

First steps of the Roman diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean: development of the common political strategy

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Abstract. *The article deals with the first diplomatic contacts of Rome in the Hellenistic world in 3rd century BC (before the beginning of the Second Macedonian War). The author attempts to discover if Roman Senate had common approach to its eastern policy in this period. In general the author agrees with those scholars who assert that Romans on their eastern diplomacy used the instrument (widespread in the interstate relations of the Hellenistic world) of “informal friendship” (amicitia – φιλία). However, tracing the development of the Roman relations with its “friends” in the Eastern Mediterranean, the author comes to the conclusion that from the beginning of the Illyrian Wars Roman attitude towards those states which established the amicable relations with Rome started to change. Romans more and more perceived these states as clients and expected from them services, which were usually provided by the Roman socii in Italy. The only exception from such a practice was the military alliance with Aetolia during the First Macedonian War which was determined by the extraordinary circumstances of this conflict.*

Rezumat. *Autorul face referire la primele contacte diplomatice ale Romei cu lumea elenistică în secolul al III-lea a.Chr. (înainte de începutul celui de-al doilea război macedonean). El este în general de acord cu acei cercetători care susțin că romanii au utilizat în diplomația lor din răsărit instrumentul (altminteri răspândit în relațiile interstatale din lumea elenistică) „prieteniei informale” (amicitia – φιλία). Totuși, urmărind evoluția relațiilor Romei cu „prieteni” din Mediterana de est, autorul ajunge la concluzia că de la începutul războaielor illyrice atitudinea romanilor față de acele state care stabiliseră relații amicale cu Roma se schimbă treptat. Romanii percep aceste state din ce în ce mai mult în calitate de state clientelare și așteaptă servicii din partea lor, într-un mod asemănător cu al socilor din Italia. Singura excepție de la o astfel de practică a constituit-o alianța militară cu Etoția în timpul primului război cu Macedonia, alianță care a fost determinată de circumstanțele extraordinare ale conflictului.*

Keywords: Rome, Hellenistic world, informal friendship, alliance, diplomacy.

Roman foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean has attracted the interest of modern historians for a long time. Special attention in the historiography has been dedicated to the problem of the Roman imperialism and from that point of view to the correlation between

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the Roman diplomatic and military actions with the political practice, accepted in the system of Hellenistic states in the 3rd–2nd centuries BC.² However, still a lot of questions cause disputes among historians. Frequently new epigraphic monuments elucidate some little-known aspects of relations between Romans and Greek states and allow looking in a new fashion on the principles which determined these relations.

One of the questions of the period under consideration that face historians may be formulated like this: what motives did Romans mostly follow when they intervened in the affairs of the Hellenistic states and was there any common political strategy elaborated by the Roman Senate, which determined the Roman Eastern policy? Such statement of a question requires tracing the history of relationship between the Roman republic and Greek states in the earlier period (before the active Roman military involvement into the affairs of the Eastern Mediterranean during the Second Macedonian war) and ascertaining the kind of similarities and variations in the Roman diplomatic actions in the East during that period.

Already in the 4th century BC Greece was not totally unattainable and unknown for Romans. Diodorus and Appian tell the same story, when they describe taking of the Etruscan city Veii by Romans. After the triumph of Marcus Furius Camillus it was decided to dedicate 1/10 of the booty to the god Apollo, because his prophecy helped Romans to capture the city. As Romans had no treasury in Delphi they used the one of Massaliotes where they dedicated to Apollo golden crater on a stand and it was possible to see it until the plunder of the Delphi by Onomarchus (App. Ital., 8, 1; Diod., XIV, 93, 3–4). Diodorus and Plutarch add another interesting detail: the ambassadors sent to Delphi were captured near Lipari by pirates and liberated by the local *strategos* Timasipheus, when he had known about the aim of their trip (Plut. Cam., 8)³. Subsequently Romans granted to Timasipheus some honours and after the capture of Lipari during the First Punic war liberated his descendants from all taxes (Diod., XIV, 93, 5). Titus Livius also tells the story about the prophecies connected with the capture of Veii, sending ambassadors in Delphi and the donations sent to the god (Liv., V, 15, 3; 23, 8–11). Certainly, this story may be doubted and regarded as the invention of the annalists, but the early connections between Romans and Massalia in the beginning of the 4th century BC are confirmed by other evidence. In particular, Justin mentions that after the Gallic invasion the Massaliotes, who had known about the ransom Romans had to pay to Gauls for the peace, gathered the gift to Rome from private citizens and from the whole community. In order to thank Massaliotes for that Romans granted them *foedus aequo iure* (Justin., XLIII, 5, 8–9).

² From comparatively recent works, where it is possible to find bibliography for earlier period see: HARRIS 1979, GRUEN 1984, KASCHEEV 1993, ECKSTEIN 2008, ERKSINE 2010.

³ F. CASSOLA (1962, 28) argues for authenticity of this evidence, linking it to other evidences on the Roman presence on the sea in the 4th century BC (for example, Diodorus' evidence on the capture and execution by Timoleon of some tirrenian Postumius, who had in his disposal twelve ships – Diod. Sic., XVI, 82, 3).

One of the earliest examples of the diplomatic relations between the Roman republic and a Greek state of Balkan Peninsula refers to the 330s BC, when the king of Epirus Alexander Molossus (invited by the Tarentines) landed in the Southern Italy to help Greeks in their struggle against the surrounding tribes of Lucani and Bruttii. Romans at this point had already been in a tended relationship with Samnites, allies of Lucani, and obviously decided to make use of the situation for their own purposes⁴. Livius tells that when Alexander defeated the allied army of Lucani and Samnites near Pestum Romans made “peace” with him (*pax* – Liv. VIII., 17, 9–10). Perhaps, the better translation here would be “alliance”, considering the parallel evidence of Justin who tells that the king entered into a friendly relation with Romans and concluded an alliance (*foedus amicitiamque* – Justin., XII, 2, 12).

Incidentally, the Romans embassy to Alexander the Great mentioned by Pliny the Elder with the reference to Clitarchus (Plin. N.H., III, 57) doesn’t seem absolutely impossible. In historiography this embassy was also connected with the one of Alexander to the Romans regarding the piracy of Antium’s inhabitants mentioned by Strabo⁵. Strabo tells: «Formerly residents of Antium owned ships and together with the Tirrenians were engaged in sea piracy, although they had already been ruled by Romans. Therefore in the former times Alexander sent ambassadors complaining about that (Strab., V, 3, 5). Th. Mommsen believed that this passage dealt with the Alexander Molossus⁶, but this view was rejected and in the 20th century and it was overruled by the opinion that it’s dealing with Alexander the Great⁷.

One of the first sporadic contacts between the Roman republic and the Hellenistic state may be assumed as an establishment of friendly relations with Rhodes in the end of the 4th century BC. Polybius, narrating about the Roman war with Perseus in 167 BC, tells: “So intelligent was the policy of Rhodians that almost for hundred and forty years the Rhodian people, participating in the most well-known and famous affairs of Romans, didn’t conclude an alliance with them” (Polyb., XXX, 5, 6)⁸. So it may tell us about the relations between two republics that dates back to almost 306/5 BC. Th. Mommsen argued that in that period a commercial agreement between Rome and Rhodes was concluded⁹. However the expression used by Polybius (*κοινωνέω τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων καὶ καλλίστων ἔργων*) implies the common military operations¹⁰. Such actions are improbable and that’s the reason why there were attempts to reconsider this evidence. For example, it was proposed to delete from the text *πρὸς τοῖς ἑκατὸν* as an erroneous insert. In that case the text of Polybius may be read “for

⁴ E. GRUEN (1984, 61) considers that Alexander was the initiator of the agreement.

⁵ DE SANCTIS 1960, 406.

⁶ CIL, X, 1, 660.

⁷ Compare Liv., VIII, 14, 8 (about the Roman colonization of Antius and the closing of the access to the sea for its inhabitants in 338 BC). Historiography: SCHMITT 1957, 39; DE SANCTIS 1960, 406; CASSOLA 1962, 28.

⁸ Compare Liv., XLV, 25, 9: *nam ita per tot annos in amicitia fuerant, ut sociali foedere se cum Romanis non inligarent*.

⁹ MOMMSEN 1997, 376. The similar idea was stated by G. DE SANCTIS 1960, 406.

¹⁰ WALBANK 1979, 423.

almost forty years” and this chronological indication corresponds with what we know about the relations between Rome and Rhodes in the end of the 3rd century BC.¹¹

According to another hypothesis, at the end of the 4th century BC between Rome and Rhodes there may have been established not more than informal relations of “amicitia”. As for common military operations, Romans and Rhodians after 304 BC could have undertaken some common actions against Etruscan pirates¹². The date is definitely connected with the unsuccessful siege of Rhodes by Demetrius Poliorcetes and correspondingly with the approval of the island Republic’ independence¹³.

Incidentally, it’s worth consulting once again the evidence of Strabo who, continuing the story about pirates from Antium, tells the following: “Demetrius sent back to Rome captured pirates and ordered to tell Romans that although he makes favour to them returning captives for the sake of kinship between Romans and Greeks he consider worthless that people who own the whole Italy send gangs of pirates” (Strab., V, 3, 5). This evidence deals with the situation of the beginning of the 3rd century BC, so “Demetrius” is Demetrius Poliorcetes.

F. Cassola assumed that recalling their old cooperation with the Romans Rhodians meant just those actions of Roman pirates against Demetrius Poliorcetes, with whom Rhodos was fighting for independence at that time. To confirm early and direct trade relations connecting Rhodos and Rome he quotes the dedicatory inscription to the goddess Athena on behalf of some L. Folius on the acropolis of Lindos, made on both Greek and Latin (CIL. I². 404)¹⁴.

Finally, the inscription found in 1976 in Rhodos dating back to the last decades of the 3rd century BC may serve as an indirect confirmation of the pretty early relations between the two states. The very beginning of this inscription refers to some official religious actions that took place at the Capitolium, while Rhodians are mentioned among the Romans and their allies though separately from the latter. The text of this inscription evidently indicates the close connection between the two states which was established before the beginning of the Second Macedonian War.¹⁵

In the 3rd century BC the contacts between Rome and Hellenistic world became broader and more diverse. There still prevailed informal friendly relations and trade connection. The catalyst for the activation of such contacts had become the Pyrrhic war after which the Hellenistic kings discovered the strong state in the West Mediterranean and Romans realized those dangers, which could come from the East.

It’s not accidental that the next exchange of embassies mentioned in the sources happened with Ptolemaic Egypt, one of the most powerful Hellenistic states at that moment.

¹¹ HOLLEAUX 1921, 29–46.

¹² SCHMITT 1957, 13, 44.

¹³ NENCI 1958, 196–212.

¹⁴ CASSOLA 1962, 30–31.

¹⁵ KONTORINI 1983, 24–32.

In 273 BC Ptolemy Philadelphus sent the ambassadors with some gifts to Rome and then Romans sent Numerius Fabius Pictor, Quintus Fabius Maximus and Quintus Ogulnius “honoured as private person” (ἰδίαις τιμηθέντες) by the king. Having returned, the ambassadors delivered the king’s gifts to the state treasury but the Senate decreed that they must be returned to them as a reward for their virtue (τιμὰς ἀρετῆς)¹⁶. As for the results of this exchange of embassies, the epitomator of Livius tells about the conclusion of an alliance (*societas iuncta est* — Liv. Per. XIV), Cassius Dio about some agreement (ὁμολογίαν ἐποιήσατο — Cass. Dio, X, 41 = Zon., VIII, 6), and Eutropius only about “friendly relations” (*amicitia* — Eutrop., II, 15).

Originally, in historiography prevailed the idea of trade agreement which might have had also some political significance¹⁷. The similar coin stamps of Roman and Egyptian coins in the middle of the 3rd century BC served as the main argument to prove it¹⁸. Henceforth the idea of establishment of “informal relations” (*amicitia* — φιλία) between two states gained more support. It’s possible that these relations from the mere exchange of diplomatic courtesies could steadily develop into the perception of common interests and later into the conclusion of a treaty¹⁹.

W. Harris points out that it would be naïve to think that there were no political implications in the exchange of embassies with Egypt, because at that moment Carthage was neighbour of both powers and it’s indeterminate how the Carthaginians regarded the proclamation by Magas of Cyrene of his independence from Egypt about 275 BC. In any case one should consider seriously the refusal of the Egyptians to grant a loan of 2000 talents to Carthaginians during the First Punic War on the basis of friendly relations that connected the king both “to Romans and to Carthaginians” (App. Sic., 1)²⁰.

However, the last phrase of Appian just tells that friendly relations connected Egypt also with Carthage so that in the course of the First Punic War the Ptolemies wanted to demonstrate their neutrality. According to Eutropius, after the end of the First Punic War, the Romans sent envoys to Ptolemy, promising him help in his struggle with the Syrian king Antiochus. However, Ptolemy refused because at that time the war had already been finished (Eutrop., III, 1). This evidence seems dubious not only because of the incorrect name of the king, with whom Ptolemy III Euergetes had been at war (it was Seleucus II Callinicus and not Antiochus, mentioned by Eutropius), but also because it’s hard to imagine that Rome would

¹⁶ Dion. Hal., XX, 14. Compare: Val. Max., IV, 3. 9; Eutrop., II, 15 (about the date).

¹⁷ MOMMSEN 1997, 417 (common struggle against Carthage); DE SANCTIS 1960, 407 (common struggle against Pyrrhus). Trade motives: BELOCH 1926, 457–458; ROSTOVITZ 1941, 394–397; CASSOLA 1962, 46.

¹⁸ MATTINGLY 1945, 68–69; CRAWFORD 1974, 39–40.

¹⁹ However, the trade agreement is denied and the similarities in the mint stamps are explained by the connections between the Greek cities of Southern Italy and Egypt: GRUEN 1984, 54, 675; ERRINGTON 2008, 81; ECKSTEIN 2008, 30, 201–202.

²⁰ HARRIS 1979, 183–184, n. 6.

propose its military aid to any power in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially after the hard war with Carthage²¹.

It seems very probable that some real Roman embassy to Egypt in 241 BC was reflected in this evidence. It may have had an aim to thank Ptolemy on behalf of the Roman people for his refusal to help Carthage in the course of the First Punic War and report about its results²². Incidentally it's noteworthy another evidence referring to the same period. According to Suetonius, the emperor Claudius granting the exemption from taxation to Ilion, cited the ancient letter in Greek in which the Senate and Roman people offered to king Seleucus "friendship and alliance" (*amicitiam et societatem*) for granting the exemption from taxation to the people of Ilion (Suet., 25, 3)²³. It may refer to the same Seleucus II, with whom Ptolemy III fought during the Third Syrian war.

The indication of Livy about "friendship and alliance" (*socium et amicum populi Romani*) between Roman people and king Antiochus III already during the negotiations of 198 BC, when Romans refused to give to Pergamum help against him (Liv., XXXII, 8, 13), may serve as an indirect evidence of the early establishment of diplomatic relations between Rome and Seleucid Empire. E. Gruen believes that period around 230s BC, when Seleucus II fought with his younger brother in Asia Minor and may have needed friends and allies, may be the appropriate context for such a contact. If the initiative came from Seleucids there is nothing surprising that the Senate could make hint about the legend of the Trojan origin of Romans in reply to this mission²⁴.

The experience of diplomatic relations with Greek states was accumulated steadily. It was not without excesses. Valerius Maximus tells in a jocular form about the arrival of the envoys from Apollonia to Rome, who were beaten in the ensuing quarrel with them by the *edilicii* Q. Fabius and Cn. Apronius. Both disturbers were officially delivered up to the envoys through the *fetiales* (Val. Max., VI, 6, 5). Parallel evidences of this event in the *periocha* of Livy and Cassius Dio in the exposition of Zonara allow assuming that this fact took place in the beginning of 260s BC (Liv. Per., 15; Dio fr. 42 = Zon., VIII, 7). By meaning of the story of Valerius Maximus it results that already at that time there were some relations that connected Romans with the inhabitants of Apollonia²⁵.

²¹ The story was rejected by M. HOLLEAUX (1921, 75–76), but G. DE SANCTIS recognized its authenticity (1917, 275–276).

²² GRUEN 1984, 676; ECKSTEIN 2008, 202.

²³ This evidence was also rejected by M. HOLLEAUX (1921, 46–60), but the majority of researchers accepted it: MOMMSEN 1997, 530; DE SANCTIS 1917, 277; CASSOLA 1962, 48.

²⁴ GRUEN 1984, 612.

²⁵ E. GRUEN (1984, 63) thinks that the penetration of Romans in the south of Italy in the course of the Pyrrhic war may well have served as an impulse for developing relationships with Greek cities situated on the opposite side of the Ionic sea.

Another embassy related to the beginning of 230s BC is narrated by Pompey Trogue in the exposition of Justin (Just., XXVIII, 1, 5–2, 14). During the war of Aetolians with Epirus for Acarnania its inhabitants expecting that queen Olympias (widow of Alexander II of Epirus) couldn't protect them supposedly sent envoys to Rome asking for help. In their turn Romans attempted to intervene in the conflict and sent embassy in Aetolia requiring to “remove their garrisons from Acarnania and leave its citizens free” (*praesidia ab urbibus Acarnaniae deducerent paterenturque liberos esse*). Having listened the envoys, Aetolians boastfully rejected Roman claims reproaching them with cowardice of Carthaginians and Gauls.

It's understandable why this evidence caused doubts among the historians. First of all, Polybius didn't mention anything about these events and, secondly, here again, like in the case of the embassy to Seleucus II, Romans refer to their Trojan origin (Just., XXVIII, 1, 6)²⁶. However, R. Errington fairly affirms that Polybius could omit this episode because of its insignificance and absence of any consequences of this Roman embassy. Moreover, if we accept the authenticity of this evidence, Roman negotiations with Aetolians in 212 BC (propraetor M. Valerius Laevinus promised that “he would return also Acarnanians in accordance with the ancient treaty under the authority of Aetolians, who badly received separation of Acarnanians from the alliance” — Liv., XXVI, 24, 6) look very unattractive and that's why in Rome they preferred to forget about the earlier contacts²⁷.

In all this early contacts the initiative practically always issued from Greek states. At the same time it's also obvious the absence of interest of Roman Senate in acquiring the diplomatic connections in the Hellenistic world²⁸. Simultaneously it may be noticed that Romans didn't attempt to use mechanisms that served in the relationship inside the Roman-Italian federation (particularly the institute of *foedus*) in the agreements with the states outside the Apennine peninsula.

As it was convincingly demonstrated by E. Gruen such neutral form of relationship as *amicitia* – φίλῖα actively used in the Hellenistic world apparently was introduced into the Roman diplomacy by Greek embassies. In the course of time it allowed Romans to explain their growing intervention into the Greek affairs, but at the same time to minimize any moral obligations towards those states which were recognized as “friends”²⁹.

What “friendly relations” meant among the Hellenistic state in the 3rd–2nd centuries BC we may understand using the evidence of Livy about the embassy from king Antiochus to Rome in 193 BC sent for establishing “friendship with Roman people”. One of the king's ambassadors Menippus said in the Senate: “And in friendship between each other cities and

²⁶ HOLLEAUX 1921, 722; GRUEN 1984, 63–64. However, MOMMSEN (1997, 530) and DE SANCTIS (1917, 277–278) accepted authenticity of this evidence.

²⁷ ERRINGTON 2008, 85.

²⁸ CASSOLA 1962, 49.

²⁹ GRUEN 1984, 94–95. See also: KASCHEEV 1993, 227–229.

kings may join only by three ways. First, when winners prescribe conditions to defeated; in this case those who won with the force of weapons receive everything and then decide according to their laws and willingness what to return back to the defeated and what to keep. Second, when forces appeared to be equal and both sides conclude an agreement on equal about peace and friendship, agree whom and what to return back and what requirements to meet... And third, when those who never before were at enmity with each other came to form an alliance and join in the friendship; here no one establish proper conditions and accept the other's because there are no winners and no defeated" (Liv., XXXIV, 57, 6–9). In the contacts with Hellenistic states described before prevailed just the last way, because Romans still didn't take military participation in the events on the Hellenistic East.

Incidentally, it's remarkable what Polybius wrote about the foreign policy of Rhodes: "They didn't want to take away the hope for their help and the alliance with them from any of the rulers and sovereigns that's why they decided not to join any government and not to bind themselves with oaths and treaties in advance but remaining independent and to turn in their favour the expectations of each state on their support" (Polyb., XXX, 5, 8). Thus, Rome establishing its first connections with Hellenistic states in the 3rd century BC was not alone in following the principle of rejection of permanent unions, requiring the enforcement of clear obligations.

Two Illyrian wars are the next important phase in the development of Roman diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean. Statement that Rome had no foreign policy in the East before the beginning of the First Illyrian war³⁰ is a little bit exaggerated, but it correctly reproduces a thought that before that moment Romans had no proper interests in the Eastern Mediterranean which they were ready to defend with weapons in their hands.

Polybius who described these events in detail particularly underlined their significance (Polyb., II, 2, 1–2). He called their reason the fact that "the king of Illyrians Agron, son of Pleuratus, have at his disposal more considerable land and sea forces than his predecessors" (Polyb., II, 2, 3). Thus, if we believe Polybius, Romans undertook a sort of preventive military operation fearing the strengthening of their Eastern neighbor. The immediate cause of sending of the embassy to queen Teuta (wife of Agron) Polybius considers robbing and capture of the Italic merchants during the seizure of Phoenix, the city in Epirus, by Illyrians. The murder of one of the ambassadors on their way back made the war inevitable (Polyb., II, 8).

Appian, the second major source depending most probably on some alternative to Polybian tradition, tells the following facts. When the island of Issa was attacked by Illyrians and asked Rome for help Romans sent an embassy there in order to figure out all the circumstances on the spot. The Roman embassy was attacked by the Illyrians and one of the

³⁰ BADIAN 1964, 1.

ambassadors, Coruncanius, was killed. For that reason Romans began the war with Illyrians (App. Ill., 7).

In the research literature different motives that induced Romans to send their first naval expedition to the East were brought to the fore. Th. Mommsen suggests that it may be explained by the Roman wish for a good naval base in the upper part of the Adriatic Sea which they didn't have on the Italian shore³¹.

G. De Sanctis supposed that Romans concluded an alliance with the inhabitants of Issa that made practically impossible any compromise with Illyrians. Death of the Macedonian king Demetrius II followed by the infant Filipe's accession to the throne and weakening of Macedon (before it periodically acted in alliance with Illyrians) also played its role in these events³².

M. Holleaux suggested that the Roman embassy came to Issa to claim officially *rerum repetitio* ("satisfaction of claims") which meant that Romans had already decided to fight with Illyrians even before the murder of the ambassador³³. However, in the evidence we can't find anything to prove that such decision was accepted by the Senate or the Assembly.

E. Badian believed that it was the embassy and not the Senate who had made a decision about the war. The Senate sent the mission only to ascertain the circumstances reported by the Italian traders and envoys from Issa on the spot. However, having made sure that the Roman military involvement was necessary they used *rerum repetitio* to make the war inevitable. The main reason for the war was usual Roman fear based on incorrect assessments³⁴.

N. Hammond emphasized that after the First Punic war Romans were sensitive about any neighbouring power disposing of considerable naval forces because they recognized the vulnerability of the Italian coast before attack from the sea. At the same time, the course of events led to the capture by Illyrians of the whole Adriatic coast and naval bases on the islands which would allow them to make raids to the Southern Italy³⁵.

W. Harris underlines the aggressive character of the Roman policy whose main aim was not only to weaken the Teuta's power but also to consolidate Roman power in Illyria³⁶.

R. Errington especially noted the weakening of Epirus after the termination of the dynasty of Aeacides. The followed capture of Phoenix where a lot of Italic merchants were killed or enslaved provoked the reaction of the Senate³⁷.

³¹ MOMMSEN 1997, 532.

³² DE SANCTIS 1917, 295–298.

³³ HOLLEAUX 1921, 99.

³⁴ BADIEN 1964, 4–5.

³⁵ HAMMOND 1968, 5–6.

³⁶ HARRIS 1979, 195.

³⁷ ERRINGTON 2008, 86–88.

E. Gruen argues that Rome had nothing to fear from Illyria but Romans took action in order to maintain the security of sea routes which played an important role for the citizens of the Magna Graecia cities. For Rome it was important not only because of the trade interests but also to support loyalty of her allies in Southern Italy³⁸.

A. Eckstein returns again to the theme of piracy and complaints of Italic traders, noting that in the conditions of interstate anarchy, which characterized the system of international relations of ancient Mediterranean, it was very common the phenomenon of the appeal of the weak one to the strong one for protection and patronage. In this context Rome was not unique considering that already before the appeal to Romans Greek states of the region (Epirus, Kerkyra, Epidamnus, Apollonia) had appealed to the Aetolian and Achaean Leagues, which had undertaken the joint expedition against Illyrians (Polyb., II, 6, 1; Polyb., II, 9, 8)³⁹. The author also underlines that Roman diplomatic reaction to the complaints of the Italic merchants requiring to stop the piratic activity in Adriatic Sea is an example of the common for the international relations of the Hellenistic world practice of “compellence diplomacy”. Such diplomacy meant transforming demands into ultimatums which were not to be discussed during the negotiations⁴⁰.

Among the hypotheses about the reasons for Roman diplomatic and military intervention in the Illyrian case discussed above following ideas are worth mentioning: the Roman tendency not to allow the appearance of any concurrent naval power in Adriatic Sea; the aspiration for binding even more to Rome the Greek cities in the south of Italy interested in the security of navigation in this region. Undoubtedly, merely the commercial reasons couldn't be the cause for such a radical change of the foreign policy comparing to the way Romans had reacted about ten years before to the Acarnanian embassy asking protection from Aetolians.

In the context of our topic it's important to understand the kind of diplomatic relations Romans entered with the Greek cities which they liberated from Illyrian danger during their intervention. Polybius used the following terms: towards Kerkyrians, Epidamnians and inhabitants of Issa “accepted into Roman fidelity” (εἰς τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων πίστιν – Polyb., II, 11, 5; 11, 10; 11, 12); towards the citizens of Apollonia “given under guardianship” (εἰς τὴν ἐπιτροπὴν ἀνήχθησαν – Polyb., II, 11, 8); towards the tribes of Parfini and Atintani “accepted into friendship” (εἰς τὴν φιλίαν – Polyb., II, 11, 11).

Appian tells that after the transition of Demetrius of Pharos to the Roman side Romans entered in “friendship” (φιλία) with Epidamnus and when Teuta sent ambassadors to Rome for the exchange of captives and peace negotiations Romans responded that Kerkyra, Pharos, Issa, Epidamnus and Atintani were already Roman subjects (Κόρκυραν μὲν καὶ Φάρον καὶ

³⁸ GRUEN 1984, 366–367.

³⁹ ECKSTEIN 2008, 35–37.

⁴⁰ ECKSTEIN 2008, 40.

ἴσσαν καὶ Ἐπίδαμον καὶ Ἰλλυριῶν τοὺς Ἀτιντανοὺς ἤδη Ῥωμαίων ὑπηκόους εἶναι — App. Ill. 7). On the basis of this evidence some researchers argued that these cities and tribes became *dediticii*, according to Roman view, but as Appian tells later among them Kerkyra and Apollonia received freedom (Ῥωμαῖοι δ' ἐπ' αὐταῖς Κόρκυραν μὲν καὶ Ἀπολλωνίαν ἀφῆκαν ἐλευθέρως — App. Ill., 8) and others became a sort of Roman protectorate⁴¹.

However, the point of view at Roman protectorate in Illyria was justly questioned in the second half of 20th century. It was marked that large areas were ceded by Rome to Demetrius, ruler of Pharos, who had chosen their side at the beginning of the war (Polyb., II, 11, 17). These territories formed a sort of buffer state between the kingdom of Ardiaei ruled by Teuta and cities which became dependent on Romans⁴². Moreover, the status of this dependency seems dubious if we take into consideration the following Roman withdrawal of troops and naval forces. It's most probable that they were recognized merely as “friends of Roman people” without any formal obligations towards Romans⁴³.

Another two facts connected with diplomatic consequences of the First Illyrian war are noteworthy. First, it's a fact that from that moment appear the category of Roman “friends” (*amici*) in Eastern Mediterranean which in Roman view are not only non-hostile towards Rome like it was with all those states with whom Romans entered into *φιλία* before that (Rhodes, Egypt, Seleucid Empire), but “entrusted themselves” to Romans and so fell under Roman *fides*.

Already E. Badian marked that informal character of interstate “friendly” relations attached to this institute flexibility that allowed Rome to manipulate it for her own purposes. That's why the attitude towards those “friends” who were clearly inferior to Rome in force was similar to the attitude towards the states dependent on Rome. As a result by the 2nd century BC the very concept of *amicus populi Romani* became a euphemism for designation of dependent status of a state. Such states were called by Badian “client-states”⁴⁴.

The similar idea was developed by V.I. Kascheev who sees the main difference in the approach to diplomatic relations between Rome and Greek states in the fact that for Romans in their foreign policy the main was the idea of strength and the notion of *fides* connected with it. So the actual terms of the contract interpreted in the light of *fides* always gave Romans the right to decide the degree of Roman obligations and correspondingly the obligations for another side of the contract⁴⁵.

We believe that the first Roman application of this principle in their foreign policy in Eastern Mediterranean refer exactly to the results of the First Illyrian war. As a result of this

⁴¹ HOLLEAUX 1921, 106, n. 3; ERRINGTON 2008, 89.

⁴² HAMMOND 1968, 7–8.

⁴³ BADIAN 1964, 9, n. 39; GRUEN 1984, 57; ECKSTEIN 2008, 52.

⁴⁴ BADIAN 1958, 60–61, 68, 111.

⁴⁵ KASCHEEV 1993, 238–239.

event a group of communities appeared whose “friendship” with Rome was evidently of unequal nature. In the course of the subsequent wars with Philip, Antiochus and Perseus Romans regularly used the harbours of Apollonia, Epidamnus and Kerkyra to disembark their troops while the cities themselves delivered ships and auxiliary units during the Roman military operations in the East (Liv., XXXIII, 3, 10; XLII, 55, 8; XLIV, 30, 10; XLII, 48, 8; XLIV, 30, 10). There is no reason to say that citizens of these communities couldn’t pretend to have the same right and to require, for example, from Rome auxiliary units to participate in their local conflicts. Such “friendship” was strikingly different from that which connected Rome with big Hellenistic kingdoms or Rhodes before.

Finally, we should draw attention on sending of the embassies to Aetolians, Achaeans, Corinthians and Athenians by the consul L. Postumius to give an account of Roman reasons for war with Illyrians and conditions of the peace treaty after its conclusion with Teuta (Polyb., II, 12, 4–8). According to Polybius, Corinthians then for the first time admitted Romans to participation in the Isthmian games (apparently in 228 BC – Polyb., II, 12, 8). Obviously, Romans began to understand the significance not only of formal interstate connections but also using modern language of creating a favourable public opinion, justification of their action in the eyes of other interested states of their actions and attainment of additional propagandistic effect from their military actions⁴⁶. Meanwhile Roman ambassadors avoided the Macedonian court and that was hardly casual because Roman actions in Illyria could be seen there as interference into the Macedonian sphere of interest⁴⁷.

As it is well known the Second Illyrian war of 219 BC was against Demetrius of Pharos, who in the course of 220s BC steadily stepped aside from the alliance with Romans and was more and more drawn towards Macedon. In particular he fought on the side of Antigonos III Doson in the battle of Selassia (222 BC) and after that, as Polybius tells us, Demetrius openly broke the conditions of the treaty of 229 BC by organizing the naval raids to the south of Lissus reckoning on Macedonian support (Polyb., III, 16; IV, 16, 6). Appian adds that Demetrius engaged Istrians, another Illyrian tribe, into his naval robbery, and also inclined Atintani to secede from Rome (ἀπὸ Ῥωμαίων ἀφίστη – App. III., 8)⁴⁸.

These claims to Demetrius demonstrate the changes that happened after the First Illyrian war in Roman comprehension of her “friendly connections” with the cities of Illyrian coast. It is still a question if naval expeditions of Demetrius to the south of Lissus were the violation of the treaty considering that this treaty had been concluded with the kingdom of Ardiaei where

⁴⁶ HARRIS 1979, 137, 161.

⁴⁷ ERKSINE 2010, 23.

⁴⁸ E. GRUEN (1984, 372) considers the Second Illyrian war to be the logical sequence of the campaign against Istrians, mentioned by Eutropius (Eutrop., III, 7), but in our opinion the anxiety of the Senate was mostly connected with the behavior of Demetrius towards the cities that were under Roman *fides*.

at that moment Pinneus, son of Agron, continued to rule⁴⁹. But the attempts to support anti-Roman sentiments in the cities which “entrusted themselves” to Romans were now perceived as a quite serious reason for war. The result of the war was apparently the acceptance into the ranks of the “friends of Roman people” of two more cities: Dimalum and Pharos (Polyb., III, 18, 1; 18, 6).

Another interesting epigraphic evidence found in the town of Starigrad on the island of Hvar and published by L. Rober in 1960 thirty years after caused controversy because of the status of Pharos after the end of the Illyrian wars⁵⁰. P. Derow assumed that the inscription was a response of the Senate and Roman people after the flight of Demetrius in 219 BC and destruction of the city to the request of the Pharians about the renewal of the alliance concluded with the island in 229 BC as a result of the First Illyrian war. It is said in the 7–9 lines that the Senate and Roman people granted to the city of Pharians “alliance and friendship” (τὴν συμμαχίαν καὶ φιλίαν). On this basis the British historian came to a conclusion that not only Pharos in 229 BC but also Apollonia, Kerkyra (that Kerkyra was in alliance with Rome at least from 216 BC is proved by Appian — App. Mac., 1), Epidamnus and Issa entered into “friendly relations” with Rome, and henceforth were perceived as Roman allies (*socii*). Derow thinks that conditions of these alliances were standard and cites as an example the inscription from Maronea dating by 160s BC in which there are listed clauses of the treaty of alliance between two states: not to help the enemies of each other without fail and, on the contrary, to help each other in common actions whenever possible⁵¹.

A. Eckstein responded with an article in which he criticized this hypothesis. First of all, he questioned once again the dating of this inscription to the end of the 3rd century BC and brought additional arguments in favour of the later date. Then he brought numerous examples of the participation of Hellenistic states (Pergamum, Rhodes, Achaeaen and Aetolian leagues, Macedon) in the end of the 3rd–beginning of the 2nd centuries BC in military operations on the Roman side without signing any formal treaty. Also there is an evidence of Cicero who calls Dyrrachium (Epidamnus) in one of his private letters *civitas libera* (Cic. Fam., XIV, 1, 7). If there was no formal treaty with this city in the middle of the 1st century BC why should we assume this treaty in the 3rd century BC? With regard to inscription itself, according to the view of Eckstein, it was not the record of the treaty of alliance and couldn't serve as a proof of its existence. The language of the inscription didn't suggest the unambiguous interpretation: in the beginning of the inscription Romans are designated only as “friends” (φίλοι) of the inhabitants of Pharos and only afterwards we may find the

⁴⁹ For example, E. BADIEN (1964, 14) doesn't consider them as such.

⁵⁰ HELLENICA XI/XII 1960, 505–541. L. Rober himself dated the inscription by the second half of the 2nd century BC and ascribed it to the time of the last independent Illyrian ruler, Gentius.

⁵¹ DEROW 1991, 261–270. Inscriptions from Maronea: SEG, 35, 823. P. Derow's hypothesis about Demetrius of Pharos received support from A. COPPOLA (1993, 123–127).

expressions τὴν συμμαχίαν καὶ φιλίαν. Comparing the text of the inscription from Pharos with parallel epigraphic evidences of the first half of the 2nd century BC. Eckstein demonstrates that this expression most often meant the close informal link but not the formal treaty. The author also marks that, according to Polybius, Pharos was the basis of the possessions of Demetrius (Polyb., V, 108, 7) until his flight to Macedon. Thus, any treaty with independent Pharos couldn't be concluded before 219 BC. As a result, the author thinks that this very year remains most probable date for the inscription because it has a hint at some events that required from Pharians requesting assistance for the “recovery” (ἐπανόρθωσις) of their city from their metropolis Paros as well as from Athens what is told in the second part of the inscription. The most logical context for these requests seem to be the destruction of the city by L. Aemilius after the flight of Demetrius mentioned by Polybius (Polyb., III, 19, 12)⁵².

In this case the view of Eckstein seems more convincing. Actually, we have much more parallel evidences (including epigraphic ones) that the expression φιλία καὶ συμμαχία meant not more than the same relations of “friendship” which were discussed above⁵³. In our view it's doubtless that this expression reflected broad interpretation of the “friendly relations” which Romans began to apply steadily in their foreign policy starting from the Illyrian wars. It doesn't mean that this expression was used exclusively towards the dependent states but it marked the closer connection with Rome than ordinary relations of φιλία, which characterized the previous diplomatic contacts of Romans in the Eastern Mediterranean.

To better understand the difference between the formal alliance and the “friendly relations” we should turn to the only case of the regarded period when Romans entered into the formal alliance with the state in the Eastern Mediterranean. We are meaning the treaty with Aetolian league concluded in the winter of the 212/211 BC⁵⁴ during the First Macedonian war when Romans desperately needed an ally against Philip V in the Balkans, because of the heavy war with Hannibal they waged at the same time.

The first war of Romans with Macedon also began because of Illyria. With the beginning of the War of the Allies (220–217 BC) against Aetolians Philip V allied with Scerdilaidas and Acarnanians (Polyb., IV, 29). Such alliance could have been regarded in Rome as potentially dangerous. Moreover, after the end of the Second Illyrian war Macedonian king hosted Demetrius of Pharos who fled to him after the fall of Dimale (Polyb., III, 18, 8–9). Livius tells that in 217 BC Romans sent an embassy to Philip to demand the extradition of Demetrius as well as to the king of Illyrians Pinneus to demand the payment of the tribute (Liv., XXII, 33, 3–5). The phrase used by Livius to characterize Roman foreign policy of that time is very

⁵² ECKSTEIN 1999, 395–418.

⁵³ A. ECKSTEIN (1999, 406–411) cites inscriptions of the 2nd century BC from Narfacius in Thessaly (SIG³, 674) and Pergamum (SIG³, 694), of the 1st century BC from Stratonicea in Caria (OGI, 441), as well as numerous evidences of literary sources in which this expression is used just in that very sense.

⁵⁴ On the date of this treaty see: WALBANK 1967, 11–13.

significant: “Besides, despite the fact that they carried the great war, as far as they were concerned, they didn’t neglect no precautions about any case no matter how distant it was”⁵⁵. Despite the war with Hannibal, Romans continued achieving their aims in Illyria with diplomatic tools⁵⁶.

Break of the alliance between Scerdilaidas and Philip because the latter refused to pay for the services of Illyrians became the positive factor for Romans. Already in 217 BC Illyrian dynast started looting of the Greek states allied with Macedon (Polyb., V, 95, 1–4; 101, 1–2). It was just then that Macedonian king who learned about the defeat of Romans near Trasimene Lake decided to come to terms with Aetolians and to begin the war for Illyria (Polyb., V, 101, 6–102, 2). This moment was considered extraordinary important by Polybius for his “Histories” because it was just at that moment that “for the first time the fortunes of Hellas, Italy and Libya intertwined” (Polyb., V, 105, 4).

In the spring of 216 BC Philip attempted to attack Apollonia (Polyb., V, 109, 6), the city which was somehow or other under the Roman *fides*. Scerdilaidas when he knew about the preparations of Philip and the construction of the ships notified Romans about that. Obviously, Illyrian dynast was not interested in the Macedonian intervention in Illyria and was ready to accept Roman help to avoid that. The fact that Romans reacted immediately on the movement of Philip towards Apollonia and dispatched 10 five-deck ships from their fleet in Lilibaem for joint operations with Scerdilaidas against Philip (Polyb., V, 110) tells that they didn’t lose sight of Illyria. Philip as is well known weighed anchor and in panic returned in Peloponnesus frightened that the whole Roman fleet was moving against him.

It is in that context that after the defeat of Romans near Cannae the treaty of alliance was concluded between Philip V and Hannibal. The substance of this treaty is reproduced in detail by Polybius (Polyb., III, 9)⁵⁷. Among the clauses great importance has the mention that in the post-war arrangement Kerkyra, Apollonia, Epidamnus, Pharos, Dimala, tribes of Parthini and Atintani shouldn’t remain under the power of Romans and the former possessions of Demetrius of Pharos should be returned him back (Polyb., III, 9, 13–14). This mention shows the pretty limited aims of Philip in his first war with Rome. The point of view that Romans were seriously frightened of Philip’s landing in Italy and his joint operations with Hannibal seems erroneous to us⁵⁸. Precautionary measures that were launched in connection with the news about this alliance (sending of reinforcements to the fleet in Tarentum, reconnaissance mission of Publius Valerius and transfer of praetor Marcus Valerius Laevinus over there), tell

⁵⁵ Liv., XXII, 33, 6: *Adeo, etsi bellum ingens in ceruicibus erat, nullius usquam terrarum rei cura Romanos, ne longinuae quidem effugiebat.*

⁵⁶ Considering that fact we don’t share the view of E. BADIEN (1964, 18) that the main aim of the Senate’s eastern policy after 219 BC was to avoid provoking Philip.

⁵⁷ About the exclusivity of Roman-Aetolian alliance: KASCHEEV 1993, 226.

⁵⁸ ECKSTEIN 2008, 84–85.

just about the fact that Romans planned to defend their interests in Illyria despite their war with Hannibal (Liv., XXIII, 38, 7–11).

In 214 BC ambassadors from Oricum came to praetor Marcus Valerius in Brundisium and told about the intention of Philip to attack Apollonia. Roman fleet occupied Oricum where the ambassadors from Apollonia came with the news that their city was besieged (Liv., XXIV, 40, 1–7). It's important that the ambassadors told Roman commander that they “don't want to secede from Romans” (*deficere ab Romanis nollent* — Liv., XXIV, 40, 7). One more evidence of the new status of Illyrian “friends”. During next two years Philip has made significant progress: he took Lissus and subjugated the surrounding tribes (Polyb., VIII, 15–16).

In these conditions Romans performed their memorable diplomatic manoeuvre concluding the treaty of alliance with Aetolians. Diplomatically they defeated Philip who first lost his only ally in Illyria and then all the fruits of victory in the War of the Allies. Hannibal and the Carthaginian navy couldn't help Philip in the Balkans.

If we trust Livy in this question propraetor Marcus Valerius Laevinus demonstrated outstanding diplomatic abilities in the negotiations with Aetolians. He held preliminary talks tête-à-tête with Aetolian elders and then came to their council with equipped navy to demonstrate firm intention of Romans and their military power. After that he told about the successes of Romans in their struggle against Carthage. Finally, he characterized Roman policy towards their allies in Italy: “to some of them they have given the rights of citizenship making them in that way equal with themselves, others feel themselves so happily in their positions that prefer to remain allies” (Liv., XXVI, 24, 1–3). The last phrase tell us that Romans considered the alliance concluded with Aetolians to be something new with respect to their previous politics, maybe even as *foedus*, similar to those concluded with the communities in Italy. It was the real revolution in their Eastern policy and diplomacy.

However, Aetolians considered the alliance with Rome as an ordinary treaty of *συνμαχία*. This is evidenced by the fact that Aetolians stipulated for the quite concrete advantage from their alliance with Romans: the return of the Acarnanians in the Aetolian League (Liv., XXVI, 24, 6; 24. 8). But Romans according to the treaty could reduce their military presence almost in half because they bind themselves to participate in the war with not more than 25 *quinquiremes* (Liv., XXVI, 24, 10). Text of the treaty of alliance is reproduced by Livy, but there is also corresponding epigraphic monument: the inscription found in Tirreum in Acarnania to the south from Acropolis in 1949⁵⁹. Comparisons of these two texts allow making a conclusion that Livy on the whole very precisely reproduces the main substance of the treaty: land and cities captured in the war were to be passed to the Aetolians⁶⁰, while the booty to the Romans

⁵⁹ SEG, 13, 382.

⁶⁰ Livy adds to that a condition: “from the borders of Aetolia to Kerkyra” (Liv., XXVI, 24, 11), but in the inscription there is no such clause. However, E. GRUEN (1984, 378, 439) rightly considers that this limit was added by Romans because they weren't interested in the Aetolian entry into the sphere of interests of Rome.

(if the city was taken jointly, the booty was divided equally). Both sides were obliged not to sign a separate treaty with Philip (the clause broken by Aetolians in 206 BC). Moreover, it was presumed that Eleans, king of Pergamum Attalus and Scerdilaidas could join the alliance (Liv., XXVI, 24, 9–13).

However, receiving the short-term profit from this alliance Romans very quickly understood that they lost a lot in Greek public opinion. Evidently, in the Senate it was recognized because the ratification of the treaty was delayed for two years⁶¹. Apparently, the alliance was considered shameful by many in Greece. At any case, the passionate exclamation of the Acarnanian ambassador Liciscus when he tried to convince Spartans not to join it: “Who can listen to these words calmly looking on the invasion of Romans, who wouldn’t hate Aetolians for they in their madness decided to conclude such a treaty?” (Polyb., IX, 39, 1), characterize the attitude of one of the victims suffered from it.

It’s not by chance that already in 209 BC the ambassadors of Egyptian king Ptolemy, Rhodians, Athenians and from the island of Chios⁶² came for mediation to reconcile Aetolians with Philip (Liv., XXVII, 30, 4). The declared aim of the mediation was as Livy tells: “to deprive Romans and Attalus from the occasion to enter Greece”⁶³. In the Polybian “Histories” these events are scarcely presented but some of his information is very important for understanding of the whole picture. Thus it seems that it was during one of the stages of these negotiations that from the side of the opponents of the Roman-Aetolian treaty it was heard the comparison of Aetolians with light infantry on the field of battle, and the Romans with phalanx. The orator asserts that in the case of the victory as well as in the case of the defeat of Aetolians they have to wait unenviable fate. In the first case the Romans would be able to step back and come out from war unharmed, and in the second they would conquer not only the winners but also other Greeks (Polyb., X, 25).

Romans couldn’t prevent these negotiations by diplomatic means so they attempted to do that with military demonstration. Appearance of the Roman fleet near Naupactus became one of the reasons for Aetolians to put forward new claims during the talks and following breakdown of the negotiations (Liv., XXVII, 30, 11–14). However, mediators continued to make efforts to reconcile Aetolians with Philip in the following years. Thus, in 207 BC the Rhodian ambassador blamed Aetolians for that by their alliance with Romans they prepare the enslavement and the downfall of Hellas betraying Greeks to the barbarians for mockery and offences (Polyb., XI, 5). Finally, mediators succeeded in persuading Aetolians to conclude a peace with Philip (Liv., XXIX, 12, 1). Appearing in the situation of diplomatic isolation Romans also thought it best to reconcile with Macedonian king and used for that purpose the

⁶¹ HOLLEAUX 1930, 125.

⁶² On the date and its affixment with Nemean games see: SCHMITT 1957, 194.

⁶³ Liv., XXVII, 30, 10: *ibi de Aetolico finiendo bello actum ne causa aut Romanis aut Attalo intrandi Graeciam esset.*

First steps of the Roman diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean: development of the common political strategy

mediation of the Epirotes. For the prompt signing of peace treaty they even ceded to the king Atintania from the sphere of Roman interests in Illyria (Liv., XXIX, 12, 8–15).

This diplomatic experience had big importance for the subsequent Roman politics in the Eastern Mediterranean. Romans burned themselves with Aetolians decided if possible to refuse from concluding formal treaties and at any rate to minimize their obligations if such treaty was necessary. All the subsequent Roman diplomacy basically went the same path of informal “friendship and alliance” with defeated states and those ready to accept Roman power. This approach became especially characteristic for the Greek politics where it was much easier to perform in the role of “liberators” than to try to understand its intricacies and accept any formal obligations.

To sum up, it should be noted that the view about the absence of any Eastern policy in Rome before the Second Macedonian war doesn't correspond to the reality. Romans got acquainted with the Eastern Mediterranean and tied diplomatic relations there long time before their first military intervention in the Balkans. However, before the Illyrian wars Rome engaged exclusively in informal friendly relations with Hellenistic states mainly based on the Greek diplomatic practice. From 229 BC when Roman troops and fleet for the first time appeared in the west of Balkan Peninsula diplomatic approach started to change. Romans started to understand international “friendship” even with the states which weren't defeated by them in a war in a manner that characterized the attitude of the winners towards the defeated. As far as they achieved new military and political successes in the East this type of relations began to extend more and more.

The only exception was the Roman-Aetolian treaty of alliance during the period of the First Macedonian war build on the principles of the equality of two sides and caused by the extreme circumstances of the Hannibal war. However, this alliance had temporary character and ultimately lost any importance because of the withdrawal of the Aetolian league from the war with Macedon. Henceforth, Romans were much less willing to conclude formal treaties of alliance in the Hellenistic world and returned to the practice of *φιλία καὶ συμμαχία* relations which were used to control increasingly bigger number of Hellenistic states. As the control became more and more difficult to keep and maintain, Roman Senate came to the conclusion about the necessity of the spreading of the provincial system in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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