



Summary :

Paerisades V (c. 125-109 or 107 BC) was the last king of the Spartocid dynasty, rulers of the kingdom of Bosphorus for three centuries. Paerisades V was killed during the so-called revolt of Saumacus, which broke out upon the transfer of kingship to Mithridates VI Eupator.

Other Names

Parisades

Date and Place of Death

109 or 107 BC

Main Role

King

1. Written Sources – Coins

There is little historical information about Paerisades V, the last [Spartocid](#) king. He is reported by [Strabo](#),¹ while the most important historical source of his time is the resolution of Chersonesus in honour of Diophantus, general of the [Kingdom of Pontus](#).² Nothing is actually known about the political history of the 3rd-2nd c. BC Bosphorus. Information from written sources is scant. Although most king names have been recorded, their exact number and the years each of them reigned remain unknown.³ The same happens for the number of years Paerisades V ruled, which may be estimated on speculation according to coins and the events of [Diophantus' campaign](#) to Taurica.

Four coin series minted between 125 BC and 110-100 BC belong to the period of the last Spartocid king.⁴ Silver and bronze coins reading ΠΑΝΤΙΚΑΠΑΙΤΩΝ were issued together with the gold [stater](#)s bearing the inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΠΑΙΡΙΣΑΔΟΥ, which indicates that both the king and the city maintained the right to mint coins – a right granted by Paerisades V's ancestor, Leukon II (c. 240-220 BC).⁵

2. The Reign – Historical Background

The polity of the state in the years of Paerisades V, at least formally, remained the same as that defined in the 3rd c. BC, when the Spartocids first held the title of king, which replaced the earlier title of “archon and βασιλεύων”. Paerisades V was a Hellenistic-like monarch, who pretended to maintain certain elements of the ancient democratic regime throughout his reign.⁶

In the 2nd c. BC the kingdom of the Cimmerian Bosphorus went through a deep economic and political crisis resulting from political events and the general change in economic relations both in the Pontus and the Mediterranean. In particular, the new correlation of powers in the northern Black Sea, where [Scythians](#) and [Sarmatians](#) shared control over the entire region, played an important role.⁷

It should be mentioned that the governors of the Bosphorus paid a tribute to the Scythians, as reported by Strabo.⁸ In the 2nd c. BC things became more complex in the Asian part of the state, where the formerly pro-Bosphorus Maeotian tribes, which either bordered or had been incorporated into the state, appeared to be openly hostile.⁹

Changes also took place in the 3rd and particularly the 2nd c. BC in the rural district of the Bosphorus, where the number of settlements was reduced due to external danger and the minor role of the Bosphorus in the wheat trade of the Mediterranean.¹⁰ A clear indication of these changes is the construction of fortifications around the rural settlements of the state of Bosphorus, particularly in the Asian part of the kingdom.¹¹



3. Transfer of Kingship to Mithridates VI Eupator

Apart from the general information about his rule, Strabo reports that Paerisades, as he was unable to deal with the gradually increasing demands of the barbarians for a tribute, transferred his power to [Mithridates VI Eupator](#).¹² The geographer also provides an account of the relevant events included in the resolution adopted by Chersonesus in honour of Diophantus. According to the inscription, the following events took place:

The Scythians under King Palacus assaulted an area possessed by [Chersonesus](#), which asked for help from [Pontus](#). In order to defend Chersonesus, in 110 BC, Mithridates sent an army to Taurica under general Diophantus.¹³ The Scythians were defeated and the general moved to the Bosphorus. The first trip of Diophantus to [Panticapaeum](#) aimed to prevent the joint military action of the Scythians and the Cimmerians of Bosphorus in his rear. The fact that the state of Bosphorus paid the Scythians a regular tribute could implicate an alliance between them.¹⁴ It is thought that during his first visit to Bosphorus, Diophantus managed to extract Paerisades V's promise to cede his power to Mithridates VI.¹⁵

One year later,¹⁶ the Scythians began once again hostilities against Chersonesus and Diophantus returned to Taurica. The Scythians were beaten and Diophantus left for Bosphorus, where, according to the resolution, "he settled things for the benefit of Mithridates". It was apparently the transfer of power from Paerisades V to Mithridates VI.

While Diophantus was busy with negotiations in spring 107 BC,¹⁷ certain people in the entourage of the Scythian Saumacus rebelled, murdered King Paerisades and organized a conspiracy against Diophantus. The latter escaped to Chersonesus and it was not until the following year that he managed to defeat Saumacus.¹⁸

4. Results

Saumacus' revolt, which used to be presented as an uprising of the slaves,¹⁹ was possibly an attempt of the Scythians participating in the entourage of the last Spartocid, perhaps under Palacus, to avert the change in the political scene of the state and, generally, in Taurica.²⁰ An interesting question arises as to why Paerisades ceded his power expressly to the king of Pontus. It has been suggested that the king of Bosphorus gave Mithridates his throne because he had no successors.²¹ However, this supposition neither actually explains the choice of Mithridates nor is it grounded. It is much more possible that Mithridates assumed power in the Bosphorus by right of the most powerful of all.²² Much more so, considering Mithridates' ambitions, the presence of Pontic military forces in Taurica as well as the successive victories of his army against the Scythians, who, according to Strabo, was the main reason for the transfer of power.

Besides, the fact that during a crisis, which was gradually weakening the kingdom of Bosphorus in the 2nd c. BC, the society of the Bosphorus looked to the Pontic state, as it was more powerful in financial, political and military terms,²³ like Chersonesus and other cities of the northern Pontus later did, should also be taken into account.

5. Evaluation

Paerisades V was the last king of the independent state of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, which from then on became a play in the hands of other, more powerful forces of Antiquity.

1. Strabo, 7.4.4.

2. *IOSPE P* 352.



3. V. Yaylenko, for example, suggests a completely different total number of Bosphorus kings and radically changes the duration of their reigns. In his chronology, Paerisades V becomes Paerisades VI, while his reign is dated between 140-109 BC; see Яйленко В.П., “Ольвия и Боспор в эллинистическую эпоху”, in Голубцова, Е.С. (edit.), *Эллинизм: экономика, политика, культура* (Москва 1990), p. 307. For problems in chronology and succession of dynasty members in 3rd-2nd c. BC, see Молев, Е.А., *Боспор в период эллинизма* (Нижний Новгород 1994), from p. 7 onwards.
4. Анохин, В.А., *Монетное дело Боспора* (Киев 1986), pp. 65-66, 143-144, no. 178-188a.
5. Анохин, В.А., *Монетное дело Боспора* (Киев 1986), p. 57.
6. According to V. Yaylenko, Paerisades held the title of king until he transferred his power to Mithridates, while for one year he exercised the power of Mithridates' deputy holding the title of archon; see Яйленко, В.П., “Ольвия и Боспор в эллинистическую эпоху”, in Голубцова, Е.С. (edit.), *Эллинизм: экономика, политика, культура* (Москва 1990), p. 307, n. 169.
7. Гайдукевич, В.Ф., *Боспорское царство* (Москва – Ленинград 1949), pp. 298-301.
8. Strabo, 7.4.4.
9. Strabo, 11.2.11.
10. Кругликова, И.Т., *Сельское хозяйство Боспора* (Москва 1975), pp. 96, 98-99.
11. Кругликова, И.Т., *Сельское хозяйство Боспора* (Москва 1975), pp. 98-99, 101.
12. Strabo, 7.4.4.
13. See Гайдукевич, В.Ф., *Боспорское царство* (Москва – Ленинград 1949), p. 301 and Жебелев, С.А., *Северное Причерноморье* (Москва – Ленинград 1953), pp. 93-94. Views are divided over the year of Diophantus' first campaign. According to Молев, Е.А., *Властитель Понта* (Нижний Новгород 1995), p. 37, it was launched in summer-autumn 111 BC.
14. Виноградов, Ю.Г., “Вотивная надпись дочери царя Скилура из Пантикапея и проблемы истории Скифии и Боспора во II в. до н.э.”, *ВДИ* 1 (Москва 1987), p. 73; Молев, Е.А., *Боспор в период эллинизма* (Нижний Новгород 1994), pp. 118-119.
15. Жебелев, С.А., *Северное Причерноморье* (Москва-Ленинград 1953), pp. 96-98; Гайдукевич В.Ф., *Боспорское царство* (Москва – Ленинград 1949), p. 302.
16. According to Молев, Е.А., in autumn 110 BC.
17. According to Гайдукевич В.Ф., or in 109 BC, according to Молев, Е.А. *Властитель Понта* (Нижний Новгород 1995), p. 43.
18. He defeated him possibly in winter 108/107 BC.
19. Жебелев, С.А., *Северное Причерноморье* (Москва – Ленинград 1953), pp. 101-106.
20. RE III:1 (1897) 774, Гайдукевич В.Ф., “О скифском восстании на Боспоре в конце 2 в. до н.э.”, in: *Античное общество: Труды конференции по изучению античности* (Москва 1967) pp. 17-22, Гаврилов А.К., “Скифы Савмака – восстание или вторжение? (IRE I2 352–Syll.3 709)”, in: *Этюды по античной истории и культуры Северного Причерноморья* (Санкт-Петербург 1992) pp. 61-62, Молев Е.А., *Боспор в период эллинизма* (Нижний Новгород 1994), pp. 120-121 and a lot more. For a complete review of the opinions, see Rubinson Z.W., “Saumakos, Ancient History, Modern Politics”, *Historia* 29 (1986), pp. 50-70.
21. Молев, Е.А., “Установление власти Митридата Евпатора на Боспоре”, *АМА* 2 (Саратов 1974), p. 64.



22. As for the way Paerisades V ceded his power to Mithridates, Жебелев's view is interesting, for he believes that the king of Pontus was originally appointed patron of the Bosphorus because he was the most powerful of all, as it happened in the case of Chersonesus of Taurica. It was only after the murder of Paerisades that Mithridates became the master of the Bosphorus; see Жебелев, С.А., *Северное Причерноморье* (Москва – Ленинград 1953), pp. 92-93.

23. Молев Е.А., "О пропонтийской ориентации боспорян в период подчинения Боспора Понту", in *Проблемы античной истории и классической филологии: Тезисы докладов всесоюзной научной конференции* (Харьков 1980), pp. 43-44; Молев Е.А., *Боспор в период эллинизма* (Нижний Новгород 1994), pp. 108-109.

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Glossary :

	stater, the
The term "stater" was used in various areas of the ancient Greek world to define either a standard weight unit or the most important coin in precious metal (gold, silver, electrum) of a numismatic system. The dead weight and accordingly the value of a stater differed from one area to another and it was based on the weight standard effective in the various cities. Therefore, it was necessary each standard to be defined by the authority that issued it (e.g. Aeginetan, Attic, Boeotian, Corinthian).	

Quotations

Paerisades V hands over power to Mithridates VI

«...έμοναρχεῖτο δὲ πολὺν χρόνον ὑπὸ δυναστῶν τῶν περὶ Λεύκωνα καὶ Σάτυρον καὶ Παιρισάδην αὐτὴ τε καὶ αἱ πλησιόχωροι κατοικίαι πᾶσαι αἱ περὶ τὸ στόμα τῆς Μαιώτιδος ἐκατέρωθεν μέχρι Παιρισάδου τοῦ Μιθριδάτη παραδόντος τὴν ἀρχήν...»

Στράβ. 7.4.4