Emperors, Kings and Subjects: The Politics of Two-Level Sovereignty

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No one would deny that the Roman Empire was a complex system, incorporating many different geographical zones, ethnic groups and political formations, or that much of what we might at first want to describe as the "government" of the Empire really involved diplomacy and political relations. But perhaps not enough stress has been laid on one very important aspect of the political structure of the Empire, especially in the earlier period, namely the presence of what one might call a two-level monarchy, in which quite large populations were subject both to local kings and, indirectly, to a distant superior monarch in Rome, the Emperor. This paper is concerned to explore briefly some aspects of the complex diplomatic and symbolic relationships which this structure brought into being. One effect of it was that the public life of the dependent kingdoms was marked by a symbolic language which clearly reflected this dual sovereignty — the power and status of the local king, combined with, and overshadowed by, the unseen presence of the distant Emperor. In many very visible respects, the public status of the one would depend on his symbolic association with the other.

This paper was given as a lecture at the conference of the Fédération Internationale des Études Classiques in Québec in August, 1994, which was the last occasion on which I had the pleasure of seeing Addi Wasserstein, and when I heard his stimulating paper on non-hellenised Jews.[1] It was already sadly evident then that his strength was failing. I offer this article now as a small and inadequate tribute to a true scholar. Few people have more fully lived up to the old-fashioned English description of "a scholar and a gentleman".

We will begin with three well-known passages. Firstly, the last sentence of Strabo's *Geography*: "Moreover, kings and dynasts and *dekarchiai* belong to his (the Emperor's) portion, and always have done". Strabo is of course referring to the division of the Roman provinces between those of the Emperor and those of the *populus Romanus* (δῆμος), which he has just described.[2] I hope that it is no longer necessary to point out that the expression "senatorial provinces" is not merely a *mistake*, but misconstrues the entire constitution of the early Empire.[3] There is, incidentally, a puzzle here. It is clear enough that Strabo is asserting

1 A. Wasserstein, "Non-Hellenised Jews in the Semi-Hellenised East", *SCI* 14, 1995, 111-137.

2 Strabo, *Geography* 17, 3, 25 (840).

3 F. Millar, "'Senatorial' Provinces: An Institutionalised Ghost", *Ancient World* 20, 1989, 93-7.

that *basileis* and *dynastai* belong in the Emperor's sphere. A couple of paragraphs earlier he had said that part of Roman territory "is ruled by kings (βασιλεύεται)". Apart from provincial territory proper, he goes on to say, there are free cities, and "there are also δυνάσται and φύλαρχοι and ἱερεῖς (who are) under them (the Romans)".[4] But what does Strabo mean by δεκαρχίαι? The text must surely be wrong, for the word itself is very rarely attested, and in any case Strabo should have been speaking of a type of *person*, not of an institution described by an abstract noun. What Strabo actually wrote was surely τετράρχαι. He himself had also referred earlier to the fact that, after the deposition and exile of Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, his two brothers (Herodes Antipas and Philip) had succeeded, by much cultivation (θεραπεία) of the Emperors, in retaining the tetrarchies earlier given to them.[5]

Strabo's allusions to dependent kingdoms and other less prestigious forms of local monarchy are enough to remind us that, if we think of the fully provincial territory of the Roman Empire as it was to be a century later, a very large proportion of it, perhaps 10%, had been, in the early first century, under the rule of subordinate, or intermediate, monarchs. We are dealing with quite a significant aspect of the history of governmental institutions in Antiquity.

The second quotation comes from Suetonius', *Life of Augustus*, and still looks at the kings from the point of view of Rome:[6]

> As regards the kingdoms of which he (Augustus) gained control by right of war, he returned them, apart from a few, to the same kings from whom he had taken them, or to external ones ... . Nor did he treat any of them (the kings) other than as members and parts of the Empire.

It is thus assumed by Suetonius, as it had been by Strabo, that from the moment of Actium onwards the disposition of the title of king was in the hands of the Emperor. It is this same assumption which lies behind my third quotation, which comes from the Gospel of Luke:[7]

> A certain nobleman journeyed to a distant country to get himself a kingdom (*basileia*), and return ... . But his fellow-citizens (*politai*) hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying "We do not wish this man to be king over us".

Although no names are used, and no context is given, the reference is unmistakable. It is to Archelaus, the son of Herod, going to Rome after his father's death, and to the embassy from the Jewish people which followed him, to demand (unsuccessfully at this moment) the ending of Herodian rule, and the attachment of Judaea to provincial territory.[8]

This parable reflects an awareness not only of the power of decision on the part of the distant Emperor, but of the relation of the Herodian dynasty to the

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4 *Geography* 17, 3, 24 (859).

5 *Geography* 16, 2, 46 (765).

6 Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 48.

7 Luke 19:12-14.

8 See E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* 1, edd. G. Vermes and F. Millar, 1973, 330-5. For a powerful argument for a revised dating of the last phase of Herod's life (winter 4/3 BCE rather than 5/4 BCE), see A. Kushnir-Stein, "Another Look at Josephus' Evidence for the Date of Herod's Death", *SCI* 14, 1995, 73-86.

people whom it ruled. Or rather, in this case, different peoples. For in fact it was not only a *Jewish* delegation which followed Archelaus — one which Josephus describes as made up of 50 men, sent "with the consent of the nation" (γνώμῃ τοῦ ἔθνους)[9] — but also, as we know from Nicolaus, separate embassies from the Greek cities.[10] These too were seeking exclusion from the Herodian kingdom, just as representatives of Gadara had done, unsuccessfully, before Augustus sixteen years before.[11] Two of these Greek cities, Gaza and Hippos, were now, after Herod's death, successful in separating themselves from the kingdom, and were attached to the province of Syria.[12] The subjects of a dependent king could envisage an alternative political situation, *and* knew how to seek it.

These local details are significant only as illustrations of my theme, which is the complexity, and the interest, of the political relations which were created when a kingdom or tetrarchy or *dynasteia* functioned as an element in a wider Empire. Firstly, to repeat, the Roman Empire itself was a complex organisation, in terms of ideology, constitution and political structure. In a general sense, it is not misleading to describe it simply as a monarchy. But it was a monarchy which, as seen from the centre, was defined in relation to the institutions of the *res publica*: the Senate, certainly, but not only the Senate. In formal terms, the sovereign body of the early Empire was the *populus Romanus*. As the Tabula Siarensis shows, the proper description of the legions which were lost under Varus in 9 CE was *exercitus p(opuli) R(omani)*.[13] Seen from the provinces and the dependent kingdoms, however, the Empire was indeed, to a very large extent, personified by the Emperor himself. If we needed any proof of that, it is provided by the city coinages of the early Empire, which give a very prominent place to the name and image of the Emperor, and of members of his family. In this respect, as in so many others, the appearance of the first volume of *Roman Provincial Coinage*, covering the period 44 BCE to 69 CE, is a landmark in the history of our subject.[14] In actual practice, moreover, so far as kingdoms were concerned, relations to the Emperor in person were very important: for instance in the education of royal children at Rome, of which Suetonius also speaks,[15] or in personal appearances by kings at Rome before the Emperor, or (occasionally)

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9 Josephus, *Ant.* 17, 11, 1 (300).

10 Nic. Dam., *FGrH* 90, F. 131.

11 Josephus, *Ant.* 15, 2, 3 (354-9).

12 See F. Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 1993, 41-43.

13 *AE* 1984, no. 508; J. González Fernández, *Bronces jurídicos romanos de Andalucía*, 1990, no. 11, Fr. 1, ll. 14-15: "vindicata frau[dulenta clade] exercitus p. R.". See F. Millar, "Imperial Ideology in the Tabula Siarensis", in J. González and J. Arce (eds.), *Estudios sobre la Tabula Siarensis*, 1988, 11-18.

14 A. Burnett, A. Amandry and P. Ripollès, *Roman Provincial Coinage* 1. *From the Death of Caesar to the death of Vitellius (44 BC-AD 69)*, 1992.

15 Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 48: *ac plurimorum (regum) liberos et educavit simul cum suis et instituit*. See e.g. D. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of the Client Kingship*, 1984, ch. 1.

even before the Senate,[16] or in formal bestowals of a diadem by the Emperor in person. Much of the future history of the Empire is summed up in the scene at Rhodes in 30 BCE, when Herod appeared before Octavian without his diadem, argued that his previous loyalty to Antonius should be taken as a sign of his future loyalty to the new Emperor, and was duly rewarded with the return of his diadem and confirmation as king of Judaea.[17] Very soon afterwards Herod played a prominent role in escorting Octavian through Palestine to Egypt, and providing supplies for his forces, then in visiting Octavian in Egypt, and finally in escorting him again on the way back, through the Syrian region as far as Antioch.[18] The escorting of the Emperor on journeys by kings evidently became an established diplomatic norm; so much so that Suetonius' description of their doing so "in the manner of clients" has been largely responsible for the invention of the misleading modern term "client kings".[19]

It is worth noting that both in receiving Octavian at Ptolemais and (obviously) in going with him as far as Antioch, Herod was playing a very visible political role outside the bounds of his own territory. I do not, however, want to dwell on the case of Herod, partly because it is too well known. But it is worth stressing how strange it is that the three books of Josephus' *Antiquities* (XV-XVII) which describe Herod's reign have played so little part in informing our more general conceptions of the Augustan empire. It is beyond dispute that they depend directly on the later books of the universal history of Nicolaus of Damascus;[20] so we thus have in effect something very close to a 200-page contemporary history of a major dependent kingdom, whose affairs repeatedly engaged the Emperor's personal attention in the most urgent way. This extensive narrative is thus also, to a significant degree, a history of the early Imperial regime.

The political contacts of a dependent king were, however, not only with the Emperor in Rome, but with the nearer Roman governors. Again, a complex balance of power was involved. On the one hand dependent kings, in the first century CE, on occasion provided quite large forces for Roman military operations: for example, when Vespasian advanced into Judaea in 67 CE, about a third of his forces, some 18,000 men (thus the equivalent of at least three Roman legions), came from the allied kingdoms of Commagene, Emesa, Nabataea and the domains of Agrippa II.[21]

On the other hand, governors might have to intervene to restore appropriate relations with kings on the fringes of the Empire who were actual or potential aggressors: we see this, for example, in the famous inscription of Silvanus

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16 See F. Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 BC to AD 378", *Britannia* 13, 1982, 1-23, on p. 4.

17 Josephus, *BJ* 1, 20, 1-3 (394-5); *Ant.* 15, 6, 5-7 (183-197).

18 References in Schürer, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 289.

19 Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 60: *Reges amici et socii ... saepe regnis relictis non Romae modo sed et provincias peragranti cotidiana officia togati ac sine regio insigni more clientium praestiterunt.*

20 See B.Z. Wacholder, *Nicholaus of Damascus*, 1962, esp. 62-64.

21 See F. Millar, *op. cit.* (n. 12), 72.

Plautius Aelianus from Tibur, which indicates the formal acts of subservience required of kings, and the role of the Danube as the symbolic frontier of the Empire (*ignotos ante aut infensos p(opulo) R(omano) reges signa Romana adoraturos in ripam, quam tuebatur, perduxit*); it also records that Aelianus took hostages from some of them, and describes how he lifted the siege of Chersonesus by the king of the Scythians.[22]

Equally, the governor of the nearest major Roman province might have to intervene to prevent what seemed to be too close contacts between allied kings. The most notable example is of course the occasion in the early 40s CE when Domitius Marsus, the *legatus* of Syria, insisted on the dissolution of a meeting of allied kings called by Agrippa I at Tiberias: those who attended were Antiochus IV, the last king of Commagene, Sampsigeramus of Emesa, Cotys of Armenia Minor, Polemon of Pontus, and Agrippa's brother, Herod of Chalcis.[23]

When the issue was potentially more serious, the political relations concerned became tripartite, that is to say king-governor-Emperor. Again, there is a well-known case from Josephus, when Caesennius Paetus, the *legatus* of Syria, wrote to Vespasian in 72 or 73 to say that he suspected Antiochus IV of Commagene of connections with Parthia. Vespasian wrote back empowering Paetus to act as he thought best, and the invasion and provincialisation of Commagene followed.[24]

For the whole period, roughly up to the end of the first century CE, when allied kingdoms were a major feature of the structure of the Empire, such tripartite relations must have been common. We catch a passing glimpse of such communications in operation, though from the following period, in Pliny's correspondence with Trajan from Bithynia. First a *tabellarius* from King Sauromates of the Bosporus arrived in Bithynia with two letters: one for Pliny, saying that there was an urgent communication for Trajan, to which Pliny responded by giving the *tabellarius* a *diploma* to assist his journey; and secondly the letter for Trajan, of which Pliny learned no more than that it contained news which Trajan needed to know. Finally an ambassador (*legatus*) from Sauromates arrived to find Pliny in Nicaea, and stayed for two days before Pliny sent him on en route to Rome. Again, there is no indication that Pliny learned anything of the issues at stake between king and Emperor.[25]

With this episode, however, we have already passed beyond the period when dependent kingdoms played an important part in the political and military structure of the Empire in the East. For the first and early second centuries had seen a steady tendency, marked by occasional reversals, towards the eradication of dependent kingdoms, and their replacement by direct provincial government. Even if we leave out complex minor cases, a summary list of major transformations from kingdom to province would include the following: Cappadocia (18 CE); Mauretania (42); Judaea (44); Thrace (46); Armenia Minor (64); Commagene (72 or 73); Emesa (70's?); the territories of Agrippa II (90's?); Nabataea

22 *ILS*, no. 982.
23 Josephus, *Ant.* 19, 8, 1 (338-342).
24 Josephus, *BJ* 7, 7, 1-3 (219-243).
25 Pliny, *Epp.* 10, 63-64; 67.

(106). It is thus significant that, of all the major kingdoms which played such a large part in the first century CE, the kingdom of the Bosporus alone survived until the fourth century. Its potential strategic importance, in controlling barbarian movements around the north coast of the Black Sea, was reflected in the fact that by the middle of the second century its kings were receiving a regular annual subsidy from Rome. Thus the narrator in Lucian's *Alexander* records: "There (at Aegiali on the coast of Paphlagonia) I met a party of Bosporans, ambassadors from King Eupator, sailing along the coast on their way to Bithynia to bring back the annual subsidy (*syntaxis*)".[26] It remains unclear in this passing anecdote whether, having reached Bithynia, the ambassadors would have collected the cash there, or merely paid their respects to the governor (like the *legatus* from Sauromates to Trajan), before going on to Rome. For what it is worth, the anecdote tends to imply that Bithynia was their actual destination. In that case, not only was tribute revenue from the nearest province being diverted directly to an important allied kingdom, but responsibility for that process rested with the governor. Diplomatic relations, direct or indirect, with the king were clearly part of his duties. The *legatus* of Cappadocia similarly had to keep a watch on the Bosporan kingdom, as well as the kings of various regions in the Caucasus, and in a more active sense than the governor of Bithynia, in that he controlled major forces. Thus, when Arrian, addressing himself to Hadrian, has finished his description of his journey round the coast of the Pontus as far as Dioscurias, where (he says) the *epikrateia* of the Romans ends, he continues: "But when I learned that Cotys, the king of the Bosporus called 'Cimmerian', had died, I made it my concern to describe for you also the coastal voyage as far as the Cimmerian Bosporus, so that in case you were making plans in relation to the Bosporus you could do so on an informed basis".[27] Both before this point in the work and after it Arrian lists a number of other kings ruling areas around the coast of the Black Sea, and indicates which of them have received their *basileiai* from the Emperor.[28] But the purpose of this paper is not primarily to look at the relations of kings and Emperors, but to sketch some of the other relationships to which the combination of provinces and dependent kingdoms gave rise, including those between kings and neighbouring governors.

Inevitably, since our information on Judaea is so superior to that on any other provincial area, it is there that we can see the complex relations of king and governor most clearly. The best illustration of these relations, however, happens to come not from Josephus, but from some of the later chapters of the *Acts of the Apostles*. Paul, probably in the later 50s CE, is in prison in Caesarea; the new *procurator* of Judaea, Festus, arrives to take up office; after three days he goes up to Jerusalem, and the "High Priests" and leading Jews appear before him, to renew accusations against Paul. Then, back in Caesarea, Festus holds a hearing at which Paul appears before him, and appeals to Caesar. A few days later

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26 Lucian, *Alex.* 57: ἔνθα ἐγὼ παραπλέοντας εὑρὼν Βοσποριανούς τινας, πρέσβεις παρ' Εὐπάτορος τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς τὴν Βιθυνίαν ἀπιόντας ἐπὶ κομιδῇ τῆς ἐπετείου συντάξεως.

27 Arrianus, *Periplus* 17.

28 *Periplus* 11; 18.

"Agrippa the king" (Agrippa II, now ruling various territories to the north-east of Judaea), and his sister Berenice arrive in Caesarea to greet Festus (ἀσπασάμενοι τὸν Φῆστον). It is implied that it was a routine aspect of diplomacy that he should do so for each new *procurator*. Festus persuades them to join in the hearing. The description of the *consilium* which next day heard Paul deserves to be quoted: "On the next day, after Agrippa and Berenice had arrived with great pomp (μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας) and had taken their seats in the auditorium (ἀκροατήριον) with tribunes and leading men of the city (Caesarea) — ἀνδράσι τοῖς κατ' ἐξοχὴν τῆς πόλεως — and Festus had ordered Paul to be brought in ...".[29]

In a sense this scene gives us the mirror-image of the main theme which I want to stress. For what it shows is the presence and influence of an allied king inside the Roman province bordering his own domains. This was indeed a very extreme case. Agrippa II not only owned a house in Jerusalem, but had the right to keep the High Priestly robes, to appoint and dismiss the High Priests, and to convene the Sanhedrin.[30] In the years leading up to the Jewish Revolt of 66 CE Judaea was under a sort of dual local control, both procurator and king being under the adjudication of the Emperor in Rome.

But what I want to emphasise, as an aspect of the history of government in the Ancient World which has been too little studied, is firstly the symbolic presence and real influence of the Emperors and the Empire within the allied kingdoms; and secondly the complexity of the political — and perhaps one could say also constitutional — structures within those kingdoms. All were of course, by definition, monarchies. But any monarchy, no matter how despotic it may be in intention, has to relate to existing social structures. It has to form marriage alliances either inside or outside its own kingdom, or of course both; it has to recruit a household and a court, which may be made up partly of slaves or freed slaves; it has to recruit an army, and thereby give power to its officers and commanders. It has to raise taxes, which must follow some recognised system of obligations, and cannot be wholly arbitrary. It has to have some definable relations with the various social and political units within its borders. And it is likely to develop some system of symbolisation and self-representation.

To say all this is to say no more than that any established monarchy has to be, in some sense, "constitutional", to operate within established norms. I am thus suggesting that the post-Hellenistic, or sub-Hellenistic, monarchy of the Eastern Mediterranean in the early Roman Empire is a proper subject of study in itself, if only because it represented the system within which quite a large part of the Greek-speaking world lived. But, secondly, it is of interest for two particular reasons. One is the implicit or explicit claim on the part of any political unit which defined itself as a Greek city to some degree of diplomatic consideration and respect, to the operation of internal self-government, and to self-representation in a manner which implied a degree of independence. In that sense, the late-Hellenistic monarchy of the Roman period continues the pattern of the major monarchies of the Hellenistic period proper, when kings and cities co-existed in

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29 Acts 25-6.

30 See Schürer, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 1, 421f.

a state of tension marked by elaborately polite diplomatic language. The second reason relates to the fact that these monarchies functioned within the shadow of the Empire. Internal relations, and internal systems of self-representation, will have been profoundly affected by that fact, since they had to find a place not only for the king, but for his ultimate superior, the Emperor.[31]

It would be easy to go on drawing examples from the history of Judaea — for example, Herod's kingdom, and then that inherited by his grandson, Agrippa I, was profoundly re-structured by his foundation of two Greek cities named after the Emperor, Caesarea and Sebaste — not to speak of other Greek cities like "Tiberias" and "Caesarea Panias", as well as minor places whose names also reflected the Imperial dynasty, and whose status is not entirely clear: "Livias", "Iulias" and so forth. In Caesarea and Sebaste the power of Rome was explicitly symbolised from the beginning: the main temple in both cities were dedicated to Augustus, or to Roma and Augustus, as was that at Caesarea Panias.[32]

There is no need to rehearse these well-known details, which we owe to the fact that Judaea, alone of all the provinces of the Empire, was the subject of a history (or rather two histories) written by a native of it. It is of more interest to ask whether we can gain any impression of social, political and symbolic structures in other kingdoms, and to consider how far these reflect the presence of the Empire. Often, our information is only anecdotal: for instance Tacitus reports, from the year 17 CE, that after the deaths of Antiochus of Commagene and Philopator of Cilicia these *nationes* were in turmoil, "most preferring Roman *imperium* and others royal".[33] How political opinion was expressed in these contexts, we do not know. Each of these kingdoms, however, contained a number of Greek cities. But we do gain an impression of how, as in Judaea, direct Roman rule could seem a desirable alternative to royal authority. Similarly, Cappadocia, until now a kingdom, became a province in the next year; and whatever the system of taxation had been under the last king, taxes were deliberately reduced by the Romans at the moment of the imposition of provincial rule, precisely to reconcile public opinion.[34] Another perfect, if equally brief and enigmatic, example of power-relations in the shadow of Rome is provided by a further report from Tacitus, under the year 36. The episode relates to the period of rule on Cilicia by Archelaus II, the son of the recently-deceased king of Cappadocia:[35]

> At about the same time the *natio* of the Cietae, subjected to the rule of the Cappadocian Archelaus, because they were forced to undergo a census of Roman type, and to endure direct taxation, migrated to the heights of the Taurus, and by use of the terrain

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31 For other aspects of this complex relationship see Braund, *op. cit.* (n. 15), and earlier the very suggestive paper by J. Gagé, "L'Empereur romain et les rois: politique et protocole", *Revue Historique* 121, 1959, 221-60.

32 Josephus, *BJ*, 1, 21, 1-8 (403-16).

33 Tacitus, *Ann.* 2, 42.

34 Tacitus, *Ann.* 2, 56.

35 Tacitus, *Ann.* 6, 41. See R.D. Sullivan, "The Dynasty of Cappadocia", *ANRW* II.7.2 (1980), 1125-1168, on p. 1167-8.

> defended themselves against the weak royal troops, until the *legatus*, M. Trebellius, despatched by Vitellius, governor of Syria, with 4000 legionaries and selected auxiliaries, besieged the two mountains ... which the *barbari* had occupied, and forced them to surrender.

Such passing reports, though suggestive, are hardly satisfactory. This last one, however, does indicate clearly that a census of a type imitated from the (quite recently instituted) Roman provincial census could be applied within the bounds of a dependent kingdom. But it remains a mere allusion. There is no dependent kingdom other than Judaea from which we have any coherent literary evidence, and it is perhaps only in the Bosporan kingdom that we have enough internal documentary evidence, from the substantial numbers of Greek inscriptions found there, to gain a more nuanced conception of royal rule. The rest of this paper will be concerned to explore a few relevant aspects of our evidence for this kingdom.

The very remarkable political formation represented by the Bosporan kingdom has perhaps not received the attention from historians of the Classical world which it deserves, and it goes without saying that nothing resembling a history of it will be attempted here. Indeed a true internal social history, of the sort which, up to a certain extent, is possible for Judaea, is not in any case attainable in this case. None the less, through allusions in external literary sources, through a very remarkable corpus of inscriptions, through its coins and through archaeology, it is possible to follow in some detail the outlines of its history from the fifth century BCE to the fourth century CE.[36] Its extraordinary endurance is all the more remarkable in view of its curious geographical structure, for its main cities straddled the straits of the Cimmerian Bosporus, leading into Lake Maeotis (the Sea of Azov), with Panticapaeum and other cities as far west as Theodosia occupying the eastern promontory of the Crimea, and Phanagoria and other minor cities situated on the opposite side of the straits, on the Taman peninsula. As we will see, in the Imperial period the kings also claimed dominion over a large group of peoples living on the east side of Lake Maeotis; and the Greek city of Tanais, at the mouth of the River Tanais (the Don), and situated well over 300 km from Panticapaeum, also formed part of the kingdom. Perhaps surprisingly, the kingdom seems neither to have achieved nor claimed any control of the "Tauroscythians" who occupied most of the Crimea. Even the relatively prominent Greek city of Chersonesus, on the south-west corner of the Crimea, was certainly not an integral part of the kingdom, though from time to time in the Imperial period the evidence shows the city to be in alliance with it. As we saw earlier, the governor of Moesia under Nero, Tiberius Plautius Silvanus Aelianus, had to intervene to lift the siege of Chersonesus, "which is beyond the Borysthenes (the River Dniepr)", by the king of the Scythians.[37] There is nothing in the text of the inscription to suggest that the Bosporan kingdom played any part.

All the more, therefore, the major Greek cities around the north-west corner of the Euxine, namely Olbia at the mouth of the River Hypanis (the Bug), and

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36 For a thorough survey, see V.F. Gajdukevič, *Das bosporanische Reich*, 1971.

37 P. 163 above.

Tyras on the River Tyras (the Dniestr), insofar as they belonged to any wider political-military system, were gradually drawn into the orbit of the *legati* of the province of Moesia. This situation is reflected for instance in the inscription recording that "the city of the Olbiopolitai" had dedicated a bath-house on behalf of Septimius Severus and all his house, in the governorship of Cosconius Gentianus.[38] But although there are occasional reflections of the presence of Roman soldiers in this area, there was nothing resembling a Roman military occupation of the north-west corner of the Black Sea coast, and the Bosporan kingdom, in spite of its established relation of diplomatic dependence on Rome, remained remarkably isolated, both geographically and strategically. For in the opposite direction also, south-eastwards round the east coast of the Black Sea, "the *epikrateia* of the Romans", as we earlier saw Arrian reporting, stopped at Dioscurias or Sebastopolis, some 400 km from Bosporan territory, where there was a Roman fort.[39]

Even if very soon after Arrian's report a Roman fort was established at Pityous, another 75 km north-eastwards up the coast, and although as we saw, Arrian regarded the political circumstances of the Bosporan kingdom as being of great concern to Hadrian, the exposure and isolation of the Bosporan kingdom make its survival and relative stability remarkable.

In terms of our evidence, what is equally remarkable is the extensive corpus of Greek inscriptions from the kingdom, over 1300 being known so far, of which nearly 900 come from Panticapaeum and its neighbourhood.[40] The inscriptions of the Imperial period hint at the complexity of the communal, political and administrative structure of the kingdom, illustrate the formal status and public honours of the kings, and vividly represent the presence in Bosporan public vocabulary of the Roman Emperors, of the wider structure of the Empire and of the cities of Anatolia, above all those of the Roman province of Pontus and Bithynia, through and to which we have already seen emissaries of the kingdom making their way.[41] The presence of the Roman Empire was to be symbolised from the first century to the early fourth by the fact that the kings were characteristically (and perhaps without exception), to be, like the kings of Judaea, Roman citizens with the Roman *tria nomina*, retaining to the end the Julio-Claudian nomenclature "Tiberius Iulius Rhoemetalces" or "Rhescuporis" and so forth.

All that will be attempted here is to pick out a few examples from the inscriptions of the Bosporan kingdom, to illustrate the symbolic functioning of a system of dual sovereignty, of the local king and the distant, all-powerful Emperor. But we will begin with a striking royal letter from Gorgippia, published in the same year, 1965, as Struve's excellent *corpus* of the Bosporan

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38 B. Latyschev, *Inscriptiones Antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini* I^2, 1916, no. 174 (*IGR* I, no. 834).

39 P. 164 above. Arrian, *Periplus*, 10, 3-4; 17, 1-2; see now D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity*, 1994, 193f.

40 See V. Struve, *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani* (*CIRB*), 1965.

41 Pp. 163 and 164 above.

inscriptions, but too late to be included in it, and remarkably neglected since.[42] It was indeed duly noticed by Louis Robert, but his intention to re-publish it and analyse it fully in a forthcoming *Bulletin* does not seem to have been fulfilled.[43] It has not gained a place in *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* or in *L'Année Epigraphique*.

The first of the two letters contained in the inscription runs as follows:

[Βασιλεὺς Ασ]ποῦργος φιλορώμαιος
[Παντ]αλήοντι καὶ Θεαγέλωι
χαίρειν·
εὐεργετικῶς διακείμενος πρὸς τὴν Γοργιππέων πόλιν,
καὶ βουλόμενος τὰ δίκαια αὐτοῖς παρέχεσθαι, ἐπειδὴ ἔδο[ξε]ν ἐν πολ-
[λοῖς] μ[ὲ]ν πράγμασιν εὐνοηκέναι μοι, μάλιστα δὲ ἐν τῆι πρὸς τὸν Σεβαστὸν
Αὐτοκράτορα ἀναβάσει συντετηρηκότες ἑαυτοὺς ἐν πλείστηι ἀτά[ρα]ξίαι,
κατὰ τὰς ὑπ' ἐ μ ο ῦ δεδομένας ἐντολὰς δοκιμάζω [ε]ἰς τὸ λοιπὸν τὰς κ[λ]ηρονομία[ς]
μένειν αὐτοῖς βεβαίως κατὰ τὸν Εὐπάτορος ἀνχι[στ]ευτικὸν νόμον·
ἐκθεσία τίσ[α]ντες οὖν τόδε τὸ δόγμα φανερὰν ποιή[σ]ατε γενέσθ[αι τοῖς πᾶ]-
[σιν κατὰ?] τὴν ἡμετέραν κρίσιν. Εὖ ῥωσθε. βιτ', Δαισίου κ'.

King Aspourgos *philoromaios*
to Pantaleon and Theangelos,
greetings.
Being benevolently disposed towards the city of the Gorgippeis, and wishing to secure for them their rights, since it seemed that in many respects they had been favourable to me, but especially in having preserved themselves, during my journey up to Sebastos Autokrator, in the most complete absence of disturbance, in accordance with the instructions given by me I rule for the future that inheritances should by right be retained by them according to the kinship law of Eupator. Therefore, by putting up this decree in public, see to it that this judgement of mine(?) becomes known to all. Be well. (Year) 312. Daisios.

Like the accompanying one, this letter from King Aspourgos (10/11-38/9 CE) dates to the Summer of 15. As a royal letter to a city, it is thus very close in time to the well-known letter of Artabanus III of Parthia to Seleucia on the Eulaeus, of 21 CE.[44] But there is a crucial distinction in the presence here of

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42 T.V. Blavatatskaya, "Reskripti tsarya Aspurga", *Sovietskaya Archeologia* 10.2, 1965, 197-209. See also S. Yu. Saprykin, "'Ebratorov zakon o nasledovanii' i yevo znachenie v istorii pontiiskovo tsarstva" ("'Eupator's Law on inheritance', and its role in the history of the Pontic kingdom"), *VDI* 197, 1991, 181-197. I reproduce the text as printed, but suggest in my translation that in ll. 10-11 φανεράν agrees with κρίσιν.

43 *Bull. Epig.* 1968, 378.

44 C.B. Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period*, 1934, no. 75.

two-level monarchy. The date makes it very possible, but by no means certain, that the "Sebastos Autokrator" to whom Aspourgos had "gone up" was the new emperor Tiberius. Aspourgos evidently did not share the doubts felt in Cyprus as to whether the *praenomen* "Imperator"/"Autokrator" had actually been assumed.[45] But he may equally be referring to the now deceased "Imperator (Caesar divi filius) Augustus", and to an earlier voyage. If so, he had failed to incorporate in the letter any reflection of Augustus' recent deification. The form of the name is in fact not fully correct for either emperor.

What is important, however, is on the one hand the very concrete reflection of the dependence of a king like Aspourgos on the distant Emperor in Rome. His "going up" (*anabasis*) thus perfectly mirrored the well-known journeys of the Herodian household to Rome. On the other hand we see Aspourgos' recognition of established rights (granted in this case by the great Mithridates VI Eupator) possessed by the Gorgippeis, and his awareness of the need to address them diplomatically, and to return their goodwill. The letter is thus a reflection of the diplomatic expression both of two-level sovereignty and of the delicate relations of king and city.

In the epigraphy of the Bosporan kingdom over the next three centuries, a double conception of the kings, as monarchs and conquerors on the one hand, and as loyal subjects of Rome on the other, is visible everywhere. For instance, there is a later inscription of King Aspourgos, of the 20s, from Kerch:[46]

> The Great King Aspourgos, *philorōmaios*, descendant of King Asandrochos, *philokaisar* and *philorōmaios*, king of all the Bosporus and Theodosia and the Sindi and Maiti and Taipeii and Toreti, Psesi and Tanaiti, who has subjected the Scyths and Tauri, Menestratus... in charge of the island, (honours) his own saviour and benefactor.

Two and a half centuries later, in the 270s, during the reign of King Tiberius Iulius Teiranes (275/6-278/9), still described as *philokaisar* and *philorōmaios*, we find an inscription from Panticapaeum which was set up "for the victory and permanence" of the king and his queen, Ailia, and which also gives a remarkable list of officials of the kingdom, some of them with functions relating to particular towns or districts: a *lochagos* (military commander); an official "over the *basileia* and Theodosia"; a man who was both *chiliarchēs* and "over the Aspourgiana"; an *archigrammateus*; two former *politarchoi*; a former superintendent of accounts (ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων).[47] There is no time to explore these details here. But they give some impression of the complexity of relations between the king and the different elements of the kingdom.

The Bosporan kings were unique among dependent kings in that they regularly bore the title "High priest of the Emperors for life" (ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν

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45 T.B. Mitford, "A Cypriot Oath of Allegiance to Tiberius", *JRS* 50, 1960, 75-79. See also F. Millar, "Ovid and the *Domus Augusta*: Rome seen from Tomoi", *JRS* 83, 1993, 1-17, on pp. 16-17.

46 *CIRB*, no. 40, cf. also no. 39.

47 *CIRB*, no. 48.

Σεβαστῶν διὰ βίου); it appears first in the reign of Cotys I (45/6-68 CE).[48] We do not know how the king's functions related (for instance) to those of the priest of the Kaisareion attested in the second century at Phanagoria.[49] But what is striking and important is that the kings adopted a public role which very explicitly acknowledged their subordination to a line of superior monarchs. On the other hand, the Bosporan kings were similar to other kings in that they themselves received honours from the cities in the nearest Roman province, Pontus and Bithynia. It is indeed a very striking feature of the epigraphy both of Olbia and of the cities of the Bosporan kingdom that cities and individuals from the northern and north-western regions of Roman Anatolia play a conspicuous part. In that sense the honours paid to the Bosporan kings are merely a reflection of those wider economic and diplomatic connections across the Black Sea to which Rostovtzeff called attention in a famous article.[50] One instance of such honours is a Latin inscription from Panticapaeum naming "Regem Ti(berium) Iu(lium) Sauromaten, amicum Imp(eratoris) populiq(ue) R(omani) praestantissimum", put up by the "C(olonia) I(ulia) F(elix) S(inope)".[51] Sauromates was king from 93/4 to 123/4; the fact that, as late as this, the *populus Romanus* is also mentioned is quite striking. Or there is a Greek inscription of 221 CE put up by the city of Amastris in Pontus and Bithynia to honour the King Tiberius Iulius Rhescuporis (Rhescuporis III, 210/11-226/7), who is described as "king of the Bosporus and the surrounding *ethnē*, *philorōmaios* and *philhellēn*".[52]

The diplomatics of mutual honour as displayed in the Bosporan inscriptions could be explored endlessly. But the real operations of government are hardly revealed by the inscriptions (one inscription recording how King Iulius Tiberius Sauromates rebuilt the walls of Gorgippia is only a partial exception).[53] Rather more informative is the inscription of 193 CE from Tanais, which will date to the reign of Sauromates II, and which celebrates victories against the Sirachi and Scyths, records a dedication by one Zenon "sent by the king to the *emporion*", and refers to sea-traffic from Bithynia.[54]

All that I have wished to suggest in this paper is that the allied kingdoms of the Roman period represent a significant subject, not just as so-called "client" kingdoms, that is in relation to Rome, but as military, political and social groupings of a complex kind, which represent a modest, but not insignificant, part of human history in the Graeco-Roman period. At one time there will have been several million people who lived under a form of two-level monarchy, that is under their own *basileus*, and beyond him under the distant figure of the Emperor. The time of the greatest importance of these subordinate kingdoms

48 See Gajdukevič, *op. cit.* (n. 36), 343, and W. Blawatsky, "Le culte des empereurs romains au Bosphore", *Mélanges Piganiol* III, 1966, 1541-1545.

49 *CIRB*, no. 1050: [ἱερέα ἀπο]δειχθέντα τοῦ καισαρείου διὰ βίου.

50 M.I. Rostovtzeff, "Pontus, Bithynia and the Bosporus", *Pap. Brit. Sch. Athens* 22, 1916-18, 1-22.

51 *CIRB*, no. 46.

52 *CIRB*, no. 54.

53 *CIRB*, no. 1122.

54 *CIRB*, no. 1237.

was the first century CE; and here we must look always to the history of Judaea. But the longest-lasting and most interesting of them all was the Bosporan kingdom, which survived until some point in the fourth century. It may not help the study of it in the modern world that its territory, on the two sides of the straits, is now divided between two sovereign states, Ukraine and Russia, though archaeologists from the two countries are in active collaboration.[55] But, all the same, we can now expect that this extremely important frontier of the Greek and Roman world will open up further. While study and exploration of it continues, we can already contemplate the complex symbolic relations which are embodied in some of the latest Greek inscriptions from this area, from the early fourth century. For instance, there is the dedication of 307 CE put up by the *archontes* of the "Agrippeis" (Phanagoria) and the "Kaisareis" (Panticapaeum) to honour Marcus Aurelius Andronicus, who had formerly been "in charge of the kingdom (*basileia*)".[56] It is striking to see that the Roman *tria nomina*,[57] and the early Imperial names of these cities, can still be used. Just as with the city foundations, or re-foundations, by Herod and his descendants, names drawn from the Imperial dynasty functioned as prominent symbols of loyalism. In fact, the name "Caesarea" for Panticapaeum otherwise appears in our evidence only on city coins minted under Augustus. "The *dēmos* of the Agrippeis" also appears on such coins,[58] as well as on an inscription of the Augustan period honouring Queen Dynamis *philorōmaios* (9/8 BCE-7/8 CE), and on another fragmentary inscription, probably of the second century.[59] Then, from the year before the dedication to Marcus Aurelius Andronicus, namely 306, there is a dedication from Panticapaeum to "Theos Hypsistos Epēkoos", put up by Sogous, who is described as "in charge of Theodosias", as *sebastognōstos* ("known to the Emperor"), as having been honoured by Diocletian and Maximian, and as having been given the name "Olympianus" in the provincial area (ἐν τῷ ἐπαρχείῳ).[60] Here again, the distant Emperors are made very visibly present in the text. Aurelius Valerius Sogous had built a *proseuchē*, by which we ought perhaps to understand a Jewish synagogue.[61] If so, and if the "Theos Hypsistos"

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55 For an overview see J.G.F. Hind, "Archaeology of the Greeks and Barbarian Peoples around the Black Sea, 1982-1992", *Archaeological Reports*, 1993, 82-112, on pp. 100-109.

56 *CIRB*, no. 1051.

57 See for comparison B. Salway, "What's in a Name? A Survey of Roman Onomastic Practice from *c.* 700 BC to AD 700", *JRS* 84, 1994, 124-145.

58 See Gajdukevič, *op. cit.* (n. 37), 328, 431; Burnett *et al.*, *op. cit.* (n. 14), 334-5, nos. 1936 (ΚΑΙΣΑΡΕΩΝ) and 1935 (ΑΓΡΙΠΠΙΕΩΝ).

59 Gajdukevič, 477; *CIRB*, no. 979 (Dynamis); 983.

60 *CIRB*, no. 64.

61 This question has of course been long debated, and cannot be discussed again here. For the undoubted Jewish presence in the area see J.-B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum* I^2, 1975, nos. 683-691; E. Schürer, *op. cit.* (n. 8), III.1, 1986, 36-38. For a new Jewish inscription from Phanagoria of AD 51 see D.I. Danshin, "Phanagoriiskaya Obschina Yudeev", *VDI* 204, 1993, 59-72, which also presents a

whom Aurelius Valerius Sogous worshipped was the Jewish God, this inscription will serve, like other undoubtedly Jewish ones from the area, to suggest how the Roman Empire had served to make a link between the two best-attested and most interesting of its dependent kingdoms, Judaea and the Bosporus.

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general review of the evidence. For Theos Hypsistos see now J. Ustinova, "The *Thiasoi* of Theos Hypsistos in Tanais", *History of Religions* 31, 1991, 149-180.