

# The Roman presence in the Northern Black Sea Region during the Republican Era: a Sociocultural Dimension

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The article investigates the specifics of Roman expansion and understanding Roman frontier policy in the Northern Black Sea region. The study emphasizes the differences between modern and ancient concepts of a border, which complicates its demarcation. The potential limit of the Roman state's influence is defined through M. Mann's concept of the "empire of domination," which identifies three levels of Roman expansion during the Republican era. Based on historical sources, the dynamics of the Roman presence in the Northern Black Sea region are traced. Particular attention is given to the establishment of a system of client and allied states along the frontier. The entry of such states into the zone of the Roman state's diplomatic influence created the groundwork for the full-fledged integration of this region as a Roman province. The study determines that Roman expansion was defined not so much by military means as by a political strategy of eliminating or weakening potential regional hegemonies, exemplified by the Pontic Kingdom of Mithridates VI Eupator. The Roman presence in the region was defined by the integration of local elites through the institution of *clientela*, which was crucial in establishing dependence on Rome. The emergence of a sociocultural syncretism during the Romanization and Hellenization of the region is identified.

## KEYWORDS

*Roman expansion,  
Northern Black  
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Roman policy,  
Mithridatic Wars,  
Roman border,  
Bosporian Kingdom,  
clientela*

## Introduction

Characterizing European culture, it should be noted that it is based on two fundamental principles: the classical (antique) heritage and Christian values. This makes it a common denominator for all countries in the region, emphasizing their historical and civilizational unity. For Ukraine, which seeks to confirm its European origin and place in this civilizational space, the study of antiquity is particularly relevant. After all, the classical era includes not only the Ancient Greek but also the Roman epoch, which unfolded directly on the territory of modern Ukraine.

The analysis of Roman expansion to the East often begins in Rome, but its movement in the eastern and north-eastern directions was much more complex. It was in the region of Pontus Euxinus (the Black Sea) that a specific political system was formed after the conclusion of the wars with local hegemonies (Philip V of Macedon and Antioch III of Syria), consisting of Hellenistic client states on the Roman frontier. However, this established order was challenged by the Kingdom of Pontus, which began to unite an anti-Roman coalition around itself. Therefore, the integration of the southern coast of the Pontus Euxinus was carried out in the spirit of subduing disobedient clients, rather than outright conquest.

Despite this, the spread of Roman influence in the Northern Black Sea region is unfairly overshadowed by other conquests of that era, and ancient authors limit themselves to cautious mentions of this region. This makes our research particularly important.

The aim of the research is to analyze the dynamics of the Roman presence in the Northern Black Sea region during the period of the Roman Republic (before the

establishment of the Principate by Octavian Augustus), with an emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects of the interaction. Research Objectives:

- Determine the limits and nature of the spread of Roman influence in the Pontus Euxinus region.
- Define Rome's motivation for this direction of expansion, taking into account not only political and economic but also socio-cultural factors.
- Analyze Roman policy towards the client states in the region, particularly its impact on local elites, public institutions, and cultural practices.

The source base of the research is represented by classical historians: Titus Livy, Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, Publius Cornelius Tacitus, Appian of Alexandria, Diodorus Siculus, Polybius, and Cassius Dio. It is also supported by individual testimonies of eyewitnesses of those events, particularly through the treatises and judicial speeches of Marcus Tullius Cicero. In addition, materials from archaeological surveys of the Northern Black Sea region by O. Dzyhovskyi, I. Sapozhnykov, and V. Kokozhara are utilized.

## Research methods

The study employs general and specialized historical research methods: the historical-comparative method, the statistical method, the analysis of dictionary definitions, and the method of generalization and logical analysis. The research also utilizes M. Mann's concept of the *Empire of Domination* (Mann, 2012: 275). This concept defines military power as the social concentration of lethal violence, meaning the factor of military force is considered not only in the context of territorial conquest but also



in its interaction with the subjugated peoples. The military is viewed as one of the defining factors in the expansion of the Roman sphere of influence. Its expansion is determined by the degree of military presence in the region. Such a presence is considered significant for a province only when a military unit of no less than a legion is stationed there. This presence largely regulated integration processes, by suppressing local uprisings and creating an additional burden on the province's economy, which had to service the legion's needs. The concept suggests a division into three zones of influence: (1) zone of Direct Control: Territories that were integrated as a Roman province; (2) zone of Diplomatic Control: Client states and allied states that maintained sovereignty but were under Roman influence; (3) zone of External Influence: Represented by cooperation with neighboring states and tribes on terms of equal partnership.

### Results and Discussion

The Roman frontier during the Republic is a complex phenomenon, difficult to grasp in the usual modern sense. The Romanian scholar G. Cupcea highlighted this problem, noting the Republic's lack of "what might resemble the borders of the Empire" (Cupcea, 2015: 13). Obviously, this refers to a border in the modern understanding: a demarcation line that clearly delineated territory as belonging specifically to the Roman Republic. Such a border is more or less identifiable during the Imperial era and is associated with the system of *limes* (Roman frontiers). The futility of searching for the extent of the Roman state through the Roman concept of "world domination" was rightly criticized by O. Bandrovskyi, who pointed out the discrepancy between the Roman aspiration to conquer Parthia and their geographical ideas about the structure of the world (Bandrovskyi, 2012: 35).

For Republican Rome, the concept of a border as a dividing line was known. However, its limits were much closer than what appears on a political map. Rome, being a city-state (polis-type state), did not end with the last conquered territory. Its actual boundary was determined by the sacred boundary (Latin: *pomoerium*). This was not a mere convention but a real legal boundary marked by special boundary stones (Latin: *cippus*). The main purpose of their placement was to denote the jurisdiction of the city (Latin: *urbs*) and the surrounding lands (Latin: *ager*). The law within the limits of the *urbs* and *ager* operated differently, imposing various restrictions on Roman citizens. For instance, the use of *imperium* – the full political and military authority – was only permitted outside the city limits, with the exception of the right to a triumph.

However, the sacred boundaries of the city were not fixed and changed repeatedly with the development of the state. The expansion of the city's limits was possible thanks to a privilege held by every general "who enlarged the *imperium*". Yet, according to Tacitus, not all generals utilized this right. The expansion occurred several times: by Servius Tullius (Livy, 1935: I.44), Lucius Cornelius Sulla, and Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (Tacitus, 1884: XII.23). Before the establishment of the Principate by Octavian Augustus, the city's boundaries did not even encompass all seven Roman hills. Therefore, in outlining Roman expansion during this era, we do not attempt to find a visible line on a map that would divide the world into "roman" and "barbarian." The most appropriate criterion for searching for the limits of Roman expansion was defined in the will of Octavian

Augustus: "Rome conquers peoples, not territories, it has client kings, not kingdoms" (Augustus, 1969: XXVI.9).

The attempt to define the limits of the Zone of Direct Control leads us to search for what could serve as a conditional reflection of the boundary of the conquered provinces and their jurisdictions. In this case, the most obvious approach is to look for geographical features that served as natural barriers. Specifically, Livy gives the example of the Alps, which in the 2nd century BC served as an insurmountable border between the Romans and the barbarians (Livy, 1935: XXXIX.54). The Rubicon River is a similar example, from the time of the civil wars (Tranquillus, 1913: I.31). It is therefore not surprising that such frontier boundaries were often delimited by rivers – the Rhine, the Euphrates, and the Danube.

The limited knowledge about the northern part of the Pontus Euxinus, especially considering the map from the Porticus of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, may have fostered the idea that expansion into this peculiar "end of the world" was unpromising (Euripides, 2016: 3; Athenaeus, 1854: XIII.600). Consequently, we have a minimal number of testimonies concerning the Roman presence in the northern Pontic region. Specifically, this presence was more related to the Bosporan Kingdom as a client state than to individual poleis (city-states). Therefore, in defining the limits of Roman influence in the Northern Black Sea region, we are faced with searching for any signs of a Roman military presence in the area under study, following the previously mentioned concept of M. Mann. Such signs include fortifications of various kinds: from megalithic structures like Trajan's Walls to separate *limes* that could indicate intentions for long-term entrenchment, or temporary camps (*castrum*). Within the European Union's cultural project "Frontiers of the Roman Empire" (2005–2008) (Breeze, Sonja, 2008), approximately 200 remains of various fortification structures were discovered along the Danube, spaced 10 to 30 km apart. The systematic nature of border construction is crucial for conducting demarcation and determining the limit of the Roman state's direct influence until its highest point of development.

However, Roman influence, given the specifics of their unofficial frontier doctrine, extended beyond the boundaries of Roman provinces and the Roman camps within them. Starting from the 3rd century BC, Roman border policy did not consider it necessary to integrate all conquered territories. Instead, frontier security was ensured by a network of client states. This system was particularly characteristic of Rome's eastern policy toward the states of Hellas and Asia Minor. Their integration unfolded differently from that of the Iberians and Italics. The dissemination of the "freedom of the Greeks," the practice of Romanization through the collection of hostages, and the support of pro-Roman factions in democratic poleis made it possible to form a system in which Rome transformed from a local hegemon into an unquestionable arbiter for the Hellenistic states. Full subjugation and conquest of clients occurred through the practice of pacification. Rebellions or alignment with anti-Roman alliances were used as a pretext for integrating the region with the goal of restoring order there. For example, after the conclusion of the Third Macedonian War, the kingdom of Perseus was divided into four city-state leagues without the right to unification or communication between them. Yet, with the revolt of Pseudophilippus, the region was incorporated as the province of Achaea-Macedonia in 146 BC.

Traditionally (*Strabo*, 1932: VII.4; *Højte*, 2010: 94; *McGing*, 1986: 47), the spread of Roman influence in the Northern Black Sea region is traced to the conclusion of the Mithridatic Wars (89–66 BC) and the inclusion of the Bosphoran Kingdom as a Roman client, with its broader integration occurring during the Imperial era. Proving whether the northern colonies of the Pontus Euxinus had any relationship with Rome before the 1st century BC is currently a difficult task. However, there is a mention of Chersonesus as one of the signatories of the peace treaty of 179 BC that concluded the Pergamene-Pontic War (183–179 BC) (*Polybius*, 1962: XXV.2.). It should be noted that Polybius did not specify which Chersonesus he meant: the Thracian or the Tauric one. The separate mentions of Sarmatian rulers as parties to the treaty introduce further doubt.

A precedent for speculating about the involvement of Tauric Chersonesus was the tablet discovered in 1908 under the direction of Robert Koehler (Leper) with fragments of a treaty between Tauric Chersonesus and Pharnaces I of Pontus, which its discoverer linked to the very treaty described by Polybius (*Latyshev*, 1916: *IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>*, 402). However, the participation of Tauric Chersonesus is subject to major doubt. There is, unfortunately, no other evidence that could confirm this thesis. The researcher Jakob Højte questions the connection of this find to Polybius' treaty of 179 BC due to the problem of determining the calendar system used by the scribe when indicating the year 157 as the signing date (*Højte*, 2005: 139).

The very nature of the treaty also casts doubt on its relevance to the Pergamene-Pontic War. The tablet is not fully preserved, with the first seven lines of the agreement only partially intact. However, the rest of the tablet clearly conveys the general essence of the writing. Proposed by the envoys of Chersonesus – Matrios and Heraclides – it stipulated that Pharnaces I would establish patronage, refrain from inflicting harm, and protect the polis and its surrounding territory (*chora*) from the barbarians. The nature of the treaty was such that it would have burdened the Pontic ruler in the war of 183–179 BC by requiring him to provide military assistance to Chersonesus.

Another aspect of this treaty prompts us to consider the Romans and their probable involvement in its conclusion. Lines 25–26 of the tablet state that a condition for the agreement is the preservation of friendship with the Romans (Greek: Ῥωμαίους φιλίαν διαφυλασσόν). The phrasing suggests the existence of established friendly relations with Rome prior to the signing of the treaty with Pharnaces. The term "friendship" (Greek: *philia*) used in the discovered tablet corresponds to the same concept of friendship applied to describe the established official alliance between Rome and the Galatians during the campaign of Consul Gnaeus Manlius Vulso (*Livy*, 1935: XXXVIII.12). However, such a mention, presented in a single instance, is insufficient grounds to assert that Tauric Chersonesus was a recognized ally or client of Rome as early as that time.

No preserved information about decrees or embassies to Chersonesus or to Rome that could confirm the previous thesis is mentioned in ancient chronicles. A clue to understanding how the Chersonesites might have established friendship with Rome lies in the implemented policy of the "freedom of the Greeks" proclaimed by Titus Quinctius Flaminius. Nevertheless, we also find no information that Roman envoys could have ended up there. We cannot even theoretically assume that envoys arrived and their mention was simply not preserved, as the northern-

most point for the announcement of the Isthmian Declaration's decision was the Greek poleis of Thrace. Therefore, despite being Greek by origin, they could not have been placed under Roman protection.

In attempts to explain this mention of the Romans, we assume that, having established himself in his new capital – Sinope Pharnaces I sought ways to expand his kingdom, including at the expense of the Northern Black Sea lands. This is supported by the fragment in which Pharnaces promised not to take harmful actions against Chersonesus, but to support it in the fight against the barbarians. This suggests that similar actions may have been committed or planned. The final explanation for the mention of the Romans can be attributed to the unwillingness of the citizens (*politai*) of Chersonesus to be potentially dragged into a war with both Rome and its clients, considering the precedent of the Pergamene-Pontic War. Therefore, as of the 2nd century BC, we note that the northern part of the Pontus Euxinus found itself in the zone of External Influence of the Roman state.

A shift in the processes of integration and the spread of Roman influence in the northern coastal region of the Pontus Euxinus occurred with the beginning of the Mithridatic Wars. It was these wars that opened the path for Roman expansion into the Northern Black Sea region. It is important to note that this expansion took place during a transformation of Roman policy towards the East. The usual principle established before the Macedonian Wars (215–148 BC), the essence of which was merely the elimination of threats from potential regional hegemony, was replaced by the idea of control and subjugation. Only occasionally did the intensity of Rome's interest in the Pontus Euxinus region fluctuate. From the end of the Macedonian Wars to the beginning of the Mithridatic Wars, Rome's eastern interest noticeably ceded priority to the Iberian, African, and Transalpine directions.

The renewed interest in the region was caused by the breakdown of relations and the start of war between Rome and the Kingdom of Pontus, which had been in a client relationship with Rome until 89 BC. Appian called Mithridates V Euergetes the first Pontic friend of the Roman people (*Appian*, 1899: II.10). Therefore, tensions were provoked by Roman arbitration regarding territorial inheritance. This led to Mithridates VI Eupator beginning preparations for war. He found support by engaging the Northern Black Sea Greek colonies that were dependent on the Bosphoran Kingdom. The involvement of these territories became possible thanks to the idea of Hellenism, through which the Pontic king was welcomed as the liberator of the Black Sea Greeks from the Scythians and Sarmatians.

The Third Mithridatic War must be recognized as the defining event in creating the new political climate in the Pontus Euxinus region. The strong initial momentum of the Pontic king's third campaign was halted by Roman legions under the command of Lucius Licinius Lucullus. Defeats forced Mithridates to abandon Pontus and seek refuge in allied Armenia, and later with his son Machares, who had been installed as the ruler of the Bosphoran Kingdom.

While Lucullus's military campaign was limited to the southern regions of the Pontus Euxinus, the situation changed with the replacement of the campaign commander, as Lucullus was succeeded by Gnaeus Pompey, nicknamed Magnus (the Great). Pompey not only took over command of the campaign but also, for the first time in a long period, received unlimited authority for the war

against Mithridates under the Lex Manilia of 66 BC (*Cicero, 1905*). The conclusion of the war required the Roman army to undertake a campaign to the Northern Black Sea region. The profitability of such a campaign was doubtful. Discussions about such an expedition never ceased, from Lucius Cornelius Sulla to Gaius Julius Caesar. The difficulties and costs associated with crossing to the Cimmerian Bosphorus (the modern region around the Kerch Strait) outweighed the potential military spoils. Ancient authors criticized this idea, considering Mithridates' retreat to the Bosporan Kingdom more akin to flight than an attempt to reorganize for continued fighting (*Appian, 1899: XIX.96*). However, Mithridates did seriously consider subsequent plans involving local nomads and an adventurous march across the Alps, following the example of Hannibal.

Pompey's route through Colchis is viewed ambiguously by ancient historians. Diodorus Siculus indicates that such a campaign did indeed take place but ended in Pompey's retreat. He attributed the failure to local tribes and the difficulty of the crossing in Colchis (*Diodorus Siculus, 1989: XL.4*). Plutarch seconds this opinion, describing the crossings and the resistance of the local populace (*Plutarch, 1991: 211*). Notably, Mithridates, who was retreating to the Bosphorus via the same route, was allowed to pass without significant trouble. However, doubts about the actual campaign into Colchis are raised by Cassius Dio, who believed the difficulties assessed by Pompey on the eve of the campaign deterred him from the idea of moving to the Northern Black Sea region by either land or sea (*Cassius, 1917: XXXVII. 3*).

Therefore, we cannot confirm the fact of Pompey's Roman army presence in the Bosporan Kingdom. However, isolated attempts at containment were made. Specifically, Roman ships first entered the Pontus Euxinus under the command of Publius Piso to fight Cilician pirates. These ships were subsequently used to cut off Mithridates' sea route.

The coup by Pharnaces II of Pontus became the concluding event of the Mithridatic Wars. With the goal of becoming a friend of the Romans and preserving a portion of his inheritance, Pharnaces sent the head of the Pontic king to Pompey. As a result of the campaign, the eastern frontier situation for the Roman state changed. The list of Rome's border clients and friends was expanded to include the aforementioned Pharnaces II of Pontus, who nevertheless managed to retain his power, though only in the Bosporan Kingdom, with the exception of Phanagoria, which, due to its resistance against Mithridates, was declared free and recorded as a friend of the Roman people. For the first time, the Bosporan Kingdom became a client of the Roman state (*Cassius, 1917: XXXVII. 14*). Roman influence expanded to encompass almost the entire coast of the Pontus Euxinus.

The broader integration of the Northern Black Sea region is linked to the crisis of Rome's polis system and the crisis of the Republic. The transformation into an Empire caused shifts in frontier policy, particularly concerning client states. Simultaneously, this made possible the spread of the first practices of Romanization. Having fallen into dependence on the Roman political system of the Republic, the Bosporan Kingdom and other poleis of the Northern Black Sea region were faced with the need to find a patron who could represent their interests in the Senate. However, the Roman state had to reassert its control over the Bosporan Kingdom during the Civil War. Pharnaces II of Pontus clearly sought to exploit the inter-

nal instability and the war between the former Triumvirs Gaius Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Pompey. Driven by the idea of restoring the Pontic Kingdom, he intervened in this conflict. This would lead to the start of the Pontic War (48–47 BC). M. Videiko emphasizes the fluidity of military success during this war, linking the appearance of Roman artifacts in the Tauric sanctuary above Gurzuf as evidence of Pharnaces' probable successes in the war against Caesar (*Battles for Taurica, 2019: 300*). It is notable that Pharnaces' political allegiances remain not fully defined (*Cassius, 1917: XLII. 47*). He was simultaneously a client of Pompey, from the moment of his appointment after the death of Mithridates VI, but did nothing to support his patron. An embassy was also sent to him from Cassius with the aim of recruiting him as an ally against Caesar. Instead, after Pompey's defeat, he opposed Caesar, and, hoping to capitalize on the latter's preoccupation with Italian affairs, he tried to conclude a peace that would include the return of his father's inheritance. This did not happen, and after being defeated in battle by Caesar, he was forced to content himself solely with the Bosporan Kingdom.

The revolt of the governor Asander put an end to Pharnaces' rule. However, the aspiration to keep the Bosporan Kingdom within the Roman orbit remained, despite Appian's dismissive description of such plans as trivial (*Appian, 1913: 92*). The self-proclaimed archon was not recognized as a legitimate ruler. Therefore, as part of his struggle against Pompey, Caesar sought to replace his client kings. This was similar to the installment of Cleopatra on the throne of Egypt, or the rulers of Galatia and Cappadocia – Deiotarus and Ariobarzanes. It is not surprising that the same fate befell the Bosporan Kingdom. Being a client and open ally of Caesar, Mithridates of Pergamum, a descendant of Mithridates VI Eupator, launched a struggle for his paternal inheritance in the Bosphorus, although he was unsuccessful.

The struggle for power in the Bosphorus until the establishment of the Principate by Octavian Augustus (which represents a kind of transitional process where the Roman state was no longer a Republic but had not yet fully formed as an Empire) did not generate significant interest. Even the self-proclaimed Asander was eventually recognized as ruler of the Bosphorus by Augustus. Interest would only revive after the establishment of the Empire, and Augustus's administrative reform changed the attitude towards eastern policy. Specifically, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa was chosen as Proconsul of the Eastern Provinces and showed his own interest in Bosporan affairs, intervening in the revolt of Scribonius and preparing a military intervention from Sinope (*Cassius, 1917: LIV. 24*). Against Scribonius, Agrippa fielded the Pontic King Polemon, who had previously secured his position as a Roman client by assisting the Triumvir Mark Antony. However, the assassination of Scribonius by the Bosphorans canceled the Proconsul of Asia's expedition. As a friend and ally of Rome, Polemon I was briefly secured in power. This case cemented the practice where the governor of the province of Bithynia and Pontus was also determined to be responsible for the affairs of the Bosporan Kingdom.

The difficulty in isolating the socio-cultural influences exerted by the Roman state on the Northern Black Sea region is linked to the cultural-value competition within the Pontus Euxinus region. The policy of Romanization, which was actively pursued during Rome's western expansion into Gaul and Iberia, existed in a dichotomous

dimension –Romanization served as the only alternative to barbarism. However, the eastern direction of expansion had striking differences. Here, Roman influence faced a competitor in the Hellenistic idea. Trends in classical studies are inclined to interpret their success through the interconnectedness of the Eastern and Western Mediterranean via a single Graeco-Roman commonality, but we do not equate the ideas of Romanization and Hellenization. While significantly influenced by Hellenism, the Romans themselves began to utilize it in the context of their state policy regarding the eastern direction. Outlining the general cultural-value trends of the client states within the context of eastern expansion, we determine that even after their integration as provinces, they remained rather Hellenistic than Romanized. A similar situation is associated with the region we are studying. Subject to simultaneous socio-cultural influences from the Roman, Hellenic, and Barbarian worlds, the Greeks of the Northern Black Sea region became an example of socio-cultural syncretism in the ancient world.

Even under such conditions of cultural-value competition with Hellenism, Romanization practices manifested among the local elites. The most significant example is the adoption of the *tria nomina* by the rulers of the Bosporan Kingdom. Their integration began with the kings being recognized as "allies and friends of Rome." This context primarily linked them to the idea where the state, rather than a private political individual, acted as the king's patron. However, with the establishment of Imperial power in Rome, the Emperor himself would take clients under his protection.

Consequently, Tiberius Julius Aspurus Philoromaos received the prenominal and nomen of the Emperor Tiberius from the Julio-Claudian dynasty, clearly as evidence of the client connection between them. A similar situation would continue with subsequent rulers of the Bosporan Kingdom, solidifying this trend. However, the Hellenic heritage was simultaneously reinforced by continuing the *tria nomina* while adopting the cognomen Philoromaos – "Lover of Romans" (Greek: Φιλορῶμαιος). Thus, he combined Roman, Greek, and Barbarian traditions in a new name: Tiberius Julius Aspurus Philoromaos.

Given such precedents, a highly relevant direction for future scholarly exploration should be to incorporate prosopographical data to determine the presence of Romans in the ethnic composition. The research of N. Son, using the example of Olbia, indicates the complexity of such a classification due to existing mixed name variations. For example, there are Greek names with a Roman structure, such as Titus Flavius Achemenes, son of Achemenes. Or typically Roman names mixed with Greek or Thracian ones, such as Publius Aelius Argamenes, which points to an ethnic Greek with Roman citizenship (Son, 2020: 23). The number of names that contain at least one element identifiable as Roman in origin, based on existing epigraphic monuments, is approximately 17.4% (Son, 2020: 26).

Simultaneously, there was an expansion of the territory from the province of Macedonia northward to the Danube boundary at the point where it flows into the Black Sea. It should be noted that the border of this province was relatively conditional. Bordering on stateless barbarian peoples left the frontier unstable, where its limit was measured by the Macedonian *propraetors* with "swords and spears" (Cicero, 1909: XVI. 24). The legal change in status from a *propraetorial* to a *proconsular* province after the Mithridatic Wars expanded the offensive capabilities

of their governors. Expansion occurred through border defense practices aimed at pushing back the barbarian tribes. The main campaigns that extended the provincial boundary took place during the 80s 60s of the 1st century BC (Festus, 1967: 9).

The *Proconsul* of the province of Macedonia, Marcus Terentius Varro Lucullus, achieved the greatest expansion of his province's northern borders in 72 BC. Conducting a campaign that utilized a fleet, he captured the Greek colonies of Apollonia, Callatis, Parthenopolis, Tomi, and Histria, reaching the coast of the Danube. Similar campaign practices were not isolated incidents. Cicero's accusations against Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus also concerned Piso's unauthorized and failed attack on the Thracian tribes while he was governing the province as *Propraetor* after 58 BC (Cicero, 1909: 21).

Individual evidence regarding the spread of Roman influence in this direction of expansion is supported by archaeological finds. Specifically, the most remote northeastern fortifications guarding the borders of the Roman provinces here were the strongholds of Aliobrix and Salsovia, whose presence here dates back to the middle of the 1st century AD (Dzyhovskiy, Sapozhnykov, 2018: 179; Topoleanu, 2007: 132). The search for and identification of the purpose of these fortifications is complicated by the change in the riverbeds, in this case the Danube, over more than 2,000 years. It is difficult to determine whether these fortifications served a defensive and observational function or were intended as a potential staging ground for future offensives. A similar, atypical function belonged to the fortress of Aliobrix near Lake Kartal, which, according to O. Dzyhovskiy and I. Sapozhnykov, served as a bridgehead fortification due to its location on the left bank of the Danube (Dzyhovskiy, Sapozhnykov, 2018: 180). This means it could have been used as a staging ground for potential military campaigns.

Research conducted under the supervision of V. Kozhokaru uncovered fragments of a road that was constructed by the Romans (Dzyhovskiy, Sapozhnykov, 2018: 182). Its purpose remains difficult to ascertain today. One might assume that this road could have connected separate Greek colonies of the Northern Black Sea region. However, there is no evidence that it was ever operational or even completed. The *Peutinger Table* gives no evidence of a road leading to Aliobrix or to any other settlement located on the left bank of the Danube (Miller, 1888). Instead, the road route for this region looks like this: Troesmis – Noviodunum – Salsovia – Histriopolis – Tomis. Therefore, we determine that the Zone of Direct Influence of the Roman state in the northwestern part of the Pontus Euxinus region concludes around the specified route, limiting it to the right bank of the Danube.

The definition of the zone of Diplomatic Influence of the Roman state in the region beyond the Danube is debatable. Modern studies point to the presence of signs of defensive fortifications in the Northern Black Sea region. During the discovery of the Kamianka V and Didova Khata III sites, signs were found that, by their structure, correspond to a Roman military camp (Kozlenko, 2016: 80). Their purpose is linked to the necessity of defending Olbia, an allied state. Individual sites that could serve as additional confirmation of the Roman military presence in this region require more detailed study. This refers to the remains of a fort near the village of Dar'yivka (Krysin, 1929: 12). Research by V. Nechyporenko indicates the impossibility of continuing the study due to damage to the cultural layer in which the mentioned *castrum* was located

(Nechyporenko, 2021: 75). For us, this creates a difficulty in identifying it as either a permanent defensive fortification or a temporary camp, similar to the find near the village of Ostrivka (Kozlenko, 2016: 82). It should be noted that the existence of these sites is associated with Roman military-political activity in this region no earlier than the 1st century AD.

### Conclusion

The expansion of the Roman Republic into the northern coastal region of the Pontus Euxinus occurred in the context of the struggle against the anti-Roman forces of the Pontic King Mithridates VI Eupator. Although there are separate assumptions regarding earlier contacts between the Greek colonies of the Black Sea region as far back as the 2nd century BC, they considered reliable evidence of "friendship with the Romans". However, suggests that, even at that time, the colonies of the northern Pontus Euxinus coast considered Rome a local hegemon, which broadly corresponds to the idea of the Zone of External Influence in M. Mann's "Empire of Domination" concept.

By establishing control over the Bosphorus, Mithridates VI drew it into the maelstrom of war with Rome. Following Mithridates' defeats, Pharnaces II of Pontus, in a bid to preserve at least part of his father's inheritance, staged a revolt against his father to gain Roman favor and sanction for the continuation of his rule. By becoming the personal client of Gnaeus Pompey, Pharnaces acknowledged his dependence on Rome, including the kingdom in the zone of Diplomatic Influence of the Roman state while preserving a degree of sovereignty. This trend of limited intervention continued until the establishment of the Empire in Rome. In their search for continued power, Bosporan rulers sought the support of powerful Roman politicians and emperors, becoming their clients. Roman military presence in the northern Pontus Euxinus region was not sufficiently established before the 1st century AD to assert control over the Bosphorus as a province. Therefore, until the end of the Republic, the Bosphorus and the rest of the colonies remained under the status of allies and clients of Rome. The greatest expansion of the province of Macedonia during the period under study occurred in the 80s–60s BC, when the territory was extended to the right bank of the Danube. Probable intentions for further expansion are evidenced by isolated bridgehead fortifications on the left bank of the Danube, which could have served as staging grounds for potential military campaigns or to support allied states.

The Roman presence in the northern Pontus Euxinus region is marked by the socio-cultural influences of Romanism and Hellenism on the local ruling elite of the Bosporan Kingdom. Integration processes are exemplified by the adoption of the Roman *tria nomina* naming convention while simultaneously preserving Greek traditions.

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## Римська присутність у Північному Причорномор'ї у добу Республіки: соціокультурний вимір

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Стаття присвячена визначенню специфіки римської експансії та розумінню римської прикордонної політики у Північному Причорномор'ї. У дослідженні акцентовано увагу на відмінностях між сучасним та античним поняттям кордону, що ускладнює його демаркацію. Потенційна межа впливу римської держави визначена через концепцію «імперія домінування» М. Манна, що передбачала три рівні римської експансії у добу Республіки. На основі історичних джерел простежена динаміка римської присутності у регіоні Північного Причорномор'я. Особлива увага приділяється становленню системи клієнтських та союзницьких держав на прикордонні. Вхідження таких держав у зону дипломатичного впливу римської держави створювало підґрунтя до повноцінної інтеграції цього регіону у якості римської провінції. Дослідження визначає, що римська експансія визначалася не стільки військовою, скільки політичною стратегією усунення чи ослаблення потенційних регіональних гегемонів на прикладі Понтійського царства Мітрідата VI Євпатора. Римська присутність у регіоні визначається інтеграцією місцевих еліт через інститут клієнтели, що був визначальним у формуванні залежності від Риму. Означено виникнення тут соціокультурного синкретизму під час романізації та еллінізації регіону.

**Ключові слова:** римська експансія, північне Причорномор'я, римська політика, Мітрідатові війни, Римський кордон, Боспорське царство, клієнтела.

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