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REVIEW-DISCUSSION: ROMAN EASTERN POLICY IN THE LATE REPUBLIC

Erich S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome.* 2 volumes. Berkeley/London 1984

A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East 168 B.C. to A.D. 1.* London/Norman, OK 1984

Objectives and motivations of Roman Eastern policy after the Hannibalic War were already a problem for the Romans themselves. Roman resources were exhausted, Italy devastated, and there was no immediate need for taking revenge on Philip V, if such was the purpose of the Second Macedonian War. This, at any rate, was the opinion of many Roman politicians who at first successfully opposed the declaration of war against Philip, accusing the Senate of making war upon war (Liv. 31.6.3 f.). Roman politicians were again divided after the Aetolian War and debated for several days over the terms of the treaty with Aetolia (Liv. 37.1.5). Vigorous debate once more took place after the war with Perseus, about the fate of Rhodes. Unfortunately we know very little of the arguments used at the time for and against expansion in the East, and even less of the real intentions of the opposed groups: opportunity for the state and conflicts of interests among the ruling class certainly were more relevant than moral considerations.

For the modern historian, the problem is different. Imperialism is a heavily loaded concept. The temptation to justify or to condemn the annexation of the Greek world is very great. Sympathies or antipathies for the Romans or for the Greeks may sometimes be more of a determining factor than many scholars are ready to admit. And these sympathies or antipathies are often unconsciously connected with one's attitude towards our own historical experience.

I

The purpose of Gruen's book is not to judge Roman Eastern policy as "imperialistic" or "defensive" or "mercantilistic" or anything else: "Neither

approbation nor condemnation motivates the quest, but an effort of explanation" (p. 8). G. does not intend to explain *why* the Romans intervened in Greece, but *how* they did it, in what ways they behaved there, and, on the other side, how the Greeks reacted. His main thesis is that, on the whole, the Romans were not really interested in Greek affairs; that they were mainly passive and distant; that the wars with the Hellenistic kingdoms were a kind of *accidents de parcours*; that consequently they did not change very much in Greek political life, which ran on much as before.

His first argument, which he develops in Part I, is that by establishing diplomatic ties with the Greek states the Romans simply and almost unreflectingly adopted the patterns used for centuries in Greek interstate relations, and that they did not intend to give these ties any real significance. He particularly insists on the relations of friendship (Ch. 2), which he considers a purely Greek diplomatic instrument ignored by the Romans before they came in contact with overseas states. The investigation of arbitration (Ch. 3), of "liberty-propaganda" (Ch. 4), of relations of clientship (Ch. 5), leads him to the same conclusion: Roman policy in Greece is a "natural adaptation to Hellenic categories" (p. 157). With the analysis of Roman and Greek attitudes and motivations in Part II, G. tries to show that neither ideology nor material considerations determined Roman policy in the East, that philhellenism in particular had no influence on political decisions, even by sincere admirers of Greek culture like Flamininus (Ch. 7). In his opinion there was at that time no ambition for a world-wide *imperium Romanum* (Ch. 8); material interests of individuals such as greedy generals and publicans did not prevent the Senate from considering the public interest first (Ch. 9). He finally denies the importance of pro- and anti-Roman feelings in Greece (Ch. 10). Part III is a description of Roman intervention in Greece, with the conclusion that this intervention did not bring about major changes in Greek affairs, in the sense that class struggles, rivalries of factions and interstate quarrels, an endemic sickness of the Greek world long before the coming of Rome, just continued independently of the Roman presence, and that Rome's attitude to them was indifference and even annoyance.[1]

As we see, G. is not quite as neutral as he would like to be: the whole work is an effort to demonstrate that Roman policy was *not* imperialistic, thus taking a position quite opposite to that of W.V. Harris, *War and imperialism in Republican Rome*. His demonstration is based on a very thorough knowledge of the ancient sources, both Greek and Roman, and an exhaustive reading of the modern literature. His appreciation of the evidence is often correct, his position more convincing than that of Harris.

But it seems to me too extreme and some of his arguments need rectification.

It is a secret of the success of Rome that she learned and borrowed from her enemies anything that could be used to subdue them: she did so in tactics and strategy, she did the same in diplomacy. "Liberty" and "autonomy" were useful slogans in the Greek world, so Rome used the same language (it might be noted that these slogans were already used by Dionysius I against Carthage: Diod. 14.47.2). But the Romans nonetheless had their own traditions and their own conceptions of interstate relations. This is plainly shown, for instance, by the negotiations of the Aetolians with M'. Acilius Glabrio in 190 (Pol. 20.9–10): the Aetolians agreed to commit themselves to the "faith" of the Romans, but unfortunately did not know that the meaning of *fides* in the formula *deditio in fidem* was quite another thing than the Greek ἐπιτρέπειν εἰς πίστιν, so that the negotiations were broken off. The treaty that followed in 189 (Pol. 21.32) contains several features that are specifically Roman: first the famous *maiestas* clause, of which G. vainly tries to minimize the importance (29 f. and 279); then the exaction of a fixed sum of money to be paid in six years as a war indemnity, a clause that regularly occurs in Roman treaties but only quite exceptionally in Greek ones (the exaction of a regular tribute is quite another thing); and finally the obligation to make war "on whomsoever the Romans make war", which is not quite the same as "to have the same friends and enemies", as G. apparently thinks (26 f.).[2]

I cannot believe either that for the Romans *amicitia* was not "a recognized diplomatic concept" (58). Friends of the Roman people were inscribed on an official list, the *formula amicorum*, and according to this *formula* the embassies coming from these friends were granted special privileges (see especially Sherk, *RDGE* 22 lines 12 f.). That means that the Romans made a quite definite and official distinction between the states which were *amici populi Romani* and those which were not. The rather vague notion of *amicitia* had at least one concrete implication, namely the friendly exchange of embassies, i.e., an intermediate status between hostility and alliance. This kind of intermediate relation has always been a necessary instrument of diplomacy: the Romans did not need the Carthaginians or the Greeks to discover it.

While the Greeks regularly stipulated whether the *philia* or the *symmachia* was to last for thirty or for fifty years or for ever,[3] the Roman documents simply state that there shall be friendship or alliance between Rome and her partner, without any indication of duration.[4] Moreover, there is no example of the renewal of a treaty at the expiration of an ear-

lier one.[5] It seems logical to conclude that in the Roman tradition of foreign policy the ties of friendship and alliance were to last as long as the partner fulfilled his formal or moral obligations:[6] Roman *amicitia* and Greek *philia* are not the same thing.

The treaty of 212 with the Aetolians is a particular problem. G. shares the view that this treaty was only temporary and that the Romans did not at the time intend to commit themselves in Greece (18 ff.). It seems to me that the dispute between Flamininus and the Aetolians after the battle of Cynoscephalae (Pol. 18.38.8–9) makes perfectly clear that for both sides it was supposed to be permanent. For the Roman general rejected the claims of the Aetolians over four Thessalian cities not with the argument that the treaty of 212 had been concluded only for the war against Philip, the easiest way to discard these claims, but with the reproach that by making a peace with the king, *deserting the Romans*, they had *dissolved* the treaty. He added that even if it were still valid, the Aetolians could only claim towns taken by force and not towns that had surrendered voluntarily to the Romans. Flamininus obviously knew that, formally at least, the treaty of 212 was still in force. And that means that the friends of the Aetolians who were associated with this treaty and the *adscripti* of the peace of Phoinike were to be permanent friends of Rome: they all were to be inscribed in the *formula amicorum* with the privileges and the formal or moral obligations attached to this status.

The interpretation of these obligations is of course another matter. G. rightly insists on the fact that the Romans did not ask their friends and allies for regular financial contributions, as was frequent in the Greek world, and only exceptionally for military help. But it is not true that they were wholly disinterested: money and military help are not the only form of support one can get from a friend. In fact the Romans expected from their Greek friends much more than G. admits, and they could be very harsh when disappointed.

Before he left Greece, Flamininus summoned the Greeks to Corinth and gave them some good advice (Liv. 34.49). He ended by saying that they should preserve for themselves the liberty received from others, so that the Romans might know that liberty had been given to people who deserved it.[7] What he meant by "deserve" and what was to happen if they showed themselves "unworthy", he apparently did not tell them. But they were to discover it very soon, during and after the Third Macedonian War: all those who had not stayed quite firmly and without asking any questions on the side of Rome were systematically hunted throughout all of Greece;[8] not only friendship with Perseus, but even neutrality or luke-

warmness were considered as a sin that had to be severely punished. Rome's friendship was very possessive and exclusive indeed.

Material contributions were also occasionally demanded. We know from Polybios that the Roman generals were empowered to ask material help or troops from the allies,[9] a power of which they made large use. During the Third Macedonian War, Appius Claudius Centho required from the Achaeans 5,000 men, representing an expense of 120 talents (Pol. 28.13.7). The Chalcidians had to suffer the misdeeds of the Roman troops quartered in their city (Liv. 43.7–8). Even the dear Athenians had to give a contribution of corn to the value of 100,000 dr. although they could hardly feed themselves (Liv. 43.6.2–3). The victims complained to the Senate, which issued a SC ordering that no one should attend to requests made by commanders unless they were acting by a decree of the Senate (Pol. 28.13.11=Liv. 43.17.2). Excesses were to be avoided, but the principle itself was not questioned: material help such as troops, ships, corn, clothes, arms, and the particularly burdensome lodging of commanders or troops could be requested from allies as well as from friends.[10]

It remains true, however, that annexation or exploitation were not the main objectives of Roman Eastern policy.[11] But this does not mean that the Romans were not really interested in Greek affairs. They fought three wars in one generation and another one a generation later, with the result that there remained no really independent power in this area: Macedonia no longer existed; the Seleucid kingdom was in a state of advanced decomposition; Rhodes, Pergamon and even the quite harmless Achaea were definitively humiliated. In each of these wars Rome was the aggressor, none of her enemies represented an immediate danger for her security. The historian cannot consider these wars a succession of unfortunate incidents or misunderstandings; he cannot be satisfied with explanations of the kind: they acted out of "sensibility to their reputation" (so G. 418) or out of "exasperation and ire" (523), or in order to preserve their "public image" (628). Few scholars will believe that Rome did not deliberately provoke the decline and fall of the Seleucid kingdom.[12] The Senate cannot have ignored the disastrous consequences of the treaty of Apamea for the kingdom's economic and political survival: the indemnity of 15,000 talents to be paid in twelve years was a huge sum even for the successor of the Achaemenids; the loss of Asia Minor was a catastrophe; the prohibition to recruit Greek mercenaries, together with that against keeping elephants, must necessarily weaken seriously the authority of the king over his own subjects. The same must be said of the humiliation of Rhodes: it was not an accident. Rome deliberately and systematically annihilated all naval

powers in the Aegean, whether large or small: Philip had to surrender all his vessels with the exception of five light ships (Pol. 18.44.6); Antiochos III was forbidden to keep more than ten ships of war (Pol. 21.42.13); the punishment of Rhodes after 168 broke its naval power; at the same time the Macedonians were forbidden to exploit or to export timber for the building of ships (Liv. 45.29.14). I believe that the Romans, who were no seafaring people, wanted to become masters of the sea without bearing the cost of a permanent navy. (The disastrous consequences of this policy were to appear only later.) Whether we find it justified or not—whether we call it imperialism, self-defence or otherwise—we simply must admit that the Romans disliked independent powers, and more particularly naval powers, in their vicinity, with the notion of vicinity getting larger and larger as time went on.

The feelings and reactions of the Greeks under the Roman protectorate are a complex subject. We may readily admit that Polybius is not quite neutral and that his assertions must be taken with caution (his explanation of the popularity of Perseus after the battle of Kallinikos at 27.9–10 is a masterpiece of hypocrisy); we may perhaps admit that the division of Greece into pro- and anti-Roman factions is "gross oversimplification" (so G. 337). But G. seriously underestimates the resentment the Greeks must more and more have felt against their Western protectors. He does not take into consideration that the Romans deliberately suppressed any possibility of an alternative and thereby created a situation that was radically different from the situation the Greeks had known for most of their history. From the beginning of the fifth to the end of the third century the Greek states had tried with some success to safeguard their autonomy by maintaining a balance between the leading powers, first Athens and Sparta; later Athens, Sparta and Thebes; and finally the Hellenistic kingdoms. It had happened only twice that a single power exercised an absolute hegemony over the Greek world: Sparta after the Athenian defeat in 404 and Macedonia after Chaeronea. In both cases dissatisfaction was immediate and extremely violent; in both cases the situation was felt by a large majority as an unbearable tyranny. The exclusive protection of Rome, which left no hope of a change to those who were not happy with the present situation, must have aroused similar feelings, and we ought to believe Polybius that the great majority of the Greeks did not want a defeat of Perseus. That Rome was strong enough to eradicate any form of open opposition should not blind us to the real sentiments of the Greeks towards the Romans.

There was another major change. The relations of the Greek states with the Hellenistic kingdoms had been a kind of symbiosis. On the one hand,

these kingdoms needed Greek mercenaries, officers and administrators; they offered large opportunities for people who by will or necessity looked for a better situation abroad. On the other hand, the kings had generously practised "evergetism", helping materially any cities in difficulties.[13] The Romans did not offer anything of this kind: there was no career for ambitious men in the Roman administration, no hope for the poor to make a livelihood as mercenaries; there was no evergetism for distressed cities, quite the opposite. (Dedications in sanctuaries cannot, of course, be considered evergetism.) Nothing compensated for the obligations connected with friendship with Rome, nothing compensated for the exactions of troops, or generals, of governors and legates. Friendship with Rome was in every respect unilateral.

Relations of friendship and protection between a great power and a weaker one have always been and will always remain ambiguous. Rights and obligations are vague, intentions and sentiments of the partners are complex, not only for the observer, but also for the people involved. It seems to me that G. is too much impressed by Roman propaganda (a demonstration of its efficacy!), by the apparent indifference of the Senate to the trifling affairs of the Greek cities, by the apparent freedom the Greeks enjoyed under the Roman protectorate. The behaviour of the Romans in the East from the beginning of the second century clearly shows that they were firmly determined to get exclusive control over Greece and to extend this control progressively over the Eastern Mediterranean. It is not easy for the historian to perceive the objectives of this policy, and discussion remains open on this subject; but the fact itself is unquestionable.

II

The subject of A.N. Sherwin-White's book is less ambitious and more limited than the title announces. The work is in fact focused on the conquest of Asia Minor and more particularly on the wars against Mithridates VI Eupator, which constitute the central part of it (Ch. V–IX). Ch. I–IV are a kind of introduction in the form of a survey of Roman intervention in Asia Minor before the first war with Mithridates, the last chapters (X–XIV) a description of the Roman wars in the East after the settlement of Pompeius.

In his survey of Roman Eastern policy in the second century, S.-W. stays on much the same lines as Gruen: Rome's policy is defined as mainly indifference and reluctance to get involved in Greek affairs. He shares, for instance, the view that the Romans did not deliberately destroy the Seleucid kingdom and did not have the intention of breaking Rhodian naval power.

There are some good observations: the best is that the growing difficulties of recruitment necessarily prevented the Senate from adventurous expansionism (9 f.). But on the whole these chapters are superficial and disappointing. In his interpretation of the humiliation of Eumenes II and Rhodes after the Third Macedonian War (Ch. II) he completely disregards the policy of Rome in Greece before, during and after this war, so that the "punishment" of these faithful friends of Rome becomes wholly unintelligible. It is also illusory to believe that the king of Pergamon remained largely independent (36 ff.). Nor do I quite understand his arguments against the authenticity of the treaty of 161 with Judas Maccabaeus (70–73).

The central part is better. The Mithridatic Wars, which were the starting-point of his book (p. vii), are obviously one of his favourite subjects. But again, the title is misleading. The most valuable and interesting pages are the very detailed description of the military operations, in which the author shows a remarkable knowledge of the topography of these areas and a great competence in strategy and tactics. Unfortunately, this interest in the operations in the field is compensated by a kind of indifference to the political aspect of the wars. In his description of the First Mithridatic War and its antecedents (Ch. V), he rightly asserts that the majority of the Senate did not want expansion in Asia Minor, he recognizes that such was the policy of Sulla from the beginning to the end, but he apparently does not realize the pressures exerted by influential groups for a more aggressive policy. He forgets that in the year 101 Saturninus accused an embassy sent by Mithridates of trying to corrupt the Senate (Diod. 36.15), with the obvious purpose of preparing a new command for Marius.[14] The journey of Marius to the East in 99 was certainly less innocent than S.-W. imagines. For the understanding of the policy of those who resisted a disorderly expansion of the empire at that time, it is of capital importance to interpret properly the so-called *lex de piratis persequendis*: if the dating and interpretation E. Grzybek and myself proposed some years ago are correct,[15] this law was not issued in 101 or 100 and was not directed against the Senate, as the editors and S.-W. (98 ff.) believe, but belongs to the year 99 or perhaps 98, with the aim of strengthening the authority of the Senate over adventurous generals and governors in order to prevent undesired expansion in this area. The political situation in Rome in those years deserved a more careful examination: a comparison with the Jugurthine War might have been useful.

The rest of the book has the same characteristics as the first chapters: excellent description of the campaigns of Pompey (Ch. IX), of Crassus (Ch. XII), of Antonius (Ch. XIII) on the one side, summary and some-

times strange considerations regarding the political context on the other. The view that Pompeius was not really concerned with the interests of the financial class (202 and 232) is rather surprising. The implications of the possible annexation of Egypt in the contest between Pompeius and Crassus or of the Parthian War in the conflict between Pompeius and Caesar in the late fifties are not even perceived (Ch. XI and XII). Most astonishing is the portrait of Augustus as an imperialistic and expansionist emperor who refrained from invading Parthia only because he feared a military disaster might endanger his regime (328 ff.).

S.-W. might have written a quite valuable and very useful book if he had concentrated on the military aspects of the Roman wars in the East. But as an analysis of Roman Eastern policy, which the title promises, his book is not really satisfactory.

University of Geneva — Adalberto Giovannini

NOTES

1. See esp. p. 480: "Local affairs remained paramount, particularistic considerations still occupied the center. To concentrate upon conflict between Rome and Macedonia or between Rome and Syria misses what was most significant to the Greeks. They exploited those larger conflicts—or suffered from them—in struggles for local power with their own neighbors."

2. The only parallel I know of in Greek diplomacy is the treaty of 404 between Sparta and Athens (*Staatsverträge* 211).

3. See, e.g., Thuc. 5.23=*Staatsverträge* 189 and *Staatsverträge* 231 (fifty years); Thuc. 3.114=*Staatsverträge* 175 (one hundred years); *Staatsverträge* 223, 263, 476, 480 etc. (for ever).

4. For a list of the oldest Roman treaties see Gruen 58 f. The treaty of 263 with Hieron II (*Staatsverträge* 479) was limited to 15 years, but it was only an *eirene*, not an alliance: see A. Eckstein, *Unicum subsidium populi Romani*: Hiero II and Rome, 263 B.C.–215 B.C., *Chiron* 10 (1980) 183–203.

5. "Renewal" of friendship, which is very frequent in Greek and Roman documents, is only a diplomatic formula, not a legal act: see the bibliography in *MH* 28 (1971) 158 n. 10.

6. Treaties with kings are a particular problem that cannot be discussed here: see the bibliography on this question in *MH* cit. 166 n. 36.

7. Gruen of course knows the passage, but he quite significantly only quotes the first part of it (456 n. 105).

8. On the impressive purge that followed the Third Macedonian War see J. Deininger, *Der politische Widerstand gegen Rom in Griechenland, 217–86 v. Chr.* (1971) 191–214.

9. Pol. 6.12.6. See on this point W. Dahlheim, *Gewalt und Herrschaft. Das provinziale Herrschaftswesen der römischen Republik* (1977) 202.

10. See especially the splendid SC for Aphrodisias recently published by J. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome, JRS* Monographs I (1982) Document 8 lines 32 ff., where we find a list of the contributions a general or a governor could ask from friends and allies. The lodging of Roman troops was such a calamity that cities were ready to pay huge sums to avoid it (see Cic. *Att.* 5.21.7).

11. Gruen 288 ff. But he is certainly mistaken in doubting the creation of a province of Macedonia after 148 (433 f.). In the late Republic Macedonia was, when not attributed to a consul, a praetorian (i.e., a permanent) province (Cic. *De prov. cons.* 17; on the meaning of consular or praetorian provinces see my *Consulare imperium* (1983) 65 ff.).

12. As Gruen claims, 286 and 669 ("The idea that Rome worked behind the scenes to cripple the Seleucids is manifestly absurd").

13. A very good example is the solidarity for Rhodes after the earthquake of 227 (Pol. 5.88–90).

14. See T.J. Luce, Marius and the Mithridatic command, *Historia* 19 (1970) 161–194.

15. A. Giovannini and E. Grzybek, La *lex de piratis persequendis, MH* 35 (1978) 33–47.

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