

**Around and across the Pontos Euxeinos:
Recent Research in Ancient Black Sea Studies**

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Panel Description

From the Neolithic to the present day, the Black Sea was a true potter's wheel of tribes, nations and kingdoms, and was quite fittingly dubbed *Pontos Euxeinos* ('Hospitable Sea') by the Greeks. It was part of the ancient economy long before Greek colonization on its shores started. The Crimean peninsula in particular produced a surplus of grain, and Iranian tribes traded slaves and gold, while olive oil, wine and luxury goods were imported from the Mediterranean. The Northern coast was settled by Iranians from the steppes since the 2nd millennium, long before they were joined by Greek colonists, mostly from Western Asia Minor under Milesian leadership. These were the founders of Istria (Histria, north of Navodari) and Borysthenes (Berezan) on the north-western littoral, of Taganrog in the North, and Sinope in the South as early as the 7th century; further Milesian foundations followed in the 6th century: in the North-West, Apollonia (Sozopol), Odessos (Varna), Tomis (Constanta), Tyras (Belgorod-Dnestrovskij) on the mouth of the homonymous river (now Dniester) and Olbia (besides Parutino) shortly before the Hypanis (now Bug) merges first into the Dnjeprliman and then into the Black Sea; Dioskurias in the East; in the North, on either side of the Kimmerian Bosporos (Strait of Kerch), Pantikapaion, which would become the main royal residence of the Bosporan Kingdom, and Gorgippia. To these, Tanaïs was added on the mouth of the homonymous river (now Don) in the 3rd century, becoming part of the kingdom in the 2nd century.

Phanagoria opposite Pantikapaion was a foundation by Teos (6th century). The city of Megara also sent out colonists from central Greece: to name but their most famous colonies, they founded Mesambria (Nesebar) on the Western coast and Herakleia Pontika in Asia Minor (6th century). The latter, in turn, settled Kallatis (Mangalia) in the West and Chersonesos (Sevastopol) on the Crimea (4th and 5th centuries BCE respectively); Chersonesos would become one of the economic centers of the Bosporan Kingdom. Interconnections between the Greek cities of the Black Sea and beyond was high, but in fact the exchange of goods and movement of people would reach their pinnacle only later under Roman domination.

Thracians did not only control much of the eastern coast, but also infiltrated the north-

western parts of Asia Minor. Three centuries of Persian rule (6th-4th century) did not fail to leave their imprint on the Anatolian peninsula either, the most lasting being the long-lived House of the Mithradatids: this family began to rule over Pontos in North-Eastern Asia Minor soon after 300, before incorporating the Kimmerian Bosphoros into their kingdom in 111. The Romans showed some interest in the region in the 2nd century before establishing firmer control in the 1st century BCE, to last – with some disruptions caused by the Goths and Huns (3rd to 5th centuries CE) – well into the Byzantine period.

The whole area thus happened to be an integral part of the Classical world for over a millennium. And yet the Classics Community in Northern America has paid comparatively little attention to it. Severe political divisions made the archaeological sites barely accessible for most of the 20th century, and recent political conflicts do all but improve the situation. In addition, most publications of inscriptions, coins, artifacts and synthetic scholarship are in languages not read by Westerners, especially in Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Georgian, and Turkish. At the same time, many scholars in the East have been eager to establish international research collaborations, and a growing number of researchers who grew up on the Black Sea Littoral are now established at Western European and Northern American institutions of higher education.

The present panel reflects a most recent Canadian initiative to bring together scholars from all over the Northern Hemisphere to share their expertise and work towards an accessible, up-to-date and comprehensive account of Black Sea History. Five papers (of 15 min length each) have been chosen to convey some impressions of the geographical extensions, chronological scope, cultural diversity and panoply of skills required for critical research.

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Paper 1

***Prosodion* Written in Bone: An Inscribed Bone Plaque from the Berezan Island**

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The small bone plaque from the Berezan Island (550-525 or late 6th-early-5th centuries BCE), identified as the shin bone of a bull or a horse with the approximate length of 4.8 cm and thickness of 0.3 cm, was first published in 1986 by A. S. Rusjaeva. Since then it became one of the most difficult and challenging epigraphic riddles we have inherited from the Northern Black Sea region. The intricate graffiti on both sides of the trapezoidal bone fragment have been interpreted either as sacred, magical, or as a writing exercise, which leaves us with a number of unanswered questions. The most controversial, the most confusing, and given the least attention by scholars is the record on the bone plaque's reverse side:

EBANBOYAIA A A A
A A A A A A A A A

ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΣ ΒΟΡΕΩ

In the current study the author applies and introduces a different approach to analyse and interpret the inscriptions, arguing that the text consists of three parts connected in meaning, one of which represents an authentic record of ancient Greek vocal notation with *ephymnion*. To support the hypothesis, the author presents analogous musical documents with the same structure, including rare Greek vase depictions that present possible musical notation from the early-5th century. Such evidence will undoubtedly shed more light on a number of controversial issues related to the origin, the evolution, and the use of Greek notation systems, as well as to the composing, recording and performing of music during the Archaic age.

Arranged in a coherent order, the structure of the text inscribed on both sides of the Berezan bone plaque consists of three parts and includes 18 lines in total. The two lines of letters quoted above are identified as vocal musical notation. The full text includes the following compositional elements:

1-2 Vocal musical notation.

3-8 Allusions to mythical narratives of Apollo:

3 *Invocation (epiklesis)*

4-8 Praise (eulogia):

4 *Allusions to the story of god's birth*

5-8 Allusions to narratives of Apollo's great and beneficial deeds:

5 *Apollo (Archegetes Oikistes Patroos)*

6-7 *Apollo Toxophoros and Ietros*

8 *Apollo Delphinios*

9-18 Short sections:

9-11 *Blessing/prayer (litaneia)*

12 ?

13-15 Dedication.

16-17 Refrain-singing (ephymnion).

18 Sacred topography (location of the altar).

These compositional elements, as well as the early dating justify to identify the document as *prosodion*. The original composition reveals the ‘scenario’ of one of the famous ancient festive religious processions associated with the cult of Apollo Delphinios, parallels of which can be found among dozens of ancient authors such as Athenaios, Apollonios of Rhodes and Clement of Alexandria. Berezan was founded by settlers from Miletos not far from the future famous colony Olbia in the course of the 7th century BCE. Just like in the metropolis, the cult of Apollo was widespread along with the traditional cult music, which played a major role in all religious festivals. As part of the mandatory ritual performances, processional songs were studied by boys and girls from an early age. We may assume that the *prosodion* of Berezan was one of the traditional songs at the cult center of Didyma and was intended for performance in the official cult of Apollo in both Miletos and its colony Berezan-Olbia. It is highly likely that the processional song was sung by the citizens during the main festival of Apollo (the *Conqueror over the North wind*) in the month Taureon.

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Paper 2

Peripheral Aftermath of the Treaty of Apameia in the Black Sea

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The second century BCE began with a major geopolitical shift in the Mediterranean and Hellenistic world, one that has been studied extensively, though with a concentration on one of its aspects: the interconnectivity between the Roman and the Hellenic political spheres. This paper seeks to discuss the aftermath of the settlement of Apameia (188) as regards the Black Sea area. The Roman victory over Antiochos III triggered several new opportunities but also challenges for the powers in Anatolia and adjacent territories. Freed from Seleukid control, many kings and

dynasts actively reshaped the geopolitical order over the following decades. Their rivalries involved the control of the Black Sea, the southern shores of which belonged to the Pontic and Bithynian kingdoms, while the control of the Marmara Sea was disputed by the Attalids, Rhodians and Bithynians. These rulers entertained diplomatic relations with some cities of the Black Sea, such as Sinope, Herakleia or Tieuion on the southern shore, but also Chersonesos Taurike and Mesembria on the northern and western shores. At the same time, the Bosporan Kingdom as well as several Thracian and Scythian dynasties had their own diplomatic networks and political agendas, although positive evidence for this is lacking. All of these authorities had to respond to the retreat of the Seleukid armies.

The war which opposed the Attalid king and his Bithynian and Cappadocian allies to the Pontic king and his Galatian and Armenian allies (ca. 182-179) was of prime importance in this period. This conflict ended with the victory of the Attalid king Eumenes II, assuring a relative supremacy over Anatolia, and saw the participation of a Sarmatian dynast, as well as the conquest of Sinope and the conclusion of an alliance with Chersonesos Taurike for Pharnakes, the king of Pontos (Polybios 25.2). Among the contextual factors may have been major nomadic movements in the region, but this theory has been challenged and the archaeological evidence needs further examination. The barbarian peoples called 'Sarmatians' or 'Scythians' in civic decrees which mention attacks against the polis territories may well have been subjects of neighbouring states rather than nomadic tribes acting independently. The conclusion of the Pontic War made it clear that Roman hegemony was still a distant political factor, in spite of secondary diplomatic accomplishments by the representatives of the Senate during the peace negotiations.

All in all, the kings of Pontos, Bithynia and Pergamon pursued different strategies as regards the control of the area. As it stands, Eumenes' efforts targeted Thrace and inland-Anatolia, while his influence on the Black Sea relied on diplomatic relations with cities opposed to Bithynia, particularly Herakleia. The Bithynian king expressed a relative disinterest for the northern Pontos Euxeinos, despite the reconquest of Attalid Tieuion, which he received as a reward for his alliance in the war. Pharnakes had to withdraw from central Anatolia after his defeat, but he could keep Sinope. This led to a new maritime orientation for his kingdom, in which he was not challenged by his rivals. The most important long-term outcome of this new direction was the later conquest of the Black Sea basin by Mithradates VI Eupator of Pontos.

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Paper 3

The Bosporan Kings: Friends or Enemies of the Romans?

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Roman influence in the Northern Black Sea is attested as early as 179 BCE when the city of Chersonesos and King Pharnakes I of Pontos embarked on an alliance only on condition that this would not affect their friendship with the Romans. However, the latter did not develop a sustained interest in the region before Mithradates VI of Pontos also became ruler of the (Kimmerian) Bosporos in 111/10. The annexed territory included the Eastern part of the Crimea and the Western part of the Taman peninsula. Over the next two decades, Mithradates conquered nearly the entire Black Sea coast. In 89/88, he fought and lost the First Mithradatic War with the Romans, accepting the *status quo ante bellum* after paying huge indemnities. Not much different was the outcome of the Second Mithradatic War by 80. The third war resulted in the loss of most of his possessions by 65. And yet Mithradates managed to escape to his Bosporan territory – only to be deposed by his son Pharnakes II. The latter was acknowledged by Pompey as a ‘friend and ally’ of the Romans, but his rule was restricted to the Bosporos, excluding Pontos.

From then on, the dynasty remained confined to its northern realm. Pharnakes’ attempt to regain Pontos when civil war broke out in Rome in 49 led to his defeat in 47. This notwithstanding, he withdrew from Asia having been re-instated as an official ‘friend of the Romans’, even though this did not help him much against the usurper Asandros, who soon took life and throne from him. However, by marrying into the family of Pharnakes, the usurper continued the dynastic line. Once more being tied up with a sequence of civil wars, the Romans preferred to re-establish ‘friendly relations’ with the most important force in the Black Sea, not only to enjoy the economic benefits, but also to avoid a power vacuum in the Bosporos.

After Augustus had established himself monarch of the Roman Empire (31/27), relations to the royal house of the Bosporos grew even closer. Highly indicative of the humble submission to the Roman imperial family is the renaming of Pantikapaion and Phanagoreia as Kaisareia (after Caesar Augustus) and Agrippeia (after his son-in-law and deputy). Roman citizenship among the kings seems to go back to the Emperor Tiberius (14-37 CE), as is reflected in the first two names *Tiberius Claudius* that several kings bore henceforth. Tiberius Claudius Rhaskuporis I, the son of the usurper Kotys I and probably of Mithradatic descent himself, was appointed king by Vespasian (69-79 CE). His offspring lived on as ‘friends of the Roman people’ and as high priests of the cult for the Roman Emperor, until the Bosporos fell under the control of the Huns in the later-4th century CE.

The 19th-century paradigm that history is driven by rivalry between tribes and nations led to the assumption that major events around the Bosporos were determined by a lasting conflict between native Iranians and invading Greeks or oppressing Romans; this conflictual approach was cemented in the 20th century when Rome was regarded as a precursor of the imperialist West, at least in the eyes of Eastern European colleagues. Such ideological perspectives are still prevalent a quarter-century after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Heinz Heinen (1941-2013) was the first to systematically question those simplistic antagonisms. He repeatedly demonstrated that Bosporan rulers publicly displayed their affiliations with the imperial power to enhance their prestige among

the locals, rather than to arouse their resentment. It is in this light that the history of the Bosporan Kingdom deserves to be revisited.

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Paper 4

New Observations on the Dura-Periplus Map

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This paper will offer the results of most recent research conducted in the Manuscript Department of the National Library of France, aiming at the comprehensive re-examination of the original of one of the most puzzling artifacts that have ever been unearthed in Dura Europos at the Middle Euphrates: the *Dura Periplus-Map*. This is dated to before the destruction of the settlement by the Persians in the winter of 256-257 CE. Based on a detailed inspection of specific features of the parchment fragment and accompanied by a photo documentation of all map entries, this paper announces extensive additional and revised material. It will display newly discovered and first-time documented lines, corrected readings and orthographies, which now are making up one third of the legible fragment. Addressed will be an introductory analysis of spatial perception, geographical common-sense misconceptions, cartographic techniques, and interaction between several media such as ancient geographical works, Greek *peripli*, Roman *itineraria* and the military need to be good at making and reading maps in the 3rd-century Roman Empire.

The study pays particular attention to the most problematic, three-line section which is situated at the bottom of the Dura fragment, to the right of the outermost vignette for a settlement that has not yet been successfully identified (there are speculations about partly preserved and, as it will turn out, mostly wrongly identified letters). There are many factors adding to the longstanding difficulties regarding the reconstruction of the lettering. This may allow us to develop a deeper understanding of the nature, form, content, and utilization of that one-of-a-kind artifact. First of all, this is the most poorly preserved section. Secondly, this section provided the mapmaker

with the very limited space for five entries and four vignettes following *Chersonesos*. In the third place, and this affects the interpretation of the genuine content, the last two entries, ΤΡΑΠ(Ε) and ΑΡΤΑ, which have so far been suggested in the two most commonly used reconstructions, are not only incomplete, but they also invite ambiguity. Last but not least, all attempts to discern single letters and restore genuine entries in the aforementioned problematic section, following ΤΡΑΠ(Ε) and ΑΡΤΑ, remain mere hypotheses: these have heavily drawn on Cumon's verbal descriptions of hardly perceivable and partly preserved letters before the cleaning and conservation of the parchment, and in most cases also on the beautiful watercolor drawing by Léon Marotte (Paris, 1925).

The consultation of the original resulted, however, in the introduction of three completely new entries concerning Theudasia, Akrai/Akra and the Bosphoros. This was above and beyond all expectations. The most spectacular discovery was the fragmentary ΒΓΩΠΙ standing for Βώσπ[ορος] in the place of the hypothetical μσν, μετ, μητ, and Κιμμ. Most importantly, the entry of the Βώσπ[ορος] has the potential to considerably change our notion of ancient cartography and use of *peripli* or *itineraria*. More than ever, the military need to be good at making and reading maps in the 3rd-century Roman Empire necessitates the systematic and analytical comparison with specific literary sources, including geographical treatises, Greek *peripli*, and Roman *itineraria*. This may allow us to discern parallels in cartographic techniques, onomastic material, orthography, space perception, geographical common-sense conceptions and misconceptions, cultural historical context and chronology.

As a focus of attention, this study will document striking correspondences between Pseudo-Arrian's *Periplus of the Euxine Sea* and the *Dura Periplus-Map* as regards form, orthography, and content. Not least, this procedure will permit us to advance questions on the date of the core text of the so-called *Pseudo-Arrian* and on the text-map interaction in its cultural context.

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Paper 5

Assessing Regional Wealth in Late Roman Pontos
Dr. Hugh Elton, Trent University (hughelton@trentu.ca)

We often talk about the booming economy of the Roman Eastern Mediterranean in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, but what do we mean by this? And how do we compare the late Roman economy to the Roman Empire in second century CE, a period which was also very prosperous?

This paper uses a recent archaeological field survey in Turkey, the Avkat Archaeological Project in Pontos (2007-2010) as a case study to examine the problem of assessing regional wealth in the Roman Empire.

Avkat is located between Çorum and Amasya in Northern Turkey. It was a Roman village that was promoted to city status in the early sixth century CE by the emperor Anastasius (491-518). In addition to successfully identifying the site as the Roman city of Euchaita, the project examined the material culture of Avkat and its hinterland to see how it changed over the Roman period (Haldon et al. 2015). We were particularly interested in whether the prosperity of the fifth and sixth centuries was visible in the archaeology and whether there was any sign of the change in status from village to city visible on the ground.

The field survey produced evidence of a number of different archaeological markers for wealth (including pottery imports, building styles, and subsistence strategies) that changed over time. Pottery imports were always on a small scale, but show continuous contact with other parts of the Roman world including the west coast of Anatolia. The late Roman period was the best represented in terms of the number of ceramic finds. There was also an increase in the number of inscriptions in the late Roman Empire and of dateable buildings, especially churches, some ornamented with an unusual palmette capital very different from the Corinthian capitals used on the south and west coasts. There is thus substantially more archaeological evidence for the fifth and sixth centuries than for the second century at Avkat.

Whether more archaeological evidence correlates to more prosperity is a much more complicated problem than collecting the field data. Numerous field surveys in the eastern Mediterranean have found that the late Roman period is over-represented numerically in the ceramic finds (Pettegrew 2007; Quercia et al. 2011). Similarly, the process of Christianization introduced churches, a new and distinctive architectural form, into most villages in the Empire by the end of the fifth century (Elton 2006, 2013). Establishing a simple economic model of Roman villages and cities from first principles allows us to test the assertion that a particular period was economically successful. This model can take into account not only material remains but also archaeologically hard-to-see elements such as Roman tax structures and subsistence strategies. A model, no matter how rudimentary, will enable us to discuss changes in the wealth of Avkat between the second and fifth centuries using a common framework based on economics rather than on visible archaeological material.

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