



[A king of Bosphorus, friend of Hadrian](#) [1]

A king of Bosphorus honours Hadrian as a restorer and benefactor and is grateful for his registration as a friend of Rome.

Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.):

A king of Bosphorus honours Hadrian as a restorer and benefactor and is grateful for his registration as a friend of Rome.

Original Location/Place: Found in a reused context at the Turkish fortress of ancient Pantikapaion (modern Kerch) on the Crimean peninsula

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): Unknown

Date: 133 CE

Physical Characteristics: Stone broken in two parts. Letters are not carefully carved.

Material: Marble

Measurements: Not given by the original editor

Language: Greek

Category: Roman, Greek

Publications: *IOSPE* II.33 [*IGRR* I.877; *CIRB* 47]

Commentary: [Pantikapaion](#) [2] was a former colony of Miletus (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, IV.87; *Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax* 68) on the peninsula of Crimea, which became the traditional seat of the Bosphoran kings in the Hellenistic period (Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* XX.24.2) and continued to be the royal residence under Roman rule (Strabo, *Geography* VII.4.4). In this location, one member of the Bosphoran dynasty prepared an honorific inscription for Hadrian. This text sheds light on the foreign policy adopted by the emperor and the control of Rome over client-kingdoms.

The inscription can be securely dated to 133 CE on the basis of the local era (297 BCE) recorded in line 8. Hadrian's titulature is abbreviated as no reference to his adopted grandfather Nerva is made, preferring to highlight only the lineage of Trajan (see Hekster, *Emperors*, p. 180-181). The sequence of the king (????????/basileus) Rhoimetalkes is more elaborate and includes the Roman names Tiberius Iulius – typical of the Bosphoran dynasty after Tiberius's reign (see Gajdukevic, *Das Bosphoranische*, p. 338-339) – and the titles ?????????/philokaisar and ?????????/philorhōmaios. While the appearance of these last epithets in other client-kingdoms such as Iberia is rather spasmodic (see Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 105-107), it became an inherent element of the Bosphoran royal titulature (see Heinen, "Die Anfa?nge"). Such a persistent and obvious sign of loyalty can be explained by the historical development of the region. The Cimmerian Bosphorus heavily supported Mithridates Eupator, became one of his main bases and refuge, but needed to create new alliance when the king of Pontus was finally defeated by Rome at the end of the Republican period (see Gajdukevic, *Das Bosphoranische*, p. 301-332; Rostovtzeff, "Bosphoran Kingdom"). Already under Octavian, pretenders to the Bosphoran throne were supposed to show not only their royal lineage, but also the support of Rome (Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, LIV.24.4). From this moment too, the king Asander started displaying the title *philorhōmaios* on both inscriptions and coins (see Gajdukevic, *Das Bosphoranische*, p. 325-326). At the beginning of the imperial period, Strabo even remarked that the king of Bosphorus is "whoever the Romans set up" (*Geography* VII.4.7). This is perfectly illustrated under Claudius when the emperor appointed Iulius Aquila to protect Cotys I against the aspirations of Mithridates (Tacitus, *Annals* XII.15-21). In the 2nd century, this policy of Roman control continued when Hadrian, according to the ancient historian Phlegon, "ordered Cotys II to wear a diadem" (*FHG* III 607 F20 = *FGrH* 257.17). Upon the death of this king, the governor of Pontus, Arrian, also informs us that he "set out for you (Hadrian) the sea-route up to the Bosphorus" (*Periplus* XVII.3; see Braund, "Notes from The Black Sea"). The reference to Hadrian as ????????/ktistês ("restorer") should be read against this background.

Rhoimetalkes owed his throne to Hadrian and, for this reason, the Roman emperor is honoured as his private (?????/idios) supporter who, consequently, would have also become benefactor (????????/euergetês) of the entire Bosphorus if the suggested readings are correct (l. 2-3). These textual restorations appear to be validated by another inscription from Pantikapaion possibly referring to Hadrian as the "benefactor of the city of the Bosphorans" (*CIRB* 48). Roman support, nevertheless, did not only consist in dynastic intervention but also involved



security and military protection. According to Flavius Josephus (*Jewish War* II.16.4), this region was controlled by the 3000 armed men stationed by Nero along the eastern Black Sea coast and, indeed, at least two gravestones belonging to Roman soldiers had been discovered in the territory of the Bosporan capital (*IOSPE* II.290, 293). This area was subject to the constant incursions of Scythians, Sarmatians and other nomadic warriors; thus, when Domitian exiled Dio Chrysostom to nearby Olbia, the rhetor lamented the attacks on Greek cities (XXXVI.4).

Rhoimetalkes's alliance was also rewarded with his registration (??????????/engraphênai) among the "friends (of the Roman people)" recorded in lines 5 and 6 of our inscription. This sentence refers to the official procedure by which people favourable and loyal to Roman rule were enrolled in a formal list kept in the archives of Rome as we are informed from the *Senatus Consultum de Asclepiade*. The concept of friendship (*amicitia*) played a prominent role in the Roman conquest of the eastern Mediterranean (see Badian, *Foreign Clientelae*; Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, p. 54-95; Morstein Kallet-Marx, *Hegemony to Empire*, p. 184-197); and we can see that Hadrian was still exercising it in the relations established with client-kingdoms under his control. This tradition was not only customary but also had practical advantages. For example, "friends of the Roman people" had preferential treatment in their diplomatic missions, the so-called *ius legationis*, and an inscription from Chersonesos reports that Rhoimetalkes was very successful with embassies (*IOSPE* I² 423). Under Antoninus Pius, the *Historia Augusta* (IX.8) even records that this Bosporan king stayed at Rome in order to resolve a dispute with an imperial curator.

Hadrian is credited with a change of Roman foreign policy when he decided to remove Roman troops from the Mesopotamian lands conquered by Trajan, as attested in Dura Europos. By contrast, this inscription from Pantikapaion shows that the imperial control over the client-kingdom of Bosphorus did not decrease. Furthermore, this special relationship was based on traditional concepts such as friendship that contributed to spreading Roman ideals of restoration and benefaction in far-away lands such as those on the Crimean peninsula. The image of Hadrian was also heavily featured on the coinage of Rhoimetalkes (*RPC* III.907-923); a king who could offer protection and advantageous diplomacy to his subjects while displaying loyal support and submission to Rome's superior power.

Keywords in the original language:

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Thematic keywords:

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- [Rhoimetalkes](#) [15]
- [client-king](#) [16]
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- [royal house](#) [25]



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Other sources connected with this document: Inscription



[Senatus Consultum de Asclepiade](#) [35]

Grant of Roman friendship and privileges to a group of Greek sea-captains after the Italic war

- [Read more about Senatus Consultum de Asclepiade](#) [35]

Inscription

[The Flavian Emperors and the Walls of Iberia \(Caucasus\)](#) [36]

Vespasian and Titus provide resources to fortify the walls in the capital of the kingdom of Iberia (Caucasus). The king is called *philorhomaïos* and *philokaisar*

- [Read more about The Flavian Emperors and the Walls of Iberia \(Caucasus\)](#) [36]

Inscription

[Roman Soldiers and a Local Temple in Dura Europos](#) [37]

Alexander, a man of Semitic origin, has to restore the doors of a temple taken away by the Romans when they retreated from Dura Europos

- [Read more about Roman Soldiers and a Local Temple in Dura Europos](#) [37]

Realized by:

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