

HENDRIKUS A. M. VAN WIJLICK, *ROME AND THE NEAR EASTERN KINGDOMS AND PRINCIPALITIES, 44–31 BC: A STUDY OF POLITICAL RELATIONS DURING CIVIL WAR* (Impact of empire 38). Leiden and Boston: 2021. Pp. xii + 307, illus. ISBN 9789004441743. €119.00.

The volume under review bears witness to the unwaning scholarly interest in Rome's intricate relationships with Near Eastern rulers. Hendrikus van Wijlick focuses relatively narrowly on the intense period 44–31 B.C., with the aim of understanding the impact of Roman civil conflict in this sphere. The book consists of an introduction, three main parts and an epilogue, followed by maps and dynastic stemmata, bibliography and indices. In the Introduction, W. lists the extant source material, addresses relevant terminological issues and defines the geographical scope of the investigation. Regrettably, Cappadocia is left out (because only the region around Melitene is usually considered part of the Near East), though readers would have profited from the inclusion of a kingdom and a dynasty that was heavily affected by the Roman civil wars and close to the Parthian empire.

Part 1 ('Prelude') looks back to Pompey's activity in the East (66–63 B.C.). This laid the foundations of Roman eastern policy in later years, so W. was certainly right to include Pompey's re-organisation in his book. But this addition shows why other scholars have preferred to examine longer periods. The chapter ends by emphasising Pompey's aim of stabilising the Levant in order to explain his decision to confirm most rulers, resorting to provincialisation only in the case of Syria, where the claimant to the throne had proven unsuitable to rule. The conclusion is unsurprising: the creation of a province was not a simple matter, either in theory or in practice. For a Roman commander, the confirmation of an old king or the appointment of a new one was the most economic strategy and an excellent way to gain personal supporters. Stress should be laid on the difference between personal and interstate *amicitia*: before his *acta* were ratified by the Senate, the friendships Pompey concluded with the Near Eastern states remained at a personal level and these links lasted enough to secure him military support at Pharsalus.

The core of the book (Part 2) consists of two sections covering the years 44–42 and 42–31 B.C. respectively, with the battle of Philippi being the watershed. Each section contains chapters dedicated to particular Near Eastern kingdoms and principalities, examined exclusively in their relationship with Rome. Parthia, Ptolemaic Egypt, Judaea, Chalcis and Emesa are discussed in both sections, while Nabataea, Armenia, Media Atropatene and Commagene appear only in the second. Each chapter is designed to stand on its own. The approach makes the book easy to dip into, but leads to considerable repetition for those who read it through. Yet Part 2 also contains the book's most original contributions, for example the interpretation of Florus 2.20.1 (116–17), the chronology of the territorial grants to Cleopatra (130–6) and the discussion on the appointment of Zenodorus of Chalcis (169–72).

Part 3 analyses the political relations between Rome and the Near Eastern kingdoms from a bilateral perspective, looking for patterns of behaviour that might be characteristic of these years of civil strife. A total of thirteen types of behaviour are identified and well described. Only one of these, however, ('involvement of a Near Eastern ruler in a civil war') can really be considered distinctive to the period. The conclusion is that 'the types of conduct that have been identified in this study were, in spite of their diversity, for the most part not novel or typical of civil strife' (235). The key element was the confrontation between Rome and Parthia, which deprived the smaller kingdoms of the Near East of autonomy in their foreign policy. This takes us back to Pompey's activity in the East, which marked the initial stage of this process, and again calls into question the decision to focus on this narrow chronological interval.

This is a well-written book that assembles and thoroughly sieves a large amount of information from ancient sources and modern studies. Though it may not identify any institutional novelties or unusual administrative practices in the relationships between Rome and the Near Eastern states in this period, it nevertheless provides an accurate reconstruction of these relationships and a useful synopsis of Roman policy in the East during these troubled years. Typos are few (among the less trivial are the presence of both spellings Atropatene/Atropetene at 123; Dabrowa rather than Dąbrowa, and an Antony too many at 164). The book will thus be of value to researchers and advanced students interested in the ever-fascinating subject that is the political relations between Rome and the Near East.

Università degli Studi di Pisa  
margherita.facella@unipi.it

MARGHERITA FACELLA

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