc.* 49.2). In A.D. 8/9 and 9/10 Bosporan coins bear a so far unidentified monogram.

¹⁵ *IOSPE* IV.203 (= *IGR* I.880 = *CIRB* 69) mentions Cotys, son of Tiberius Julius. We cannot be sure, however, which Cotys is concerned.

¹⁶ *IOSPE* II.364 = *IGR* I.906 = *CIRB* 985. It is generally reported that this inscription dates to A.D. 16 (Magie 1341, *CAH* X.269). This assumption is based on the reading *ἔτους γιγ'* (in the Bosporan era). The *γ*, however, is a restoration; *ε* has also been suggested.

¹⁷ *IOSPE* II.36 = *IGR* I.879 = *CIRB* 40.

¹⁸ Minns 611; *B. M. Catalogue, Pontus etc.* 50 (attributed to Rhescuporis). A. N. Zograf, "Antičnye Zopoty Monoty Kavkaza," *IGAIMK* 110 (1936) 197, argues that the monograms appearing on staters dated 37/38 and 38/39 are probably of Aspurgus, not Gepaepyris, and that he was still ruling in those years.

On his death Aspurgus left his wife Gepaepyris, and two sons, Mithridates and Cotys. Gepaepyris succeeded her husband as sole ruler, and inscribed her coins *ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΓΗΠΑΙΠΥΡΕΩΣ*.¹⁹ Is her use of the title *Βασίλισσα* to be interpreted as an act of defiance on the loss of her kingdom to Polemo II? Hardly, since the obverse of one coin bears the bust of Gaius draped and diademed, while the reverse bears what might be the bust of Livia as Aphrodite, draped in calathos and veil.²⁰ On later coins Gepaepyris appears with Mithridates, with his full legend *ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΙΘΡΙΔΑΤΟΥ*.²¹ The presence of the two together indicates almost certainly that they ruled conjointly. The use of the full legend of Mithridates on the coin need not indicate, as Minns has argued, "numismatic audacity," symbolizing revolt. After all, Gepaepyris, whose loyalty to Rome is also attested both by Dio²² and by her presence on the coins of her son Cotys I, Claudius' most loyal protégé, used full legends on her coins, and, after A.D. 80/81, beginning with Rhescuporis, Bosporan rulers regularly put full legends on their coins. Mithridates next mints coins as sole ruler and they seem to indicate no change in policy. Two gold coins bear the head of the emperor on one side, and Nike and the name of Mithridates on the other; they are dated and bear the Bosporan dates of 336 and 338 (A.D. 39/40 and 41/42), and so were issued during the very period when Polemo II is supposed to be king of the area.²³ The fact that Mithridates puts the head of the emperor on his coins shows that he was not acting independently of Rome and that Polemo could hardly have been granted authority by the emperor over the Bosphorus.²⁴ In fact it

¹⁹ Minns, Plate VII.7; *B. M. Catalogue, Pontus etc.* 51.1; U. Kahrstedt, "Frauen auf antiken Münzen," *Klio* 10 (1910) 303; Gajdukevič, Plate IV.67.

²⁰ *CAH, Volume of Plates* IV.208h.

²¹ Minns 597; *CAH, Volume of Plates* IV.208i; *B. M. Catalogue, Pontus etc.* 51.5.

²² Dio 60.28.7; this passage is preserved in the *Historiae* of Petrus Patricius. Mithridates' mother is not actually named in the passage. However, Gepaepyris' portrait appears on the coins of Cotys I and she was undoubtedly *his* mother; Cotys and Mithridates were brothers, and since Gepaepyris appears on the coins of Mithridates and can be assumed therefore to have ruled conjointly with him, it seems certain that she was the mother of Mithridates also.

²³ Minns, Plate VII.10; *CAH, Volume of Plates* IV.2081; Smallwood, *Documents* 202. Minns 602 notes that in the portraits of Romans on their gold coins the Bosporans made little attempt to secure a resemblance. The same head used on obverses for Gaius in A.D. 39/40 seems to persist as that of Claudius.

²⁴ H. H. Scullard, *OCD* "Bosporus," suggests that Polemo had formal recognition from Gaius but that Mithridates and Gepaepyris maintained actual power. Gajdukevič

was during the reign of Claudius, and not of Gaius, that Mithridates began to feel that his allegiance to Rome was a burden. Perhaps he felt that there remained a danger of subjugation by Pontus; at any rate, he planned to rebel against the Romans, despite the opposition of his mother. To keep his scheme secret he sent his brother Cotys to Claudius to make a pretence of friendship; Cotys betrayed him and was rewarded with the kingdom, where he established himself with the help of a Roman force by A.D. 45/46 (the date of his first coin).²⁵ Mithridates was taken to Rome as a prisoner; his life was spared, but he was eventually executed by Galba for taking part in the conspiracy of Nymphidius.²⁶

The numismatic evidence, then, indicates that during the reign of Gaius the rule of Gepaepyris and Mithridates remained undisturbed and that there was no change in Roman policy in the Bosporus; balancing this, we do not find any coins of Polemo that relate to the Bosporus.²⁷ Much has been made of a piece of epigraphical evidence that purports to prove Polemo II's rule in the area. The opening lines of an inscription dated to ABosp 338 (A.D. 41/42), found at Gorgippia and dealing with the manumission of a slave, is published by B. Latyshev as follows:²⁸

Θεῶι ὑψίστῳ παντο-
κράτορι ἐνλογητῷ, βα-
σιλεύοντος βασιλέ-
ως [Πολέμωνος] φιλο-
γερμα[νι]κοῦ καὶ φιλοπάτ-
ριδος, ἔτους η' λτ'

As the editor admits, the name *Πολέμωνος* in this influential text is a conjectural restoration; the original name has been erased and almost indecipherable letters put in its place. Latyshev's predecessor, L. Stephani, read not *Πολέμωνος* but *Μιθριδάτου*,²⁹ and A. I. Boltunova,

340 seems to adopt a similar view: "Polemon II. befand sich in Pontos; um den bosporani-schen Thron bemühte er sich gar nicht . . ." But the numismatic evidence seems to point incontrovertibly to Mithridates' having imperial recognition of his rule.

²⁵ B. M. *Catalogue, Pontus etc.* 52.1; Smallwood, *Documents* 203. The Roman campaign against Mithridates is described by Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.15-21.

²⁶ Plutarch, *Galba* 13, 15. There seems to be no reason to doubt that the Mithridates mentioned by Plutarch is the former king of the Bosporus.

²⁷ Minns 597.

²⁸ *IOSPE* II.400 = *CIRB* 1123.

²⁹ *Mélanges gréco-romains* II.200-04, no. XXIII.

who has more recently studied the stone in great detail, claims that Stephani's reading was probably the correct one.³⁰ The traces of the word that Stephani saw might have been removed by the nineteenth-century restorer before Latyshev saw it. There is an intriguing piece of evidence in support of the reading *Μιθριδάτου* in the form of correspondence between Latyshev and the epigraphist Prince Oreshnikov.³¹ After Latyshev had published the inscription in *IOSPE* II, Oreshnikov wrote to him and claimed to have seen a duplicate of the stone in question on a private estate; duplicates of Bosporan inscriptions do exist,³² although Bultanova thinks that this one may have been a forgery (there is no trace of it today). He recorded the inscription, and his handwritten record, which still exists,³³ reads *Μιθριδάτου*. The erasure of the name could be accounted for by Mithridates' subsequent disgrace as well as by Polemo II's supposed removal from power, and while there is no way of proving conclusively that *Μιθριδάτου* did appear in line 4, it is clear that this inscription should not be used to attempt to prove the presence of Polemo in the area.³⁴

The evidence, then, is against any grant of power to Polemo II in the Bosphorus. Does this mean that Dio was mistaken in his account? Not necessarily. The *πατρῴα ἀρχή*, which, as Dio tells us, Gaius bestowed on Polemo II in A.D. 38, was clearly the old domain of Polemo I.³⁵ This ancestral domain would certainly include Pontus. Polemo I had been granted a kingdom by Antony for his role in the defence of Laodicea on the Lycus during the Parthian invasion of 40 B.C., and when this original territory (in southern Asia Minor) was handed over to Cleopatra, he was established in Pontus with the title of king.³⁶

³⁰ "K NAdpisi IOSPE, II, 400," *VDI* (1954) 168–76.

³¹ In the archives *IIMK AN SSSR* in Leningrad.

³² For example, *IOSPE* II.431 = *CIRB* 1246.

³³ Illustrated in Bultanova 171.

³⁴ Some scholars have used the inscription to argue that Polemo II was given *partial* control in the Bosphorus. H. Dessau, *Geschichte der Römischen Kaiserzeit* II (Berlin 1926) 149, says that Polemo II found limited recognition in the area and may never have visited it. Latyshev, *ad loc.*, suggests that Mithridates controlled the European Bosphorus and Polemo II the Asian side.

³⁵ Dio mistakenly calls Polemo II the son of Polemo I, although he was in fact his grandson. Polemo II was the son of Cotys, King of Thrace, and Antonia Tryphaena, daughter of Polemo I (*IGR* IV.145 = *SIG*³ 798; Smallwood, *Documents* 401).

³⁶ His coins bear the legend *ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΟΛΕΜΩΝΟΣ ΕΥΣΕΒΟΥΣ* (see B. V. Head, *Historia Numorum* [Oxford 1911²] 502).

On his death in 8 B.C., Pontus was ruled by his widow Pythodoris with the title of *Βασίλισσα*.³⁷ The length of her reign is unknown, but she did survive Augustus, since some of her coins bear the head of Tiberius. We do not know how much time elapsed between the end of Pythodoris' rule in Pontus and the beginning of Polemo II's, but striking confirmation of Dio's date of A.D. 38 for Polemo's accession is provided by the numismatic evidence. Coins bearing Polemo's name have regnal years from *ἔτους ιβ'* to *ἔτους κε'*. Those bearing *ἔτους ιζ'* depict both Claudius and Nero and must therefore belong to A.D. 54/55, fixing the accession in A.D. 38/39.³⁸

But while the *ἀρχή* would have included Pontus, what else, if anything, it might have been intended to include in A.D. 38 is not made clear. As well as being king of Pontus, Polemo I at various times ruled in Lycaonia,³⁹ Cilicia⁴⁰ and Armenia Minor⁴¹ and he ended his days attempting to assert his authority in the Bosphorus; the only area in which he had enjoyed an extended and unchallenged rule was Pontus, and this alone may well have constituted the *πατρώα ἀρχή*. During the Julio-Claudian period the bestowal and removal of client-kingdoms, in the East at any rate, was, for all intents and purposes, at the pleasure of the emperor. Polemo II, in his early years of power, may well have had dreams of uniting once again the two kingdoms of Pontus and Bosphorus, and to have pressed this claim with his friend Gaius,⁴² and with Gaius' successor Claudius. If this is the case, with Claudius' accession Polemo's hopes were finally destroyed. Dio's account of the beginning of Claudius' reign may be taken to mean that the emperor gave his consent and authority to Mithridates' position in the Bosphorus, but since Polemo II was a good friend of Rome (and was to remain one for many years) Claudius felt that he was not to be slighted; accordingly, by way of compensation, he was granted additional territory in Cilicia. Thus the Cilician grant may have been made to

³⁷ IG II.2 3433 = OGIS 376; IGR IV.144, 1407 = OGIS 377.

³⁸ See W. H. Waddington-E. Babelon-Th. Reinach, *Recueil général des Monnaies Grecques d'Asie Mineure* I.2 24-25.

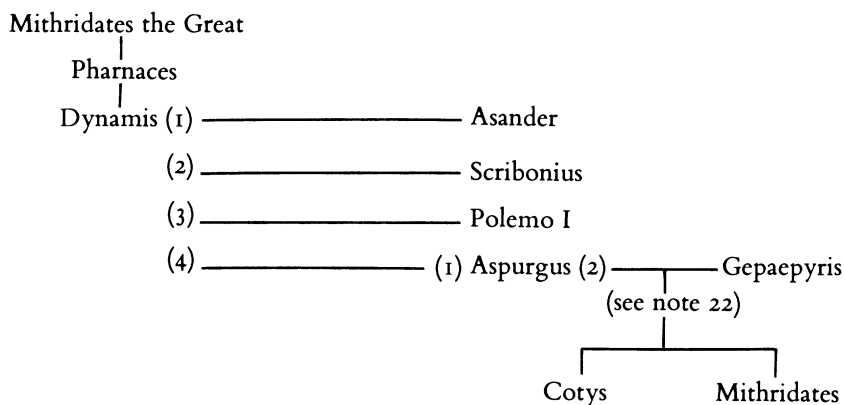
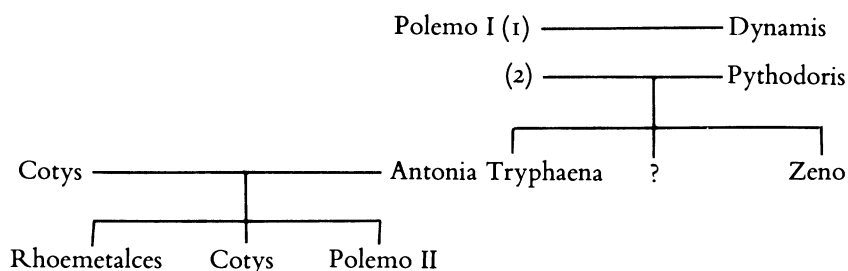
³⁹ Strabo 12.6.1.

⁴⁰ Appian, *BC* 5.75.

⁴¹ Dio 49.33.2; Strabo 12.3.29.

⁴² Polemo, together with his brothers Cotys and Rhoemetalcès, was brought up in Rome with Gaius (see the inscription cited in note 35).

compensate not for the loss of an *actual kingdom* in the Bosphorus, but for the loss of *expectations* in the area, which is a perfectly natural way to read the Greek. Interpreted in this way, Dio's account can be reconciled with the compelling evidence presented earlier. This suggests, then, that both Gaius and Claudius continued the traditional and realistic policy of recognizing loyal rulers in the Bosphorus. It was only when this loyalty was thrown into doubt that Claudius decided to intervene. It should however be noted that after the intervention Claudius did not try to impose an outsider on the Bosporans, but handed back the kingdom to a member of the Bosporans' own ruling family.



(the genealogy of the Bosporan rulers is very tentative)