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Rome as the last universal empire in the ideological discourse of the 2nd century BCE

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Rome as a universal empire in Polybius' historiography

- 1 According to Polybius' account (15.10.2), P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus delivered a speech to the Roman army before the Battle of Zama (202 BCE):

Bear in mind, he said, your past battles and fight like brave men worthy of yourselves and your country. Keep it before your eyes that if you overcome your enemies not only will you be unquestioned masters of Africa, but you will gain for yourselves and your country the undisputed command and sovereignty of the rest of the world.¹

- 2 Modern historians have generally regarded these words with some scepticism and interpreted them as nothing more than a series of propagandistic clichés. Such a conception, it is argued, belongs to Polybius' personal and a posteriori interpretation of the historical facts of that period; no contemporary source would have framed the Battle of Zama in such terms.² However, F.W. Walbank is of a different opinion. In his study of the role of direct and indirect speech in Polybius' writings, Walbank correctly argues that Scipio's speech before Zama

represents what Scipio actually said, despite the fact that on such occasions commonplaces are what one can reasonably expect. But this does not mean that Polybius improvised. In view of the principles which he enunciates so consistently and with such vigour, it seems to me more likely that he took his account of Scipio's speech in good faith from whatever source he used for the battle of Zama.³

- 3 Walbank thus claims that Polybius did not invent the speech; he was simply recording what he found in his sources, which could have been directly influenced by themes and issues that characterized the ideological discourse of Rome during its oversea wars. The

aim of this paper is to substantiate Walbank's view, adducing evidence from other contemporary sources.

- 4 In P. Scipio Africanus' speech the nexus between the outcome of the battle of Zama and the consequent universal dimension of Roman power is especially noteworthy. The same conception is mentioned by Polybius in his introduction to his account of the Battle of Zama (15.9.4-5):

Neither would it be easy to find a case in which destiny had offered such great rewards to the adversaries as those which there were then. The victors in the battle would have exercised dominion not only over Libya or Europe but also over the other regions of the inhabited world which we know about today. Exactly what came about not long after.⁴
- 5 From Polybius' perspective, the significance of the battle is not that it led to Roman dominion over Libya. Rather it is important because it represents the beginning of Rome's dominion over Europe and, more importantly, the entire known world. From a historical point of view, it is clear that such an association is a piece of hyperbolic and propagandistic discourse hailing from the period of the Second Punic War. However, themes such as the idea of Europe as Rome's realm of dominion (in ideological opposition to Carthage and Libya) and the image of Rome's universal empire are not limited to isolated and scattered references to the Battle of Zama. Such conceptions played a major role in the context of the Syrian War as well and were, more generally, part of the ideology Rome developed to justify its territorial expansion in Greece and Asia Minor.⁵
- 6 Especially interesting in Polybius' account is the projection of the battle's outcome and consequence onto the future, as if to say that Zama would be only the beginning of Rome's progression towards universal world domination. The fact that Polybius specifies that Rome will acquire this dominion shortly after Zama could be understood as a reference to the Syrian War, when Roman power took on an ideological-universalistic character for the first time (for this theme, see below). Polybius' source, using hindsight to reconsider the events of Zama, may have identified the battle – and above all its positive outcome for Rome – as the first step on its way to universal dominion!
- 7 It is necessary to clarify when Zama began to be perceived by Romans as an important historical event. In other words, when did this battle come to be seen as an epochal turning point on Rome's path to a universal dominion? It is certainly significant that Polybius links P. Scipio Africanus to the theme of universal dominion: it is P. Scipio Africanus who reminds his soldiers that Rome will obtain undisputed dominion over the whole inhabited world. If we consider the crucial propagandistic role played by P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus at the beginning of the 2nd century – in an anti-Roman tradition, probably dating to the same period, he prophesizes disaster and catastrophe for Rome⁶ – his prophecy here about Rome's future, universal dominion is certainly interesting.⁷
- 8 The theme of universal dominion appears in another tradition which has been for the most part ignored by modern scholars (with the important exception of Passerini⁸). In an analysis of the literary sources related to Hannibal's presence at the court of Antiochus III and to his plans to bring the war to Italian soil, Passerini refers to a passage from Cornelius Nepos' *Life of Hannibal* (8.3: "On the other hand, Antiochus, if he had been as willing to follow Hannibal's advice in the conduct of the war as he had been

determined in his enthusiasm for it, then he would have contended for the empire of the world (*summa imperii*) nearer to the Tiber than Thermopylae⁹). Passerini explains: "assai frettoloso e retoricamente elaborato per produrre effetto [...] Utilizzabile è solo quelle che egli accenna dell'oggetto della guerra (*de summa imperii*), che dimostra una concezione uguale a quella di Giustino". It is precisely the affinity of this particular aspect of Nepos' account to other sources which describe Hannibal's plans to invade Italy that leads Passerini to include at least a part of Nepos' biography of Hannibal among the reliable – or at least plausible – historical sources of the period. If we accept Passerini's interpretation, the importance of Cornelius Nepos' passage is clear: it mentions the theme of *summa imperii* – that is the greatest dominion ever, a dominion of ecumenical dimensions – in relation to another important episode of the beginning to the 2nd century BCE, the Syrian War. One element of Cornelius Nepos' passage allows us to contextualize these words attributed to Hannibal in the ideological climate which prevailed during the outbreak of the Syrian War: in order to emphasise that the main aspect of Hannibal's strategy was to bring the war first to Italy and specifically to Rome itself,¹⁰ Cornelius Nepos draws an interesting parallel between the Tiber river and Thermopylae. Certainly, the reference to Thermopylae could have been added later based on a retrospective reflection on the actual developments of the Syrian war, which also involved a battle at Thermopylae. However, it is clear that such a reference must also have had other and more ideologically evocative meanings. Thermopylae must be seen as pertaining to a wider, Persian theme, constituting a symbol of the clash between the Greeks and Persians or between Greeks and Barbarians, the conflict between West and East, Europe and Asia.¹¹ In light of the role that the anti-Persian theme played in the Roman anti-Seleucid propaganda at the time of the Syrian War,¹² it is possible that the reference to Thermopylae constitutes, in Cornelius Nepos' source (which the biographer may have summarized), an echo of the ideological climate current during the clash between Rome and Antiochus, lending credence to the fact that *summa imperii* was the war's primary objective (at least in propaganda).

- 9 The ideological basis of Cornelius Nepos' account must also be understood in relation to the ideological rivalry between P. Scipio Africanus and Hannibal.¹³ It is certainly no accident that it is in Nepos' biography of Hannibal, specifically during his description of Hannibal's designs on Rome and Italy, that Antiochus is characterized as aspiring for universal dominion himself at the exact moment in which C. Scipio Africanus was elected consul.¹⁴
- 10 Plutarch seems to confirm that universal dominion was one of Antiochus' objectives. He writes: "πρὸς τὴν ἀπάντων ἡγεμονίαν ἀποβλέποντα, μάλιστα δὲ κατὰ Ῥωμαίων ἀνιστάμενον" (Plutarch, *Titus Flamininus* 9.6). It is particularly noteworthy that this comment is linked to Hannibal's presence at the king's court and to his attempts to persuade the Seleucid king to attack Rome, which is remarkably similar to the passage from Nepos. It would obviously be simplistic to view this brief comment from Plutarch as historical evidence of the Seleucid plans. However, we cannot help but emphasise that, once again, the theme of universal dominion arises in reference to the struggle between Antiochus and Rome. This further confirms that the theme was an important element in the propaganda strategy employed in the political climate of that period.
- 11 Other pieces of evidence confirm this interpretation. For instance, Plutarch (*De Pythiae oraculis* 399c) records the words of an oracle which links a series of devastating earthquakes (which occurred shortly after the battle of Cynoscephalae) to the prophecy

of Roman victory over the Macedonians. This episode is also mentioned by Justin, who, however, interprets it in a very different way (30.4.4): "Everyone was astonished by this wonder and the seers foresaw that the embryonic Roman empire would devour those of the Greeks and the Macedonians".¹⁵ According to Ferrary, Justin is referencing the theme of *translatio imperii*, the transfer of universal dominion from the Macedonians to the Romans.¹⁶ Ferrary also argues that this reference to *translatio imperii* is anachronistic in the context of Cynoscephalae and should probably be attributed to the ideological context of Pompeius Trogus' time.¹⁷ However, we can counter this interpretation by citing another text of another oracle related to the defeat of Macedonia at the hands of men "from the West and the East", reported by Pausanias.¹⁸ This expression contains references to the Romans (as "men from the West") and to the inhabitants of Pergamum ("men from the East") who would together have defeated the Macedonians. However, according to Ferrary, Pausanias' explanation is not altogether satisfactory as it would have been more logical to portray the Aetolians as being on Rome's side (as in fact occurred, as reported in Alcaeus of Messene's epigram). For this reason, Ferrary believes that this oracle was codified in Pergamum after 180 BCE, when both Eumenes, king of Pergamum, and Philip V sought to obtain control over the cities of coastal Thrace. During this time, Pergamum, Rome's ally, codified an oracle against Philip V, which already celebrated its victory (and that of the Romans) over Philip at the time of Cynoscephalae. This would explain, Ferrary argues, the oracle's reference to the "men from the West and the East" as well as Pausanias' comment.¹⁹ The reference to East and West not as opposites (as occurs in anti-Roman traditions, such as the prophecy reported by Antisthenes of Rhodes and mentioned above) but as allies in productive partnership is reminiscent of the Roman propaganda against Philip V and Antiochus III. The East-West dialectic was part of the ideological panorama of this specific historical climate.²⁰ Moreover, the ideologically important bond between Europe (or the West according to the contraposition mentioned above) and Rome acquired importance in the context of Roman expansion. Finally, the Trojan myth – which, in the interpretation given to it at the time of the Syrian War, portrayed the arrival of the Romans in Ilium as a rightful and legitimate return to an ancestral homeland – gave the Romans themselves the credit for reconciling East and West. Such a meeting was another way of presenting the idea of universal dominion which had also been realized by the empire of Alexander the Great.²¹ For this reason, it is more plausible to see the obscure expressions of the oracle reported by Pausanias not as a reference to the Pergamians, which would certainly have been anachronistic, but rather as a celebrative reference to the Romans, implying not only their Trojan ancestry but also the universal character (from West to East) of their dominion.

Rome as the last universal empire

- ¹² In this respect, the evidence provided by Aemilius Sura should be also considered as it mentions Rome as the last universal empire within the so-called *translatio imperii* (Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*, 1.6.6):

The Assyrians were the first of all nations to hold world power, then the Medes, and after them the Persians, and then the Macedonians. Subsequently, through the defeat of Kings Philip and Antiochus, of Macedonian origin, following closely upon the overthrow of Carthage, the world power passed to the Romans. Between this time and the beginning of the reign of Ninus king of the Assyrians, who was the

first to hold world power, lies an interval of nineteen hundred and ninety-five years.²²

- 13 In analysing this passage, scholars have paid particular attention to chronological problems. While some historians date Aemilius Sura to the first half of the 2nd century BCE, others argue against this hypothesis. In general,²³ alongside various specific objections, it has been argued that the very idea of "universal empire" cannot have been part of the Roman worldview during the first half of the 2nd century BCE and that Aemilius Sura – and therefore the concept of Rome's universal empire – must be dated much later, to the first half of the 1st century BCE, or even to the early imperial period, when the idea of Rome as a universal empire would have made more sense and would have been in line with Augustus' ideology.²⁴
- 14 In my opinion, it is important to distinguish between the dating of Aemilius Sura, who may have been a Late Republican author, and the image of Rome as a universal empire: indeed, nothing precludes the possibility that this image was already circulating in the first half of the 2nd century BCE and then was reformulated during the 1st century BCE to respond to new ideological needs.
- 15 By contrast, it seems implausible that the idea that Rome gained her *summa imperii* as a consequence of the Syrian War was codified, for the first time, at the end of the Republic (or even later). In that period, it would have been odd to refer to the territories Rome acquired by defeating Antiochus as its greatest territorial expansion. It goes without saying that from a late-Republican or early imperial perspective a more recent reference would have been more appropriate. Rome's empire grew extensively after the end of the Syrian War and it is, thus, extremely difficult to understand why a late-Republican or early imperial tradition would have projected the maximum expansion of Rome's Empire so far back into the past, ignoring subsequent conquests. Furthermore, Mendels' observations do not refute this as he argues that the association between the end of the Syrian War and the idea of maximum expansion was purely illustrative in function.
- 16 It is much more likely that this perspective belongs to a historical period in which the victory over the Seleucids constituted, in Roman eyes, the achievement of the *summa imperii*. On the other hand, as we have seen, this was not the first time that such an important victory involved contemporary or subsequent references to *summa imperii* in Roman propaganda. In the light of these considerations, it is plausible that the concept of universal dominion, articulated in the image of the succession of empires, could have reflected the propagandistic discourse which acted as the backdrop to the Second Macedonian and Syrian Wars.²⁵
- 17 Thus, we can partially agree with Mendels when he states: "I would like to suggest that the stimulus to turn the theory into a propagandistic topos could have arisen when Rome started to interfere intensively in the regions which belonged to the first three empires of the topos, namely in the first century BC".²⁶ We cannot, however, agree with his claim that Rome began to intervene actively in Asia (the region in which the succession of empires first began) only in the 1st century BCE; Roman intervention in Asia had already begun in the 2nd century BCE with the Syrian War, especially during the events which preceded and caused it. The very Persian characterisation of Antiochus III and the struggle between the king and Rome (which as a propagandistic strategy only reappears episodically on later occasions),²⁷ undoubtedly contributed to the decision to use the framework of the succession of universal empires, since the

Persians were themselves one of these empires. In the same way, the use of the Asia-Europe dialectic could have facilitated recourse to the concept of universal dominion as, for example, can be inferred from Livy (36.17.14). There Livy describes M. Acilius Glabrio, prior to the battle of Thermopylae, forecasting the defeat of Asia and the extension of Roman dominion *ad ortum ditissima regna* in complete accordance with the universal perception of the final victory over Antiochus III (Livy, 38.8.4): "Antiochus had been defeated both on land and sea and driven beyond the Taurus almost to the ends of the world".²⁸

- 18 Another piece of evidence confirms that the idea of universal dominion (in connection or in opposition to Rome) circulated during Rome's oversea wars. Summarizing the Syrian War, Florus states (1.24.2): "Report never represented any war as more formidable than this, as the Romans thought of the Persians and the East, of Xerxes and Darius, of the days when impassable mountains were said to have been cut through and the sea hidden with sails".²⁹ Later, in paragraph 11, Florus adds: "They pursued him in his flight, and at Thermopylae, a place memorable for the glorious defeat of the three hundred Spartans [...] and forced him to own them victors by land and sea".³⁰ And finally, and no less significantly: "Let not Athens be over-proud: in Antiochus we defeated a Xerxes; in Aemilius we had the equal of an Alcibiades; at Ephesus we rivalled Salamis".³¹ In Florus' description of the Syrian War, the idea of the inevitability of the Roman Empire, moving from West to East, also prefigures and implies the birth of a new universal dominion.
- 19 This piece of evidence has never received the attention it deserves from modern scholars, who have simply counted it as another case of references to Greek history being used to glorify Roman victories. However, as argued elsewhere,³² given that the comparison between L. Aemilius Regillus and Alcibiades seems to precisely correspond to the propagandistic needs of the Aemilii – and may have originally been formulated specifically for this purpose – it is possible that the parallel between the battles of Salamis and Ephesus played a similar ideological function. In Livy's parallel narration of the battle of Ephesus, there is no trace of parallelism with any of the events of the Greco-Persian Wars (37.27-30). It is, therefore, significant that the synthetic character of Florus' work does not prevent the author from indulging in details which are not essential to his narrative but rather designed to give an understanding of the ideological climate in which this simile was produced. Livy, in contrast to the tradition reported in Florus, does not draw any parallels between the Persian and Syrian Wars.³³ Given Livy's limited interest in the Persian Wars, we would suggest that Florus took his account of the Syrian War from elsewhere, confirmed by the other discrepancies between the two accounts.³⁴
- 20 It has been suggested that Aemilius Sura could have been one of the sources Florus employed – directly or indirectly – for his narration of the Syrian War, mostly because Florus seems to present the war in a light favourable to the *Aemilii*.³⁵
- 21 Indeed, while Florus' version has several discrepancies in respect to the parallel version of Livy, it is reminiscent of the inscription that L. Aemilius Regillus placed in the temple of the *Lares Permarini* in 190 BCE on occasion of his victory on Antiochus III. The text of the inscription is reported by Livy³⁶ (Livy, 40.52.5):

When Lucius the son of Marcus Aemilius went out to battle to put an end to a great war and to subdue kings [...] The chief cause of obtaining peace [...] under his auspicious command and fortunate leadership the fleet of Antiochus, ever before invincible, was defeated, shattered and put to flight between Ephesus, Samos and

Chios, before the very eyes of Antiochus and of his whole army, his cavalry and elephants. On that day forty-two ships of war were captured there, with all their crews; and after that battle had been fought, King Antiochus and his realm [...] Wherefore, because of this action he vowed a temple to the *Lares Permarini*.³⁷

- 22 Apart from the differences between the inscription and the rest of the tradition,³⁸ the description of Antiochus watching the destruction of his fleet echoes an image portrayed by Herodotus (8.90) in which Xerxes watches from the slopes of Mount Aigaleo as his fleet was wiped out.³⁹ As Livy omits this detail (Livy, 36.43.9), it seems that for Florus (or his source) the need to echo the Salamis episode had significant repercussions for way the event was narrated and resulted in certain alterations in sequence. Accordingly, the similarity with Herodotus' version of the battle of Salamis is meant to emphasize not only the importance of L. Aemilius Regillus, whose military skill serves as a foil to the limited abilities of Antiochus, but also, more generally, the battle itself, which one tradition sought to link to the illustrious example of the Greeks at Salamis. Zevi rightly notes the connection between the temple inscription and Florus' passage: they both seem to belong to a contemporary account of the event which was only partially incorporated into Livy's own account. This would mean that the "Persian" characterisation of Florus' chapter on the Syrian War should not be attributed to the author's own literary presentation, but rather to a chronologically close (if not contemporary) tradition narrating the war between Antiochus and Rome.⁴⁰ In the light of these considerations, we could hypothesize that the rest of Florus' narration of the Syrian War – including the important references to the *translatio imperii* and to the *summa imperii* of Rome – must also be attributed to a source which was very close to the events it describes, possibly Aemilius Sura.
- 23 Apart from the problem of Florus' sources, it is important to stress here the number of ideological themes that the author incorporates into his brief narration of the Syrian War: in addition to the parallelism to the Greco-Persian Wars,⁴¹ which were an important part of the ideological discourse that Rome developed against Antiochus III already at the time of the Syrian War, there are also precise references to the idea of universal dominion and its expression through the concept of *translatio imperii*.⁴² Adding to the evidence mentioned above, Florus further confirms the primary role that the themes of the *translatio imperii* and of the *summa imperii* played at the time of the clash between Rome and the Hellenistic kingdoms.
- 24 In the context of the connection between the theme of the *translatio imperii* and the Syrian War, a further aspect of Aemilius Sura's excerpt is worth mentioning. In my opinion, it is not accidental that Aemilius Sura insists on the Macedonian origins of both Philip and Antiochus (Velleius Paterculus, 1.6.6): *exinde duobus regibus Philippo et Antiocho, qui a Macedonibus oriundi erant, haud multo post Carthaginem subactam devictis summa imperii ad populum Romanum pervenit*. In order to justify the transfer of universal dominion to Roman hands after the defeat of Antiochus III, Aemilius Sura emphasises that the Seleucid king was also of Macedonian origin.⁴³ Such a detail is particularly important to the topos of the succession of empires as it justifies the transfer of the empire from Macedonia to Rome. It also clarifies that it was the victory over the Seleucid monarch – and not over Philip V – which constituted the last step in the succession of empires. This would point to a propagandistic motive: to present Rome as the heir of the universal empires of the past and, thus, the legitimate inheritor of the right to rule over the entire world.

- 25 In summary, in the light of the evidence referring to the period of the oversea wars, the hypothesis that the picture of Rome's dominion as a universal empire spread already at the very beginning of the 2nd century BCE, as suggested by Polybius, appears to be further confirmed.

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Zevi 1997 = F. Zevi, *Il tempio dei Lari Permarini, la Roma degli Emilii e il mondo greco*, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, 104, 1997, p. 81-115.

NOTES

1. "ἡξίου γὰρ μνημονεύοντας τῶν προγεγονότων ἀγῶνων ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς γίνεσθαι, σφῶν καὶ τῆς πατρίδος ἀξίους, καὶ λαμβάνειν πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ὅτι κρατήσαντες μὲν τῶν ἐχθρῶν οὐ μόνον τῶν ἐν Λιβύῃ πραγμάτων ἔσονται κύριοι βεβαίως, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἄλλης οἰκουμένης τὴν ἡγεμονίαν καὶ δυναστείαν ἀδήριτον αὐτοῖς τε καὶ τῇ πατρίδι περιποιήσουσιν". Translation from Paton 1976, p. 487.

2. La Roche 1857, p. 67. See discussion of the issue in Walbank 1963.

3. According to Walbank 1963, p. 10, "the speeches he has recorded are an accurate version, in substance, of what was actually said".

4. "οὔτε γὰρ δυνάμεις πολεμικώτερας οὔθ' ἡγεμόνας ἐπιτυχεστέρους τούτων καὶ μᾶλλον ἀθλητὰς γεγονότας τῶν κατὰ πόλεμον ἔργων εὗροι τις ἂν ἐτέρους, οὐδὲ μὴν ἄλλα μείζω τὴν τύχην ἐκτεθεικυῖαν τοῖς ἀγωνιζομένοις τῶν τότε προκειμένων. οὐ γὰρ τῆς Λιβύης αὐτῆς οὐδὲ τῆς Εὐρώπης ἔμελλον κυριεύειν οἱ τῇ μάχῃ κρατήσαντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων μερῶν τῆς οἰκουμένης, ὅσα νῦν πέπτωκεν ὑπὸ τὴν ἱστορίαν. ὃ καὶ συνέβη γενέσθαι μετ' ὀλίγον".

5. On this problem see Russo 2013 and Russo 2014b with further bibliographical indications.

6. The prophecy, considered an interesting piece of the Aetolian and Seleucid propaganda against Rome, is reproduced in a passage written by Antisthenes of Rhodes, quoted by Phlegon of Tralles (Antisth. ap. Phlegon of Tralles, *περὶ θαυμασίων*, 3.9 = *FGrHist* 257, F 36, p. 1176), and is usually interpreted as an expression of Rome's enemies' desire for revenge in the aftermath of the battle of Thermopylae. According to a certain Publius (namely, P. Scipio Africanus), a king, hailing from Asia, would bring a series of disasters to Italy and Rome; moreover, Athena, furious with Rome, would bring war to Italy and invasion by an Asian army. Modern scholars, on the basis of the precise historical information interwoven into the prophecy, argue that the text should be dated to the Syrian War and that it was codified in an Aetolian context at some point between the battle of Thermopylae and the peace of Apamea. On the evidence supplied by Phlegon of Tralles see Breglia Pulci Doria 1983, and, for a general summary of the problem, see Porqueddu 1982. For prophecy's meaning in the context of the Syrian War, see Gabba 1975. According to Martelli 1982, p. 251, Antisthenes' evidence should be considered Seleucid in origin and should be dated to the end of the Syrian War. Gauger 1980, p. 225-261 attributes the text of the oracle not to Antisthenes of Rhodes but to another Antisthenes, a peripatetic Athenian, dating it to the period of the first Mithridatic Wars. For a recent discussion of this topic, see Russo 2014b. For the possible Mithridatic use of the prophecy, see Russo 2009.

7. Considering the relationship between Polybius and the Scipiones, it is conceivable that the former consulted sources belonging to a philo-Scipionic tradition which, in the wake of the success of the universal dominion theme during the Syrian War, sought to portray P. Scipio Africanus as the true founder of Rome's universal empire by virtue of

his success at the Battle of Zama. Be this as it may, it remains clear that the ideological core of P. Scipio Africanus' speech, with its references to Rome's universal dominion, must be placed in the context of the decades following the Battle of Zama.

8. Passerini 1933, p. 11-14.

9. *Antiochus autem, si tam in agendo bello consiliis eius parere voluisset, quam in suscipiendo instituerat, propius Tiberi quam Thermopylis de summa imperii dimicasset.*

10. This is one of the features of Cornelius Nepos' account which prompts Passerini to consider it reliable because it accords entirely with other traditions.

11. Russo 2010.

12. Russo 2013; Russo 2014b.

13. Livy (35.14.5) also reports (with a degree of scepticism) a dialogue between Hannibal and P. Scipio Africanus, which would have taken place at the Seleucid court.

14. For the propagandistic role played by the Scipionic circle in the context of the Syrian War, see Gabba 1975 and Mastrocinque 1982, p. 120-121.

15. Epitome of Pompeius Trogus' *Philippic Histories* 30.4.4: *Quo prodigio territis omnibus vates cecinere, oriens Romanorum imperium vetus Graecorum ac Macedonum voraturum.*

16. On the theme of *translatio imperii*, see especially Momigliano 1980 and Momigliano 1982. For an overview of the issue, see Fabbrini 1983. On Aemilius Sura, see Alonso-Núñez 1989. For the controversial dating of Sura, see Swain 1940, who argues for the first half of the 3rd century.

17. According to Ferrary 1998, p. 119, "il n'est pas impossible que Cynoscéphales ait suscité plusieurs oracles *ex eventu*; mais il est au moins aussi probable que Trogue ait réinterprété un oracle traduisant le désarroi des Grecs devant la défaite d'une phalange crue invincible en faisant une prophétie dominée par le thème, encore anachronique en 197, de la *translatio imperii*".

18. Pausanias, 7.8.9 and Appian, *Macedonian Affairs*, fr. 2.

19. Ferrary 1998, p. 120.

20. For an overview of the propagandistic discourse which attended the Roman military activity in Asia Minor and Greece during Rome's oversea wars, see Russo 2013; Russo 2014b; Russo 2014a (see especially the references cited there).

21. Ferrary 1998, p. 114-117.

22. *Assyrii principes omnium gentium rerum potiti sunt, deinde Medi, postea Persae, deinde Macedones; exinde duobus regibus Philippo et Antiocho, qui a Macedonibus oriundi erant, haud multo post Carthaginem subactam devictis summa imperii ad populum Romanum pervenit. Inter hoc tempus et initium regis Nini Assyriorum, qui princeps rerum potitus est, intersunt anni MDCCCXCV.* Peter 1906, p. 161; Cornell 2013, p. 137, 617-618, n.103, 1145. On Aemilius Sura, see Alonso-Núñez 1989. For the chronological problem, see especially Swain 1940; Mendels 1981 and Martin 1993. For an overview of the ideological issues implied by Aemilius Sura's excerpt, see Mazza 1996 and Mariotta 2014.

23. Mendels 1981; Alonso-Núñez 1989; Ferrary 1998, p. 129-130; Martin 1993; Mazza 1996, p. 325-328. Recently, Zevi 1997 links a passage from Florus' account of the Syrian War with a passage from Aemilius Sura's writings. In this fragment, Aemilius Sura alludes to the defeat of Philip V at Cynoscephalae in 197 BCE and that of Antiochus III in Magnesia in 190 BCE. Both battles took place after the battle of Zama of 202 BCE. As Aemilius Sura mentions neither the outbreak of the Third Macedonian War (171 BCE)

with the consequent fall of Perseus at Pydna (168 BCE) and the annexation of Macedonia, nor the destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE, it has been argued that he wrote his work between 189 and 171 BCE. Given that the most important military event of those years was the defeat of Antiochus III, which also serves as the natural historical backdrop to the theory of the succession of empires, it can reasonably be argued that Aemilius Sura's work should be linked to the positive outcome of the Syrian campaign regardless of the years in which the author was active. Studies adopting this approach include: Trieber 1892, p. 337-338; Oost 1954, p. 66-67, 128-130; Büdinger 1825, p. 321-338; Cassola 1952, p. 65-66; Brunt 1978, p. 159-191, 320-330, especially p. 323; Mastrocinque 1983, p. 151; Russo 2011.

24. See, for instance, Mendels 1981, p. 335 and Ferrary 1998, p. 130.

25. Brown 1964, p. 130, argues that the historian took his universal perspective of the Roman empire from an original Roman tradition. This would be confirmed by the fact that the theme also appears in a speech delivered by Tiberius Gracchus in Appian's *The Civil Wars* 1.11. Brown also claims that the fact that the supposed universal dominion of Rome was actually only "partial" (if measured against the later development of the Roman Empire) indicates that this perspective must belong to the same chronological period as Polybius and his account, i.e. the first half of the 2nd century.

26. Mendels 1981, p. 337.

27. On the Mithridatic campaign, see Russo 2009. For the Augustan era and the Salamis-Actium parallel see Hölscher 1984 and Spawforth 1994.

28. *Antiocho terra marique superato et prope extra orbem terrae ultra iuga Tauri exacto*. See Mastrocinque 1982, p. 121.

29. *Non aliud formidolosius fama bellum fuit; quippe cum Persas et orientem, Xerxen atque Darium cogitarent, quando perfossi invii montes, quando velis opertum mare nuntiaretur*.

30. *Tum praecipitem apud Thermopylas adsecutus, locum trecentorum Laconum speciosa caede memorandum, ne ibi quidem fiducia loci resistentem mari ac terra cedere coegit*.

31. *Ne sibi placeant Athenae: in Antiocho vicimus Xerxen, in Aemilio Alcibiadem aequavimus, Epheso Salamina pensavimus*.

32. Russo 2011.

33. In his account of the campaign against Antiochus III, Livy makes only two brief references to the Thermopylae episode (36.15.12; 16.6-7).

34. On the relationship between the Florus and Livy traditions, see Zancan 1942, p. 35-68 which is still relevant today. Through a detailed analysis of parallel sections of Livy and Florus, Zancan demonstrates the latter's independence from the former.

35. For the possible connection between Aemilius Sura and the *Aemilii*, see Russo 2011.

36. For the significance of the inscription as a historic document relating to the ideological climate of the Syrian War, see Zevi 1997, p. 85. The scholars interpret L. Aemilius Regillus' *tabula* as an extremely valuable text because it is, without a doubt, contemporary to the events and free from later revisions. The temple of *Lares Permarini* was dedicated in 190 BCE by L. Aemilius Regillus as *praetor navalis*. The temple was completed and dedicated by Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, who was censor in 179 BCE (Livy 40.52.4): *Idem (Lepidus) dedicavit aedem Larum Permarinum in campo. Voverat eam annis undecim ante L. Aemilius Regillus navali proelio adversus praefectos regis Antiochi*. See also Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.10.10: *Undecimo autem Kalendas (Ianuarias, scil.) feriae sunt Laribus*

dedicatae, quibus aedem bello Antiochi Aemilius Regillus praetor in Campo Martio curandam vovit. The name *Permarini* is absent in Macrobius but used in Livy and in the *Fasti Praenestini*. See also Pietilä-Castrén 1987, p. 91-94.

37. *Duello magno dirimendo, regibus subigendis, caput patrandae pacis hac pugna exeunti L. Aemilio M. filio [...] auspicio imperio felicitate ductuque eius inter Ephesum Samum Chiumque, inspectante eopse Antiocho, exercitu omni, equitatu elephantisque, classi regis Antiochi ante hac invicta fusa contusa fugataque est, ibique eo die naves longae cum omnibus sociis captae quadraginta duae [...] Ea pugna pugnata rex Antiochos regnumque [...] Eius rei ergo aedem Laribus Permarinis vovit.*

38. Livy, 37.30.7-8; Appian, *The Syrian Wars*, 5.27. Cf. Thiel 1946, p. 356 n.624.

39. Zevi 1997, p. 101.

40. Zevi 1997, p. 85, stresses the convergence between Florus' passage and L. Aemilius Regillus' dedicatory inscription. However, Zancan 1942, p. 5 argues that one of the more important characteristics of Florus' historical vision is precisely his belief in the inevitability of Roman imperial expansion (as appears in his introduction to *The Syrian War*).

41. For this aspect of Florus' passage, see especially Russo 2013 and Russo 2014b.

42. Florus (1.24.1-18) also articulates another fundamental concept: the expansion of the Roman empire to the East, as an inevitable and indeed necessary event (1.24.1): *Macedoniam statim Asia et regem Philippum Antiochos excepit quondam casu, quasi de industria sic adgubernante fortuna, ut quem ad modum ab Africa in Europam, sic ab Europa in Asiam ultro se suggerentibus causis imperium procederet, et cum terrarum orbis situ ipse ordo victoriarum navigaret.* The beginning of the "most terrible" battles of all is not only described in the adulatory and rhetorical terms that characterise the whole chapter, but also serves to introduce the theme of the development of the Roman Empire from Africa to Asia, *sic adgubernante fortuna*.

43. According to Mendels 1981, p. 331, Aemilius Sura's enumeration of empires is chronologically speaking, insignificant. Mendels' comparison to a passage from Sallust (*Historiae* 1.55.4) is, however, misleading as the latter is certainly an incomplete list composed for illustrative purposes only. Sura's intention, by contrast, is clearly to stress that the end of the Macedonian Empire – that is, after the victory over Antiochus III – marked the beginning of Rome taking the reins of the universal empire. Cf. Ferrary 1998, p. 129.

ABSTRACTS

Beginning with a reassessment of passages from Polybius and other 2nd-century BCE sources, this study aims to show that the concept of a universal empire was an important issue in Roman, philo-Roman, and anti-Roman propagandistic discourse during Rome's oversea wars. In addition, it will show that the incorporation of Rome into the scheme of *translatio imperii* (the succession of universal empires) belongs to this same ideological environment. This is in contrast to the

prevailing view in scholarship which argues that this theme was only codified later, in a late-republican or even early-imperial tradition.

INDEX

Keywords: Polybius, Florus, Aemilius Sura, Velleius Paterculus, *summa imperii*, *translatio imperii*, universal empire, Macedonian Wars, Syrian War, Philip V, Antiochus III

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