

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)*, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2021, 307 pp. + 3 figs. + 3 maps + 6 stemmae;
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There have been numerous detailed analyses of Rome's relationship with friendly or dependent states in Anatolia and the Near East during the First and Second Triumvirate. The interest in this subject stems from both the relatively large number of sources on the period of civil wars in the final years of the Republic and the role played by the rulers of these states in the battles of Roman political parties as well as the formation of these regions' political map. One can now add to the long list of publications on Rome's relations with the rulers of allied eastern states Hendrikus A. M. van Wijlick's book, a corrected version of the author's PhD dissertation, presented in 2013 at the University of Durham.

The subject of the book is a relatively short, but extremely dramatic period in Rome's history bracketed by the death of Caesar in March 44 BCE and Octavian's victory at Actium in autumn 31 BCE. The tumultuous political events that filled it led to the fall of the republican system and the foundation of the Principate. The position of Rome's largest neighbour in the East, the Parthian state ruled by the Arsacid dynasty, as well as the participation of the rulers of states aligned with it—the Ptolemaic Egypt, Judaea, Chalcis, Emesa, Nabatea, Armenia, Media Atropatene and Commagene—had a major impact on these events. The extent of their involvement in the events played out in the Roman state or the stance they took in some cases strongly affected their own fortunes as well as those of the states they ruled. Despite the abundance of literature on this subject, van Wijlick's attempt to order and present the many aspects of the individual rulers' activity in the course of the political struggles taking place in the Roman state is desirable and useful.

The book, in addition to the "Introduction" (pp. 1–24) and "Epilogue" (pp. 234–237), consists of three main parts. The first ("Prelude," pp. 27–60), a comprehensive introduction to the argument proper, presents the activity of Gn. Pompey in the East in 66–63 BCE. The decisions the Roman leader took at this time concerning the fate of a number of rulers and their states created the political system that assured Rome effective control over extensive areas of eastern Anatolia and the Near East. These decisions brought the regions in question into the increasingly strong orbit of Roman politics.

The second, most extensive part, which is the core of the book, does not have its own title. It is divided into two sections, one of which concerns the history of Rome's rela-

tions with the Parthian state and the rulers of allied states in 44–42 BCE (pp. 65–102), and the other the relations in 42–31 BCE (pp. 105–203). The dividing line between these two periods is the Battle of Philippi, which ushered in a new phase of mutual relations between Mark Antony and Octavian. It was characterised by the fact that, although Mark Antony did not abandon participation in the political struggle in Rome itself and Italy, he chose the eastern provinces of the Roman state as the main area of his political and military activity. The consequence of this approach was intensive activities in the East and his creation there of a dependent network of dynastic connections. These were to guarantee him a solid and stable political foundation for the future, essential for achieving his plans of taking power in Rome. The wide resonance of these actions in the sources makes an in-depth analysis of various aspects of them possible.


Part 3 (“Types of Conduct,” pp. 207–233) is divided into two chapters. One of them is about the forms of the relations of the rulers allied with Rome in the period in question (“Conduct of Near Eastern Rulers towards Rome,” pp. 209–225), and the other on the forms of Rome’s relations with these rulers (“Rome’s Conduct towards Near Eastern Kingdoms and Principalities,” pp. 226–233). Both provide a valuable supplement to Part 2 as the author shows the diverse factors that determined Mark Antony’s approach to the various rulers and dictated the nature of mutual relations between the two parties. Each had their own expectations of the other side that affected their desire to retain close relations or avoid them. Among the factors that encouraged Eastern rulers to work closely with Rome we can mention their appeal for Roman help in dealing with internal problems, forming an alliance against a local rival, and expectation of compensation for their support in the form of increased territory. In return for fulfilling these expectations, they were ready to participate in wars at the Romans’ side or to lend their support to one of the rival Roman groupings. The Roman commanders operating in the East after 44 BCE were willing to meet the expectations of their local partners in return for receiving the help they needed, but at the same time they exploited their dominant position to subject these partners to military pressure, demanding their financial and military support and changing the borders of their states as they saw fit. Mark Antony himself had such a strong position in the East that he not only arranged dynastic marriages, but even removed and designated rulers.

Van Wijlick’s book is certainly original, despite its subject matter being a thoroughly researched and described period of Roman history. This is especially clear in the analysis of the events of the years between 44 and 31 BCE—which is significant because insufficient attention is paid in particular to the years 44–42 BCE in works focusing on the late period of the Republic. A further undoubted merit of the book is the author’s clear portrayal of the role played by the rulers of individual allied states throughout the period. There is, however, a certain drawback to the chosen form of presentation: on several occasions the author repeats the same expressions almost word for word in various places. These repetitions are noticed mostly when reading the whole work systematically, and less so when reading passages on specific countries, but they are inevitable given the way the book is constructed.

Certain evaluations and interpretations made by the author are disputable, such as those on the Parthians’ participation in the struggles on the side of Caesar’s killers. Yet discussing these issues here would take up too much space.

Overall, however, there is no doubt that van Wijlick's book can be recommended to all scholars dealing with both the late period of the Republic and Rome's relations in this period with the rulers of neighbouring or allied states.

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