



Panticapaeum/Bosporus

Summary :

Panticapaion is said to be the oldest Greek colony in the Straits of Kerch. It was founded by Milesians in the 6th century BC. Ancient written sources report the city's history up to Roman times. There is also plenty of archaeological evidence related to the political, social, economical, religious and cultural activities of the city, while it is reported that Panticapeans founded their own colony, Tanais. Despite the destructions Panticapaion suffered in the course of its history, it remained the most important city of the Bosporan kingdom.

Geographical Location

Northern Black Sea coast, Straits of Kerch-Crimean peninsula

Historical Region

Cimmerius Bosporus

Administrative Dependence

Bosporan Kingdom

1. Geographical location

Pantikapaion is situated in the interior part of the gulf of the Strait of Kerch on its Crimean side. There was a safe harbour that facilitated sea trade. The strait was also an important region for fish migration. West of the city there were almost uninhabited but fertile steppes. The harbour of Pantikapaion lays in the central part of the modern [Kerch](#). Geological investigations showed that earlier in time the mouth of the river Melek-Chesme and a bay existed in this area. Already in antiquity the river moved further to the north, and the territory of the harbour was built up. Near the harbour, there was an agora. The residential area and most of the workshops stretched out on the slopes of the rocky mount that rises 91 meters above sea level and is known today as the Mithridates mount. The acropolis was located there, where the palace once stood. In Antiquity the city occupied the territory of ca. 100 ha. Nowadays, most part of the ancient city lies beneath the modern one.

2. Etymology of the geographical term

Modern linguists see in the name of the city an Iranian (Scythian) expression "the path of fish" – a name for the Strait of Kerch, where in some seasons the fish went through in a great quantity. There was also a river with the same name (Pantikapos, modern Melek-Chesme), near the mouth of which Pantikapaion was founded.¹ Probably the name of the city was borrowed from the name of the river.²

3. Date of foundation

According to archaeological and literary data, the Greek colony was founded by Milesians in the first half (more precisely in the second quarter) of the 6th century BC. It is the oldest Greek colony on the shores of the Strait of Kerch.

4. History

[Strabo](#) gave a short, but very informative description of Pantikapaion and its history up to Roman times (7.4.4): "Pantikapaion is the metropolis of the Bosporians and is situated at the mouth of Lake Maeotis [Sea of Azov]... Pantikapaion is a hill inhabited on all sides in a circuit of twenty stadia. To the east it has a harbour, and docks for about thirty ships; and it also has an acropolis. It is a colony of the Milesians. For a long time it was ruled as a monarchy by the dynasty of Leucon, Satyros, and Pairisades, as were also all the neighbouring settlements near the south of Lake Maeotis on both sides, until Pairisades gave over the sovereignty to Mithridates. They were called tyrants, although most of them, beginning with Pairisades and Leucon, proved to be equitable rulers. And Pairisades was actually held in honour as god. The last of these monarchs also bore the name Pairisades, but he was unable to



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hold out against the barbarians, who kept exacting greater tribute than before, and he therefore gave over the sovereignty to [Mithridates Eupator](#). But since the time of Mithridates the kingdom has been subject to the Romans. The greater part of it is situated in Europe, although a part of it is situated in Asia".

Thus, the literary tradition attributes to Pantikapaion a [Milesian](#) foundation,³ but the circumstances of the foundation vary. Athenaeus, quoting Ephorus, tells that the Milesian colonists took the land from the local [Scythians](#).⁴ Stephanus of Byzantium gives another version – that a son of the legendary Colchian king Aietes got this land as a gift from the Scythian king Agaetos.⁵ Neither version can be verified by archaeological evidence, as there is a time lag of several decades between the latest finding of non-Greek artifacts and the earliest finds of Greek provenance.

Between 580 and 560 BC several [apoikiai](#) were founded on the shores of the Strait of Kerch that later developed into poleis. The most important city in the European Bosporus was [Theodosia](#), founded also by Milesians. They also founded [Kepoi](#) – a city on the opposite side of the strait (Asiatic Bosporus). A joint colony of Mitylenians and Milesians was [Hermonassa](#) situated not far from Kepoi. Some towns were founded wholly or partly by Pantikapaion itself. Around the middle of the 6th century, migrants from [Teos](#) founded [Phanagoria](#) that became the capital of the Asiatic part of the future Bosporan kingdom.⁶ Very important at this stage of Greek colonization was the settling and development of the huge rural territory that became the basis for the development of crafts and trade in the cities. By the end of the 6th century BC the number of the small rural settlements reached 60. By that time the whole territory of the Bosporan kingdom was to a greater or lesser extent mastered by the Greeks.

As for barbarian-Greek relations at the Bosporus in the 6th – beginning of the 5th century BC, there is an opinion that the Greek cities of the western and northern shores of the Black Sea suffered a strong military and political pressure from the Scythians. It is possible that the integration of the Bosporan colonies into a military and religious league was a reaction at this pressure. The union was headed by the [dynasty of the Archaeanaktids](#).⁷ The archaeological reconstruction of the defensive system of the so-called Tyritake wall shows that in the first decades of the 5th century the league included Pantikapaion, [Myrmekion](#), and [Tyritake](#).⁸ This league served as the basis for the strengthening of a long lasting tyrannical power in Pantikapaion and Bosporus. By this time Pantikapaion became a typical Greek polis with its own [coinage](#). The first known dynasty that ruled there was that of the Archaeanaktids.

In his first account about the history of Bosporus, the historian of the 1st century BC Diodoros of Sicily wrote “in Asia the dynasty of the [Cimmerian Bosporus](#), whose kings were known as the Archaeanaktids, ruled for forty two years; and the successor to the kingship was Spartacus, who reigned seven years”.⁹ Who were these Archaeanaktids, what were the circumstances of the power takeover, system of ruling and political actions – all these questions have in the modern historiography different answers based on hypotheses and analogies with later times. Most historians are of the opinion that the Archaeanaktids were a noble Pantikapaean family with Pantikapaion being their original residence.

Having power over Pantikapaion, the descendants of Archaeanaktos subdued at first the northwestern corner of the Kerch peninsula, then, in 480, some of the settlements in the Asiatic shores of the Bosporus.

In the second quarter – middle of the 5th century a temple to [Apollo](#) was erected on the top of the Pantikapaean acropolis. Apollo was the main god in the metropolis of Pantikapaion, [Miletus](#), which was destroyed by the Persians just before this time. The building of the temple of Apollo in Pantikapaion had obviously a political significance. The union of the Bosporan cities could have been an amphiktyonia - a religious and political league. It could be not an accident that just at this time Pantikapaion started to issue coins with the legend ΑΠΙΟΑ. The issue of coinage and the erection of the temple took place in the first years of the Archaeanaktids' rule, and this is why a connection of the two events is possible and reference can be made to the creation of a Bosporan amphiktyony with a capital in Pantikapaion.

Probably the first members of this league were the apoikiai of Pantikapaion itself and small settlements of other metropoleis. The most important cities of the region remained independent, but the new territorial union showed that it was stronger than a single polis. This was the first sign of future integration.



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At the end of the 6th – first half of the 5th century, the Pantikapaeans founded several new colonies on the shores of the Sea of Azov and of the Strait of Kerch (Akra, Kytæ etc.). For the protection of the new territory, an old pre-Scythian wall was strengthened, that stretched from the Sea of Azov to the Churubash Lake which was a bay in Antiquity. [Fortifications](#) were erected at that time in Pantikapaion, [Myrmekion](#) and [Porthmeia](#). Historians suppose that the defense of these towns was carried out by mercenaries of the Archaeanaktids, who were offering the dynasty an enlarged territorial control, greater power and the ability to convey royal power from father to son.

In spite of the successes of the Archaeanaktids in the political and economic spheres, in 438 B.C. they were removed from power. A new ruler, Spartocus or Spartacus, was probably a [Thracian](#) (according to his name). He could have been one of the mercenaries or a governor (or both) of the Archaeanaktids. This "coup d'etat" was most probably the result of his personal ambitions. To that testifies the form of his short-lived rule – tyranny. Only Spartocus II, who came into power in ca. 429/428 BC, could become firmly established as a ruler, reigned for a long time and secured the succession of power to his direct descendants during almost 300 years. Spartocus and his descendants brought some serious changes in the administrative system of Bosporus. There are reasons to believe that Spartocus II introduced some new state institutions – a common Bosporan citizenship and a common Bosporan assembly. This means that all the inhabitants of the Bosporan kingdom had equal economic rights but also responsibilities to the [tyrant](#). However, local citizenship was also valid. The introduction of the common Bosporan citizenship supported both the strengthening of the unity of the Bosporan state and the power of the tyrant.

The succession of the [Spartocids](#) and the following Bosporan rulers, as reflected in the chronological table, has been established by scholars from epigraphic (inscriptions found both in Bosporus and elsewhere,¹⁰ numismatic (every king minted his own coins) and literary evidence.¹¹

Although we have plenty of information for the lives of some famous rulers, for others only their names survive. Written sources describe in detail only the reigns of Satyros I, Leucon I, Spartocus III, Pairisades I. The historical work of Diodorus provides a general outline for the chronology of their rule,¹² Strabo gives a brief summary of their reign.¹³ The first Spartocids carried out an active foreign policy. Economic contacts between Greeks and the local population increased, and this strengthened the friendly political contacts. The rich Scythians, Sindians and Maeotians became able to settle down in the Bosporan cities and adopted the Greek culture, language, and customs. The richest burial [tumuli](#) of the Scythian nobles are concentrated at the outskirts of Pantikapaion dating from the 5th century BC. This attests to an alliance between the Scythians and Bosporanthe allied character of the Scythian-Bosporan contacts already under Spartocus II. The same is valid for Sindians too, who were active allies of the Bosporan ruler in wars against other Maeotian tribes.

The first Bosporan ruler, whose activity is well known, was Satyros I (407/406 - 390/ 389 BC). Under his rule, the kingdom became stronger and its boundaries were expanded. As previous monarchs, Satyros personally managed the administration, army and foreign policy. His nearest assistants were relatives and officers known as "friends". From Satyros' time onwards, the Bosporan kings started to appoint the administrators of all the cities and settlements.

Satyros also strengthened the contacts with Athens – the leading economic centre of Greece. Demosthenes tells that Satyros even given Athenian citizenship for his outstanding service to Athens. This service consisted of the rendering of the duty-free rights to Athenian merchants in the harbour of Pantikapaion. The profit of such contacts was so obvious that some Athenians sent their children to Satyros in order to improve their finances, which were shaken because of the defeats of the Athenians during the Peloponessian war (431-404 BC). From his part, Satyros also sent to Athens his trade delegates and created a real diplomatic representation in Athens .

From the end of the 5th century BC the Spartocids pursued a policy of territorial expansion. The first victim of it became the Greek city of [Nymphaion](#) situated south of Pantikapaion which was perhaps a member of the [Athenian League](#). Nymphaion was incorporated into the Bosporan kingdom as a result of military action during Satyros' I reign between 410 and 405 BC. Theodosia, a Greek city in the southeast of Crimea, which was strategically important because of its all-year ice-free harbour, became the next victim of Spartocids' expansion. Ancient authors mention that the struggle for Theodosia was long and hard. Theodosia was



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supported by [Heraclea Pontica](#) and was surrounded by firm walls.¹⁴ The founder of the dynasty Satyros I perished during Theodosia's siege.¹⁵ Probably only his son Leucon I managed to incorporate Theodosia into the Bosporan kingdom, because in his official title, which is known from inscriptions, the pointing of submission of Theodosia appears for the first time ("archon of Bosporus and Theodosia"). In order to secure the country against the warlike inhabitants of the Crimean steppe, Bosporan rulers built in the beginning of the 4th century BC a system of protective banks, which stretched from north to south and west of seaside cities (such as, for example, the Uzunglar bank).

During the reigns of Satyros I and Leucon I the territory of the Bosporan kingdom also expanded eastwards. Some historians consider it possible that even large Greek cities of the Asiatic Bosporus (such as Phanagoria and the Sindian harbour) were incorporated into the Bosporan kingdom by force. The next task was the subjugation of the local Sindian and Maeotian tribes of the Taman peninsula and of the eastern shore of the Azov Sea. After long diplomatic and military efforts Sindika was incorporated into the Bosporan kingdom. However, Sindika was strongly Hellenized since the 5th century because of close contacts with Bosporus. Later other Maeotian tribes were subjugated and annexed to the kingdom that was reflected in the title of the Bosporan kings. Thus, Leucon I was the first one who began to call himself, besides the ordinary "archon of Bosporus and Theodosia", also "the king of Sindians, Toretai, Dandarioi and Psestoi".¹⁶ His son Pairisades I added to this title also the names of Thates and Doschi or named himself simply "the king of Sindians and all Maeotians".¹⁷ Polyaeus tells about one episode of the struggle of Bosporan king Satyros I together with the Sindian king Hekataios against Maeotians.¹⁸ It is interesting to note that Satyros' I son Gorgippos, when he was sent to Sindika to arrange some affairs of that place, gave his name to Sindika's capital Sindian Harbour, which since that time began to be called [Gorgippia](#). In a Bosporan inscription it is said that Pairisades I was "the ruler of the whole land, which lays between the last ends of Taurians and the borders of the Caucasian land".¹⁹ Demosthenes mentions a war of Pairisades I against Scythians,²⁰ and Strabo tells that Pairisades was deified after his death.²¹ Pairisades, whose cult remained in Bosporus also in the first centuries AD, was buried in Tsarskij (Royal) tumulus not far from Pantikapaion, which even today impresses with its monumentality and significance.

Thus, approximately in the third quarter of the 4th century BC the territory of the Bosporan kingdom was formed in its main outline. It occupied an area of ca. 5,000 km² and was the largest Greek state of that time after the Sicilian kingdom of Dionysios. It included about 30 cities and large settlements with different status and a vast agricultural area. The Bosporan kingdom retained this size practically until the end of Antiquity.

A political, social and economic stability, which was based on the interests of both ethnic groups (the inhabitants of the Greek cities and the population of the barbarian periphery), was a presupposition of an economic prosperity in the Bosporan kingdom and of its commercial expansion to the Greek world. By reading Greek orators such as Lysias, Isokrates and Demosthenes and Athenian and Bosporan epigraphic sources we can see that huge amounts of [grain](#) were dispatched to Athens in the 4th century BC. From the end of the 5th century onwards, Bosporan rulers had friendly relations with Athens. For example, the Spartocids, who controlled all grain trade, sent to Athens about 400,000 medimnoi (= 16380 t) of grain in 356 BC.²² By reading one honorary decree from the Athenian acropolis, we can learn that in 284 BC the Bosporan king Spartocus III presented 15,000 medimnoi (ca 590 t) of grain to the Athenians. For this service two bronze statues of him were placed on the Athenian agora and the acropolis "near the statues of its forefathers".²³ The Athenian state honored Leucon (like his father Satyros) with Athenian citizenship and gave him some other privileges.

In the beginning of the 3rd century BC Pantikapaeans founded in the mouth of Don (Tanais) a new town, that was named [Tanais](#). According to Strabo, "it was founded by the Greeks who held the Bosporus: it was a common emporium, partly of the Asiatic and the European nomads, and partly of those who navigated the lake from the Bosporus, the former bringing slaves, hides, and such things as nomads possess, and the latter giving in exchange clothing, wine, and the other things that belong to civilized life".²⁴

After the death of Pairisades I the Bosporan kingdom was enveloped in disturbance because of a fight between his sons Satyros II, Eumelos and Prytanis. Diodorus provides details about all the events of this fratricidal war.²⁵ Eumelos, who won this fight, ruled for about five years and was the last strong and glorious king of Bosporus. One of his most outstanding achievements was his fight against



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pirates. Eumelos had freed the Black Sea from the tribes of [Taurians](#), Heniochoi and Achaeans.²⁶ He also supported other Pontic cities. When [Lysimachus](#) besieged the city of [Kallatis](#) in 313 BC, Eumelos received one thousand of Kallatians and gave them land on the territory of the Bosporan kingdom.²⁷ No one from the following rulers achieved such a great fame, as far as we can establish from our sources.

During the 3rd and 2nd centuries some signs of an economic and political crisis in Pantikapaion and in the Bosporan kingdom appeared. Two main factors seemed to cause this crisis. On the one hand, Athens lost interest to the grain trade with Bosporus and other commodities became important – cattle, fish and slaves; in the middle of the 3rd century even the minting of the Bosporan gold and silver coins ceased. On the other hand, the military activity of the barbarian tribes in the Northern shore of the Black Sea intensified notably. At this time the [Sarmatians](#) strengthened their hegemony in the steppes and the Scythians were pushed to the steppes of the Crimea, where they established their new kingdom in the 3rd century BC. At the same time the Asiatic Scythians disturbed more often the Sindian and Maeotian periphery of the Bosporan kingdom. All this led to the collapse of the dynasty of the Spartocids and to the loss of sovereignty of the Bosporus at the end of the 2nd century BC.

These dramatic events happened during the reign of the Pontic king Mithridates VI Eupator. At the end of the 2nd century BC, when the Crimean Scythians increased their pressure on the city of [Chersonesos](#), Mithridates sent to Crimea his troops [under the command of Diophantos](#) who in 110 crushed the Crimean Scythians and in the next year interfered in the internal affairs of the neighbouring Bosporus. A certain Saumakos became head of the rebellion of the Scythians there and killed the Bosporan king [Pairisades V](#). Diophantos stifled a rebellion and joined the Bosporan kingdom to the empire of Mithridates. According to the honorary decree of Diophantos²⁸ from Chersonesos and information by Strabo²⁹ Pairisades V had already given his kingdom to Mithridates before his death. That was probably the cause of the Scythian rebellion against Pairisades. During the following years, Neoptolemos, a general of Mithridates, crushed the allies of Saumakos and the local barbarians in two battles, one on the frozen Strait of Kerch where the barbarian cavalry was shattered and a naval battle in the summer. This strengthened Mithridates' power in Pantikapaion.³⁰

For some years Pantikapaion, as well as the other Greek cities of the Black Sea incorporated into the Pontic power of Mithridates, experienced an economic rise. However, in 63 BC, a terrible disaster fell on Pantikapaion – a strong earthquake destroyed the city. In the same year, Mithridates committed suicide on the acropolis of Pantikapaion as a result of his unfortunate struggle against the Romans and of the betrayal of his close milieu. Appian describes in detail the last days of Mithridates in Pantikapaion.

Pharnaces, after betraying his father, became king of the Bosporus in 63 BC, but he dreamt of the returning Mithridates' heritage and in 48 BC invaded [Colchis](#), [Armenia](#) and Asia Minor.³¹ In 47 BC, Caesar gained a victory against Pharnaces in the battle of Zela (from here [Caesar](#) sent a letter to Rome with the famous words: *Veni, vidi, vici*).³² Pharnaces who promised to be a friend and ally of Rome, was excused and returned to Bosporus, but found here a betray: his governor Asandros usurped a power in Pantikapaion. During the struggle against Asandros Pharnaces died. Asandros married the daughter of Pharnaces, Dynamis, in order to legitimize his rule. In 44 BC Asandros accepted the title of "Great King" and thereby a new dynasty began which ruled Bosporus for more than 400 years. Asandros himself was king for almost 30 years. At this time some stabilization of the economic and political life in Pantikapaion and the other cities of the Bosporan kingdom can be noticed. Its boundaries were extended, a great defensive wall was built in the Crimea that was 65 km long and had numerous towers,³³ and gold and copper coins were minted; on some of them emblems of the rostra and of the goddess Nike were depicted that symbolized the sea victories of Asandros.

In 17 BC a certain impostor, named Scribonius, appeared who pretended to be a grandson of Mithridates. At the same time Asandros, who was 93 years old, died and Scribonius married his widow, Dynamis. Very soon afterwards, however, Pantakapaeans killed him. In 14 BC Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa sent to Bosporus the Pontic king [Polemon](#), who also married Dynamis and received the Bosporan crown. His rule was also not long. Dynamis broke up with Polemon and left Pantikapaion with Aspurgos, her son from Asandros. Until 8 BC, Polemon struggled against the intractable Pantikapaeans, destroyed the city of Tanais and [several fortresses](#) in the Asiatic part of Bosporus, but then he was killed by his enemies. Finally, Aspurgos became king of Bosporus. We know that in 15/16 he visited Rome, where he received from emperor [Tiberius](#) a confirmation of his power. Since this time Aspurgos adds to his official title "The Great King" the names "philokaisar" and "philoromaioi" (friend or Caesar and friend of Rome respectively).³⁴



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Probably during the reign of Polemon I (14-9/8 BC) or queen Dynamis (9/8 BC – AD 7/8), Pantikapaion was renamed in honor of [Augustus](#) to Caesareia, and Phanagoria in honor of Agrippa to Agrippeia, as epigraphical and numismatic sources indicate.³⁵ The dependence of the Bosporan kings from Rome was sometimes weak, as during the reign of Aspurgos' son Mithridates III, or strong as during the reign of his brother Kotys. The latter, dethroned Mithridates in 45/46 with the help of Roman troops under the command of Didius Gallus and Gaius Iulius Aquila.³⁶ Kotys and the following kings up to the 3rd century AD received the Roman citizenship and the name "Tiberius Iulius";³⁷ in Pantikapaion and other cities of the Bosporus temples or sanctuaries dedicated to the Roman emperors were built; their portraits appeared on the golden coins of the Bosporan kingdom. The Bosporan army allotted to the Romans took part in battles at Syria, Pannonia, Dacia, Asia Minor and other parts of the Roman empire; in Bosporan inscriptions there is evidence of even more Roman names.

Traces of the polis' autonomy entirely disappeared; the state displayed all the features of a typical eastern monarchy. It is interesting to note that four Bosporan kings had the name "Sauromates", which testifies to the close links of the Greeks to the aristocratic elite of the [Sarmatian tribe](#). Some names of other Bosporan kings were also of local barbarian origin.

In spite of all the disasters, Pantikapaion did not lose its importance as a political and economic capital of the Bosporan kingdom in the first centuries AD. At that time some monumental buildings were erected; pavements were routinely renovated, stone terraces renewed. Buildings typical of the Roman way of life, like [thermae](#) appeared. However, a determinative element of the appearance of the city were the artisans' quarters with workshops, cisterns for salting fish, wine-making complexes. In the 1st century AD the production of glass artefacts also began. Foreign trade was carried out mainly with Black Sea cities – Sinope, Amisos, [Amastris](#) and Heracleia.

After the invasion of the [Goths](#) (250-270) which forced the Bosporanians to provide them with a fleet for their sea campaigns against the Roman empire, Pantikapaion fell into decay. Farming became the most prevalent occupation of the inhabitants of the city. The last known Bosporan king was Rheskuperis VI whose reign started in AD 323. He minted his own coin and built a new defensive wall around Pantikapaion.

At the end of the 4th century AD the [Huns](#) invaded the Bosporan territory, and Pantikapaion turned out to be on the verge of catastrophe. The acropolis was deserted, some buildings were burned down, some were left by the inhabitants and eventually became ruins. Life moved towards the small harbour region of the city, where a medieval town arose under the name Bosporus.

5. Economy

The time of the Archaeanaktids was a period of economic flourishing at Pantikapaion and the other cities of the Bosporan kingdom. New towns were founded and the number of rural settlements increased. In the city itself the former quarters and streets were replanned, workshops and sanctuaries appeared. Pantikapaion was encircled by walls.

Agriculture was dominant in the economic life of the city. The images of wheat ear on the coins of Pantikapaion (as of Phanagoria and of the Sindian Harbour) testify to the great role of the agriculture in the life of the Bosporan Greeks. They produced mostly [wheat](#), [barley and millet](#). We learn from Demosthenes³⁸ that the Spartocids, who concentrated in their hands the whole trade, delivered only in 356 BC to Athens ca. 400,000 *medimnoi* (= 16380 t) of grain. The Athenian state gave to Leucon as well as to his father Satyros, Athenian citizenship and various privileges. In a honorary edict from the Athenian acropolis we read that in 284 BC the Bosporan king Spartocus III gifted to the Athenians 15,000 *medimnoi* of grain (ca 590 t) and in his honour two bronze statues were erected "near the statues of his ancestry" in the Athenian agora and on the acropolis.³⁹ The Bosporus exported also other goods – [fish](#), wool, coat, leather, cattle and slaves, and imported wine, olive, articles of handicraft and luxury goods.⁴⁰ Many rulers gave to foreign merchants the right of duty-free import of their wares. During the reign of the Bosporan king Leucon I, inscriptions mentioning these rights testify to the commercial and other contacts of the Bosporus with Athens, [Chios](#), Arcadia, [Mitylene](#), Sinope, Heracleia Pontica, Chersonesus, [Paphlagonia](#), Syracusae and other Greek cities.



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Various crafts, especially [pottery](#) for the needs of agriculture, developed in Pantikapaion and the other cities of the Bosporan kingdom. Production of tile became also a profitable business; as the tile stamps show, even the members of the royal family took part in its production. [Metalworking](#), connected with the army, also developed, as it is evident from the discovery in Pantikapaion of a workshop making weapons. It is noteworthy that the arrowheads from this workshop are similar to Scythian ones. Many other types of weapons, found in the cities and necropoleis of the Bosporus, show similarity to the local, especially Scythian, arms.

The jeweler's production was of great importance in Pantikapaion. The local Greek artisans, supplying the needs not only of the Greeks, but also of the representatives of the barbarian nobility, achieved a great perfection in their art producing luxury goods from gold, silver and electrum.

A very important activity of the inhabitants of the Bosporus was fishing. Some series of Bosporan coins have images of the sturgeon. Excavations have also yielded many fish bones, tools for fishing and cisterns for salting the fish. Fish (mostly of sturgeon) first to Greece, and later to Rome, where Bosporan fish was highly valued, formed one of the most important parts of the area's exports. In addition, Kerch herring, sazan, zander and khamsa were caught in a great quantity.

From the 4th century BC onwards, vine cultivation and wine-making developed and wine soon became a staple commodity. Apple-trees, pears, pomegranates, plum-trees, cherry-plums and other horticultural crops were also cultivated here.

The Pantikapaeans being inhabitants of the capital and residence of the Bosporan kings had some economic privileges – at first the exemption of customs duty, later of land-tax. They minted coins on behalf of their community. The first golden coins in Pantikapaion appeared under Leucon I and became the means for paying in the interior of the Bosporan kingdom.

We also know that the Bosporan kings had their own [navy and trade fleet](#). For that Leucon and his sons constructed in the eastern part of the Pantikapaion harbour docks where 30 ships could be repaired or constructed simultaneously;⁴¹ moreover, a Bosporan ruler had in his disposal an army of 4,000 mercenaries.

6. Social Organization

During the early phases of the Greek colonies, the form of government was aristocratic republic, which was typical also for Greece at this time. In the largest cities of the Bosporus, like Pantikapaion, Hermonassa and Phanagoria, a more strict form of government was also present – tyranny. Obviously, the confrontation with the Scythians led the Greek colonies to form a league (*amphikytionia*) which later evolved into tyranny.

As for the character of the power of the Achaeantids, Spartocids and the following kings, the most ancient writers called them "tyrants" and sometimes "kings" or "dynasties".

Bosporan inscriptions attest that a king often ruled with his brother or son, that is why we can speak about the collaborative character of the Bosporan government. The king's relatives and officials, called "friends", were represented by the close milieu of the tyrant. The Bosporus formed its own political system which was unusual for the rest of the Greek world, when the sovereignty of a single polis was strongly restricted in favor of a dynastic government.

At the same time Greek cities retained some forms and attributes of the polis autonomy and enjoyed some political rights. Diodorus, who described the intensive war between the sons of Pairisades I, Satyros II, Eumelos and Prytanis, says that after the victory of Eumelos, "because the citizens bridled at the murder [by the king] of his relatives, Eumelos convoked the people to the meeting, explained away and reconstructed the former mode of ruling. Besides he assents to the preservation of exemption from custom tribute that inhabitants of the Bosporus enjoyed under his ancestry, promised to exempt them from all tributes and spoke about many other things in order to win over the people".⁴² From this account we can conclude that in Pantikapaion in spite of the king's power a boule also existed.



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Slavery which was evident at Pantikapaion as in the rest of the ancient world, seems to have lost its economic attraction during the first centuries AD because it was no longer very profitable. This is why more and more owners used to manumit their slaves with the preservation of economical dependence of libertines from their former owner or the religious community.

7. Religion

The main god and patron of Pantikapaion was Apollo Iatros and the central temple on the acropolis was devoted to him. The cult of Apollo stood under the patronage of the ruling dynasty of the Spartocids. Because of the great role of agriculture in the local economy, the cults of [Demeter](#) and [Dionysos](#) were also very popular. In Pantikapaion there were temples dedicated to [Artemis](#), [Aphrodite](#), [Asclepius](#), Demeter, [Ares](#), [Heracles](#) and other gods of the Greek pantheon. In the Roman period, temples which were dedicated to Roman emperors appeared. There is evidence for the erection of a temple dedicated to the Bosphoran king Aspurgos who was probably deified like Roman emperors. At that time the oriental cults of [Cybele](#), [Mithras](#), [Attis](#), [Men](#), Serapis and [Isis](#) also appeared in Bosporus.

The Panticapaeans established religious unions (*synodos* or *thiasos*) in order to adore a certain deity. As inscriptions testify, a great Judaic community existed in Pantikapaion there existed. One of its members put up stelae with a dedication to the "Highest god" (*theos hypsistos*).⁴³ Later on, a Christian community appeared; its bishops took part in the oecumenical councils beginning from the first one, the so called [Nicaean](#) (325 AD).

8. Culture

The cultural life of the inhabitants of the Bosporus was very intensive. In the city there were numerous pottery and jewelry workshops supplying the needs of the citizens and of the neighbouring barbarians. The artistic standards were very high. On a stone sarcophagus of the 1st century AD found in Kerch, and now kept at the State Hermitage Museum (Saint-Petersburg), the studio of a painter is depicted; he is sitting with his brush before an easel. On the walls pictures of men are hanging, showing that the artist was a portraitist.

On the wall of a crypt near Pantikapaion, archaeologists found a highly artistic fresco with the image of Demeter and a scene of the rapture of [Kore Persephone](#) by Pluto. The remains of the architectural details often made from marble, and of the wall frescos testify to the high skill and taste of the builders.

In Pantikapaion a workshop was excavated where bronze statues were casted. The statues were also made from marble and stone. Art historians ascribe some fragments of statues from Pantikapaion to the schools of Pheidias and Skopas. A sculptural portrait of Mithridates VI Eupator is of great artistic value, made in the best traditions of the [Pergamon school](#). Moreover, funeral stelae with relief representations of the dead were widespread. From the 5th century BC onwards, the production of terracotta figurines was also established here.

Some stories told in Antiquity about the famous Greek citharist Stratonicus mention that during his tours he visited Pantikapaion where he was friendly received by the Bosphoran king Pairisades I.⁴⁴ Earlier, another celebrated Greek citharist, Aristoncus, had come to Pantikapaion.

Archaeologists established the existence of a gymnasium and of a theatre, and recovered many artifacts connected to the theatre (masks, entrance tickets, stalls, terracotta figurines of the actors, images of musicians in funeral crypts, fragments of musical instruments etc.). Among the Panticapaeans there were poets, who created verses found on funeral and honorary stelae⁴⁵ and took part in poetic competitions. The locals also had an interest in philosophy – Sphaerus of Bosporus became a well-known Greek philosopher, student of the famous Zenon and political councillor of the Spartan king Kleomenes.⁴⁶ Also known is a poetic epitaph in honour of the local philosopher Hekataios.⁴⁷ The Greek historian Diodorus, describing the civil war after the death of Pairisades I, evidently used the work of an unknown Bosphoran author.



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Finally, during Roman times gladiatorial games were held in Pantikapaion.

9. Urban planning and architecture

Archaeological investigations at Pantikapaion started in the beginning of the 19th century, but systematic excavations have been carried out only since 1945; first under the direction of Prof. V.D.Blavatskij, from 1959 under Dr. I.D.Marchenko, and in the present by Dr. V.P.Tolstikov of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

Archaeological study showed that the acropolis was located on the top of the mount, where temples and public buildings stood. Here, according to information coming from both ancient authors and excavations, the Bosporan king Leucon I had his residence. The whole city was encircled by mighty stone walls. Stones for the public buildings were mined in a quarry situated not far from Pantikapaion (modern Adzhimushkai). In the surroundings of the city lay a necropolis that differed from other Greek necropoleis. Besides the common, at that time, ground burials, the necropolis of Pantikapaion yielded a long series of tumuli, stretching from the city to the steppes along the road. The most representative chain of tumuli is situated at the southern side of the city. It is called Juz-Oba, that is "hundred tumuli". Under the mounds, the nobility and chiefs of the Scythians and the Maeotians were buried. Well known are such tumuli as Kul-Oba, Zolotoj (Golden) Tumulus, Tsarskij (Royal) Tumulus, some of which produced luxury grave goods. They are remarkable monuments of Greek funeral architecture.

1. Stephan. Byz. s.v. Pantikapaion.
2. It is an opinion of Stephanus of Byzantium (Ibid.)
3. Strabo 7. 4. 4; Plin. *NH.* 4.18; Amm.Marc. 22. 8.
4. Athen., 12. 26.
5. Stephan. Byz. s.v. Pantikavpaion. About this and other versions see Braund, D., "The myths of Panticapaeum: construction of colonial origins in the Black Sea region", in G.R.Tsttskhladze – A..M.Snodgrass (eds.) *Greek Settlements in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea* (BAR International Series 1062) (Oxford 2002), p. 73-80.
6. Strabo 11. 2. 10.
7. Vinogradov, Ju.G., "Die historische Entwicklung der Poleis des nördlichen Schwarzmeergebiets im 5. Jh. v. Chr.", *Chiron* 10 (1980), p.64 ff.; Shelov-Kovedjajev, F.V., "Istorija Bospora v VI-IV vv. do n.e.", *Drevnejshije gosudarstva na territorii SSSR. Materialy i issledovanija. 1984 god* (Moscow 1985), p. 65-78.
8. Tolstikov, V.P., "K probleme obrazovanija Bosporskogo gosudarstva (Opyt rekonstruktsii voenno-politicheskoi situatsii na Bospore v kontse VI – pervoj polovine V v. do n.e.)", *Vestnik drevnej istorii* 3 (1984) p. 38-48.
9. Diod. Sic. 12. 31. 1.
10. They are published in: *Inscriptiones orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini Graecae et Latinae* I, II, IV (I² — 1916), B.Latyshev (ed.) (Petropoli 1885–1901), further – *IPE*; *Corpus inscriptionum Regni Bosporani* (Moscow-Leningrad 1965), further *CIRB*.
11. Diod. Sic. 12. 31. 1; 36. 1; 14. 93. 1; 15. 52. 10; 16. 31. 6; 20. 22 et al.
12. Diod. Sic. 12. 31. 1; 36. 1; 14. 93. 1; 15. 52. 10; 16. 31. 6; 20. 22 et al.



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13. Strabo 7. 4. 4.
14. Polyæn. 5. 23; 6. 9. 3-4.
15. Demosth. 20. 33.
16. See *CIRB* 6, 1037, 1038.
17. *CIRB* 9-11, 971, 972, 1015, 1039, 1040.
18. *CIRB* 9-11, 971, 972, 1015, 1039, 1040.
19. *CIRB* 113.
20. Demosth., *Contra Leptinum* 34. 8.
21. Demosth., *Contra Leptinum*, 34. 8.
22. Demosth. *Contra Leptinum* 31-32.
23. *IG* II² 653.
24. Strabo 11. 2. 3.
25. Diod. 20. 22-24.
26. *Ibid.* 20. 25.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *IPE* I² 352.
29. Strabo 7. 4. 4.
30. Strabo 7. 3. 18.
31. About the fate of Pharnaces see Dio Cass. 42. 45-48.
32. Sueton. *Caesar* 37. 2.
33. Strabo 7. 4. 6.
34. *CIRB* 39, 40, 985.
35. See *CIRB* 979, 982, 983 about the "people of Agrippeans" (*ho dêmos ho Agrippêon*). Cf. also 1051. On the coins see Anohin, V.A., *Monetnoje delo Bospora* (Kiev 1986) p. 151. This problem is discussed in details in: Podossinov, A.V., "Über die Namen der bosporanischen Städte *Pantikapaion* (*Panticapaeum*) und *Phanagoria* in den ersten nachchristlichen Jahrhunderten", in A.Avram - M.Babeş (ed.) *Civilisation grecque et cultures antiques périphériques. Hommage à Petre Alexandrescu à son 70^e anniversaire* (Bucarest 2000) p. 150–158.
36. Tacit. *Annal.* 12. 15-21.



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37. *CIRB* 33, 34 et al.
38. Demosth. *Contra Leptinum* 31-32.
39. *IG* II² 653.
40. Cf. Polyb. 4. 38. 4-5.
41. See Strabo 7. 4. 4.
42. Diod. Sic. 20. 24.
43. *CIRB* 70-73, 1231 et al.
44. Athen. *Deipnosoph.* 349 d.
45. *CIRB* 113-151.
46. Cf. Diogen. Laert. 7. 6; Plutarch. *Kleomen.* 2; 11.
47. *CIRB* 121.

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Glossary :

	thermae Building complexes dated in the Roman Period housing the public baths. Within the building there were three rooms, the frigitarium, the tepidarium and the caldarium and several other facilities rooms. The Roman bath-houses were also used as meting places and they often included a palaestra and a gymnasium.
	tyrant, the The initial meaning of the term was the leading archon of a noble origin. Later on he was the usurper of rightful power and the one who was ruling in an absolute way, aiming ostensibly to the welfare of his people.



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Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.15-21

Plutarch, *Kleomenes*, 2.11

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Polybius, *The Histories*, 4.38.4-5.

Quotations

Appian. *Mithridat.* 107-111 about the death of the king of Pontus Mithridates VI Eupator in Pantikapaion (= Panticapaeum)

[107] King (Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus) had completed his circuit of the Euxine and occupied Panticapaeum, a European market town at the outlet of that sea...

[108] When he had recovered from his illness and his army was collected (it consisted of sixty picked cohorts of 6,000 men each and a great multitude of other troops, besides ships and strongholds that had been captured by his generals while he was sick) he sent a part of it across the strait to Phanagoria, another trading place at the mouth of the sea, in order to possess himself of the passage on either side while Pompey was still in Syria. Castor of Phanagoria, who had once been maltreated by Trypho, the king's eunuch, fell upon the latter as he was entering the town, killed him, and summoned the citizens to revolt. Although the citadel was already held by Artaphernes and other sons of Mithridates, the inhabitants piled wood around it and set it on fire, in consequence of which Artaphernes, Darius, Xerxes, and Oxathres, sons, and Eupatra, a daughter, of Mithridates, in fear of the fire, surrendered themselves and were led into captivity. Of these Artaphernes alone was about forty years of age; the others were handsome children. Cleopatra, another daughter, resisted. Her father, in admiration of her courageous spirit, sent a number of row-boats and rescued her. All the neighbouring castles that had been lately occupied by Mithridates now revolted from him in emulation of the Phanagoreans, namely, Chersonesus, Theodosia, Nymphaeum, and others around the Euxine which were well situated for purposes of war. Mithridates, observing these frequent defections, and having suspicions of the army itself, lest it should fail him because the service was compulsory and the taxes very heavy, and because soldiers always lack confidence in unlucky commanders, sent some of his daughters in charge of eunuchs to be married to the Scythian princes, asking them at the same time to send him reinforcements as quickly as possible. Five hundred soldiers accompanied them from his own army. Soon after they left the presence of Mithridates they



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killed the eunuchs who were leading them (for they always hated these persons, who were all-powerful with Mithridates) and conducted the young women to Pompey.

[109] Although bereft of so many children and castles and of his whole kingdom, and in no way fit for war, and although he could not expect any aid from the Scythians, still no inferior position, none corresponding to his present misfortunes, even then found a place in his mind. He proposed to turn his course to the Gauls, whose friendship he had cultivated a long time for this purpose, and with them to invade Italy, hoping that many of the Italians themselves would join him on account of their hatred of the Romans... Filled with these ideas he was for hastening to the Gauls, but his soldiers, though the very bold enterprise might be attractive, were deterred chiefly by its magnitude, and by the long distance of the expedition in foreign territory, against men whom they could not overcome even in their own country. They thought also that Mithridates, in utter despair, wanted to end his life in a valiant and kingly way rather than in idleness. So they tolerated him and remained silent, for there was nothing mean or contemptible about him even in his misfortunes.

[110] While affairs were in this plight Pharnaces, the son whom he was most fond of and whom he had often designated as his successor, either alarmed about the expedition and the kingdom (for he still had hopes of pardon from the Romans, but reckoned that he should lose everything completely if his father should invade Italy), or spurred by other motives, formed a conspiracy against his father.

His fellow conspirators were captured and put to the torture, but Menophanes persuaded the king that it would not be seemly, just as he was starting on his expedition, to put to death the son who had been until then the dearest to him. People were liable to such turns, he said, in time of war, and when they came to an end things quieted down again. In this way Mithridates was persuaded to pardon his son, but the latter, still fearing his father's anger, and knowing that the army shrank from the expedition, went by night to the leading Roman deserters who were encamped very near the king, and by representing to them in its true light, and as they well knew it, the danger of their advancing against Italy, and by making them many promises if they would refuse to go, induced them to desert from his father.

After Pharnaces had persuaded them, he sent emissaries the same night to other camps near by and won them over. Early in the morning the first deserters raised a shout, and those next to them repeated it, and so on. Even the naval force joined in the cry, not all of them having been advised beforehand perhaps, but eager for a change, despising failure, and always ready to attach themselves to a new hope. Others, who were ignorant of the conspiracy, thought that all had been corrupted, and that if they remained alone they would be scorned by the majority, and so from fear and necessity rather than inclination joined in the shouting. Mithridates, being awakened by the noise, sent messengers out to inquire what the shouters wanted. The latter made no concealment, but said, "We want your son to be king; we want a young man instead of an old one who is ruled by eunuchs, the slayer of so many of his sons, his generals, and his friends."

[111] When [Mithridates] heard this he went out to reason with them. A part of his own guard then ran to join the deserters, but the latter refused to admit them unless they would do some irreparable deed as a proof of their fidelity, pointing at the same time to Mithridates. So they hastened to kill his horse, for he himself had fled, and at the same time saluted Pharnaces as king, as though the rebels were already victorious, and one of them brought a broad papyrus leaf from a temple and crowned him with it in place of a diadem. The king saw these things from a high portico, and he sent messenger after messenger to Pharnaces asking permission to fly in safety. When none of his messengers returned, fearing lest he should be delivered up to the Romans, he praised the bodyguards and friends who had been faithful to him and sent them to the new king, but the army killed some of them under a misapprehension as they were approaching. Mithridates then took out some poison that he always carried next to his sword, and mixed it. There two of his daughters, who were still girls growing up together, named Mithridates and Nyssa, who had been betrothed to the kings of Egypt and of Cyprus, asked him to let them have some of the poison first, and insisted strenuously and prevented him from drinking it until they had taken some and swallowed it. The drug took effect on them at once; but upon Mithridates, although he walked around rapidly to hasten its action, it had no effect, because he had accustomed himself to other drugs by continually trying them as a means of protection against poisoners. These are still called the Mithridatic drugs. Seeing a certain Bituitus there, an officer of the Gauls, he said to him, "I have profited much from your right arm against my enemies. I shall profit from it most of all if you will kill me, and save from the danger of being led in a Roman triumph one who has been an autocrat so many years, and the ruler of so great a kingdom, but who is now unable to die by poison because, like a fool, he has fortified himself against the poison of others. Although I have kept watch and ward against all the poisons that one takes with his food, I have not provided against that domestic poison,



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always the most dangerous to kings, the treachery of army, children, and friends." Bituitus, thus appealed rendered the king the service that he desired.

Auxiliary Catalogues

Chronology of the Bosporan rulers

480-438 BC Archaianaktiden
438/7-433/2 BC Spartokos I
433/2-393/2 BC Satyros I (together with Seleukos I)
393/2-389/8 BC Satyros I (alone)
389/8-349/8 BC Leukon I
349/8-344/3 BC Spartokos II (together with Pairisades I)
344/3-311/0 BC Pairisades I
311/0-310/9 BC Satyros II (together with Prytanis ?)
310/9 BC Prytanis I (s. Diodor 20. 22-24)
310/9-304/3 BC Eumelos
304/3-284/3 BC Spartokos III (partly together with Seleukos II)
284/3-ca. 245 BC Pairisades II (partly together with Satyros II)
ca. 245-240 BC Spartokos IV
ca. 240-220 BC Leukon II
ca. 220-200 BC Hygiainon
ca. 200-180 BC Spartokos V
ca. 180-160 BC Kamasarye (first alone, then together with Pairisades III and IV)
ca. 180-170 BC Pairisades III (together with Kamasarye)
ca. 170-150 BC Pairisades IV Philometor (first together with Kamasarye, then alone?)
ca. 150-140 BC Spartokos VI (?)
ca. 140-109 BC Pairisades V
108-107 (?) BC Saumakos
107-63 BC Mithridates VI Eupator
63-47 BC Pharnakes
47-17 BC Asandros
17/16 BC Dynamis
15 (?) BC Scribonius
14-9/8 BC Polemon
9/8 BC - 7/8 AD Dynamis
7/8-9/10 AD unknown ruler
10/1-37/8 AD Aspurgos (= Rheskuporis I?)
37/8-38/9 AD Gepaipyris (widow of Aspurgos)
39/40-44/5 (?) AD Mithridates VIII
45/6-67/8 AD Kotys I (probably 62-67 with restricted rights)
68-92/3 AD Rheskuporis II
93/4-123/4 AD Sauromates I
123/4-132/3 AD Kotys II
131/2-153/4 AD Rhoimetalkes
153/4-170/1 (173?) AD Tib. Iulios Eupator
173/4-210/1 AD Sauromates II
210/1-226/7 AD Rheskuporis III
227/8-233/4 AD Kotys III
229/30-231/2 AD Sauromates III
233/4 AD Rheskuporis IV
234/5-238 AD Ininthimaios
239/40-275/6 AD Rheskuporis V



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253/4 AD Pharsanzes

266 AD Chedosbios

275/6 AD Sauromates IV

275/6-278/9 AD Tib. Iulios Teiranos

278/9-285/6 (?) AD Chedosbios

286/7-308/9 AD Thothorsos

308/9-322 AD Rhadampsadios

314-319 and 322 AD together with Rheskuporis VI

323-342 AD Rheskuporis VI (probably ruling and later)