

NEMANJA VUJČIĆ
Faculty of Philosophy,
University of Belgrade
nemanja.vujcic@f.bg.ac.rs

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TROGUS, JUSTIN AND THE MACEDONIAN EMPIRE

Abstract. – Our knowledge of the Seleucid Empire has grown immensely during the last century, yet the largest Hellenistic state remains somewhat elusive. The debate on the fundamentals of its organization, ideology and character is still ongoing. One of the more eccentric attempts to force the issue was that of the renowned American historian and epigraphist Charles Edson, who argued that a solution could be found in works of late, Roman-era authors, since the state of the contemporary sources is allegedly so dire that “no coherent picture of the empire emerges”. This assumption led Edson to rely overwhelmingly on the *Epitome Historiarum Pompeii Trogi* by Justin, a late abbreviation and a rewrite of the world history of Pompeius Trogus, a 1st century BC Latin historian. Edson’s conclusion was that Justin’s text reflects the official Seleucid usage, proving, furthermore, that the Seleucid Empire was not a typical dynastic monarchy of the Hellenistic age, but essentially the old Macedonian kingdom replanted in Asia. Edson’s thesis was mostly ignored and rejected by scholars, but the issue of Justin’s terminology remains. Why does this late epitomator use expressions such as “Macedonicum Imperium” and “Macedonum reges” to describe Seleucids in some parts of his work? Is it simply because the dynasty was of Macedonian descent, or is there more to it? This paper examines terminology utilized by Trogus/Justin to describe Macedonian imperialism and, more specifically, the Seleucid state and rulers, in order to understand the concepts and intentions behind the words.

In 1958, the distinguished American historian and epigraphist Charles Farwall Edson (1905-1988) published a paper titled *Imperium Macedonicum: the Seleucid Empire and the Literary Evidence*.¹ There, he argued – against the prevailing academic consensus – that what we call the Seleucid Empire was not a personal or dynastic monarchy of a more general Hellenistic type,² but essentially the old Macedonian state

¹ Edson, Ch. ‘Imperium Macedonicum: the Seleucid Empire and the Literary Evidence’, *Classical Philology* 53.3 (1958), pp. 153-170.

² The opinion held by Bikerman, E. *Institutions des Séleucides*, Paris, 1938, pp. 3-11; Rostovtzeff, M. I. *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World I*, Oxford, 1941, pp. 430-434; Tarn, W. W. *The Greeks in Bactria & India*, Cambridge, 1951, pp. 4-5;

transplanted into Asia, the direct and rightful successor state not only to the short-lived Asian empire of Alexander the Great, but equally to the old European kingdom of the Argeads. It was *the* “Macedonian Empire” and its rulers were kings of the Macedonians in a sense that their Ptolemaic rivals were not. Furthermore, Edson argued that the status of the Seleucids as the one and true Macedonian state was accepted and recognized by the contemporaries, and that this was remembered until well into Roman times.

The paper sparked little discussion at the time, and most scholars decided to ignore it. This is hardly surprising for, while the argument is enthusiastically and vigorously presented, when stripped of its rhetorical ornaments, it appears rather bare and weak. No contemporary writer offers any support for it, while the language of the official Seleucid documents goes directly against it. Edson was aware of this and made sure to avoid any discussion of the epigraphic monuments. His claim that documentary evidence “is sporadic and so partial that no coherent picture of the empire emerges”³ was not quite true even at the time it was written, let alone today.⁴ No Seleucid ruler is ever referred to, not even in the official royal letters, as βασιλεὺς Μακεδόνων or by any similar title.⁵ Instead, Edson built his argument around the statements of much later authors, but even these rarely go beyond the obvious observation that the Seleucids were Macedonians or of the Macedonian descent.⁶ There is actually only one source that (seemingly) claims something more, and it will be considered shortly.

Later scholars who would follow Edson were few and far between.⁷ It is surprising to note that his interpretation, largely unnoticed when

Cary, M. *A History of the Greek World from 323 to 146 B.C.*, London, 1951, pp. 256-259 and other leading scholars of the time.

³ Edson, *op. cit.*, p. 153. Cf. *ibid.* p. 165: “But the extant documents are so haphazard in nature and origin, and so few in number, that negative inference is impermissible.” However, on the preceding page the same “negative inference” is used to show that the Ptolemies were not Macedonian kings, see p. 164: “This is a negative fact of high significance.” Not all negatives are created equal, it would seem.

⁴ Cf. Rostovtzeff, M. I. *op. cit.*, pp. 423-428.

⁵ Seleucus I (for example in *OGIS* I, 214, l. 10), Antiochus I (*OGIS* I, 219, l. 2), Antiochus III (*OGIS* I, 231, l. 1) and others designate themselves simply as “kings” (βασιλεῖς, cf. plural form in *OGIS* I, 214, ll. 7-8; I, 215, I, l. 1 etc.), without exception. These and numerous other examples were well known to Edson. Many more have been discovered and published since. It was once believed that a single Babylonian source (the so-called “Antiochus Cylinder”, i.4-5) gives Seleucus the title of a “Macedonian king”. Nowadays, consensus among assyriologists is that the words “Si-lu-uk-ku lugal Ma-ak-ka-du-na-a-a” in i.4-5 should be understood as “Seleucus, the king, the Macedonian”; cf. Stevens, K. ‘The Antiochus Cylinder, Babylonian Scholarship and Seleucid Imperial Ideology’, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 134 (2014), pp. 68, 72, 76-77.

⁶ For example Strab. 11.7.2; 11.11.6; 11.13.6; 16.2.14; Plin. *NH* 2.167; Paus 1.16; App. *Syr.* 70 etc.

⁷ Downey, G. *A History of Antioch in Syria. From Seleucus to the Arab Conquest*, Princeton, 1961, p. 54; Hammond, N. G. L. *The Macedonian State. Origins, Institutions*

it was current, has seen something of resurgence in the last few decades.⁸ It is not my purpose nor is there any need to argue here in detail against this old thesis.⁹ What I will suggest is that Edson was on to *something* when he stressed the importance of Latin expressions *Imperium Macedonicum/Macedoniae*, but he approached it from a wrong angle and with spurious assumptions. The problem, as is often the case in ancient history, comes down to the interpretation of a single critical text.

The sole ancient author who actually speaks of the Seleucid state as the “Macedonian Empire” is Marcus Junianus (or Junianus) Justin (2nd or early 3rd century AD?) in his *Epitome Historiarum Pompeii Trogi*.¹⁰ The core of the Edson’s thesis rests on the assumption that Justin’s text in some way reflects the official Seleucid language, ideology and titulature, even though contemporary inscriptions and writers, such as Polybius, allegedly do not. This would be a hard case to prove relying on any late source, but with Justin, there are a number of additional difficulties.

First of all, Justin’s text is not an original creation but a derivative source, an *epitome*,¹¹ a (significantly) abridged and altered version

and History, Oxford, 1989, p. 287: “Thus we can see clearly that the Seleucid Kingdom was a conservative Macedonian state.”; Billows, R. A. *Kings and Colonists. Aspects of Macedonian Imperialism*, Leiden, New York, Köln, 1995, pp. xiv-xv.

⁸ Spawforth, T. ‘Macedonian Times. Hellenistic Memories in the Provinces of the Roman Near East’, in: Konstan, D. Saïd, S. (eds.), *Greeks on Greekness. Viewing the Greek Past in the Roman Empire*, Cambridge, 2006, p. 3; Daubner, F. ‘Seleukidische und attalidische Gründungen in Westkleinasien – Datierung, Funktion und Status’, in: id. *Militärsiedlungen und Territorialherrschaft in der Antike*, Berlin, New York, 2011, p. 58. A similar opinion is expressed by Stevens, K. *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77, though Edson is not in her bibliography. In Visscher, M. S. *Beyond Alexandria. Literature and Empire in Seleucid World*, Oxford, 2020, pp. 16-17 (n. 4), Edson’s paper was used in support of a view that is actually not discussed or mentioned in it.

⁹ Edson’s assertion was sometimes dismissed using a simple fact that Macedonians were a tiny minority in the Seleucid Empire, and that therefore it could not have possibly been a “Macedonian Empire”, cf. Παπαζογλυ, Φ. *Историја хеленизма*, Београд, 2010, p. 267 (or ead., *Историја на епигоните. Хеленистичките држави и Рим*, Скопје, 2009, pp. 36-37). Likewise, the evidence that seemingly points to higher settlement numbers for the Macedonians (at least in some parts of the Empire), is occasionally used in support of Edson, see. Spawforth, T. *op. cit.*, p. 4. But all this is beside the point, the discussion of the character of the Seleucid state is not a simple matter of demography but much more complicated one of institutions, law, culture and ideology.

¹⁰ A similar expression is found in one other source, Jerome’s Latin translation of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius: Schoene II, 121, Olympias CXXXIII: “Parthis a Macedonum imperio recedentibus primus regnavit Arsaces unde et Arsacidae dicti.” The comparison with the Greek text of Eusebius clearly shows that here the word “imperium” is used in the general sense of rule or dominion, a rough translation of Greek ἀρχή. Cf. Euseb. *Chron.* II, 120, Hr: Ἐν τούτου τοῦ Ἀντιόχου Πέρσαι τῆς Μακεδόνων καὶ Ἀντιόχων ἀρχῆς ἀπέστησαν... καὶ βασιλεύει Περσῶν Ἀρσάκης, ἀφ’ οὗ οἱ Περσῶν βασιλεῖς Ἀρσακίδαὶ ἐχρημάτισαν.

¹¹ I am well aware that there are scholars who object to the word “epitome” in the context of Justin’s work: because, for example, he did not merely shorten but also removed

of the *Historiae Philippicae*, written by one Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus, probably during the reign of Augustus.¹² We know very little about Trogus, apart from the fact that later generations thought of him highly as a historian.¹³ He was of Gallic ancestry, from Gallia Narbonensis, his grandfather served under Pompey, who gave him Roman citizenship. His uncle saw service under Pompey as well, while his father was employed by a Gaius Caesar, either the dictator himself, or the eponymous son of Agrippa. Trogus also wrote now inextant works on zoology and botany. The *Historiae Philippicae* was a world history in 44 books, an *opus* longer than that of either Polybius or Diodorus of Sicily. Judging by Justin's epitome and the surviving *Prologues*, its main subject were the great empires of the past, and especially, as hinted by the title, the rise and fall of the Macedonian Empire founded by Philip II. Books dedicated primarily to Macedonian imperial history and that of its successor states occupy most of the work (7-40). The six books concerning the older empires represent an extended introduction (1-6), those devoted to the Parthians (41-42) are an epilogue, and those on Italy and the Iberian peninsula (43-44) are a mere appendix. There is not much that can be definitely said about the sources of Trogus, save that he relied on some late Hellenistic writers.¹⁴

If Trogus is only partly visible, Justin is almost completely hidden. Few details that he shares about himself in the preface are all we really know. He was a visitor to Rome and, during his stay there, he utilized his spare time to create this epitome. This much we are told in the *Preface*, which is addressed to some unnamed person. In the process of abbreviating, he “took those parts most worthy of knowledge”

most of the original, because he made selections according to arbitrary criteria, and because he freely introduced ideas of his own. I will, however, adhere to standard usage, because the same objections can be applied to many other works with the same label, and a debate of basic definitions would take us far in a wrong direction. Also, proposed alternatives (anthology, selection, edition etc.) carry problems of their own.

¹² Seel, O. *Eine römische Weltgeschichte. Studien zum Text der Epitome des Iustinus und zur Historik des Pompejus Trogus*, Nürnberg, 1972, pp. 172-180; Syme, R. ‘The Date of Justin and the Discovery of Trogus’, *Historia* 37.3 (1988), pp. 366-368; Borgna, A. *Ripensare la storia universale. Giustino e l'Epitome della Storia Filippica di Pompeo Trogo*, Zürich, New York, 2018, pp. 31-33.

¹³ SHA, *Aurel.* 2.1 and *Prob.* 2.7 count Trogus as an equal of Livy, Sallust and Tacitus. Just. *Ep. Praef.* 1 praises him as “a man of old-fashioned eloquence” (“vir priscae eloquentiae”), who showed “Herculean bravery” (“herculea audacia”, *Praef.* 2) in his decision to tackle this monumental literary undertaking.

¹⁴ For traces of other writers in the vocabulary of Trogus see Yardley, Y. C. *Justin and Pompeius Trogus: A Study of the Language of Justin's Epitome of Trogus*, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2003, pp. 9-112. Most of this study is one long list of places where the influence of known writers was recognized or assumed. In the case of Trogus the difficulties of such research are doubled by the fact that his own words first needed to be established within the text of Justin. A good summary of Trogus' work, his aims and worldview can be found in Alonso-Núñez, J. M. ‘An Augustan World History: The *Historiae Philippicae* of Pompeius Trogus’, *Greece & Rome* 34.1 (1987), pp. 56-72.

(“cognitione quaeque dignissima excerpsi”, *Praef.* 4), while leaving out those which were “not pleasing to read nor usable as an example” (“et omissis his, quae nec cognoscendi voluptate iucunda nec exemplo erant necessaria”, *ibid.*). He actually removed most of Trogus’ text, the epitome being probably no more than one tenth of the original’s length. Latin was definitely his mother tongue, but that does not take us very far in determining his place of origin.¹⁵

We are similarly in the dark regarding the date of Justin’s work, the only certain pointers being that he is later than Trogus but predates the first decade of the 5th century AD, when Jerome directly mentions him and his epitome. There are very few clear and usable dating clues in his text. However, in 41.1.1 Justin says: “The Parthians, who, after dividing the world with the Romans, are now the Empire of the East, were once exiles from Scythia.” (“Parthi, penes quos velut divisione orbis cum Romanis facta nunc Orientis imperium est, Scytharum exules fuere.”). This is either a gross anachronism, directly taken from Trogus (but then, it is the only one of its kind), or it means that Justin wrote before the dissolution of the Parthian Empire in 226 AD. The analysis of his vocabulary points to the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD, though many other dates have been suggested.¹⁶

In spite of some recent attempts to paint Justin as a reasonably gifted writer in his own right,¹⁷ any apologia of him as a historian remains a challenging task indeed.¹⁸ The text, as we have it, is problematic in more than one way. The essential details, known from other sources, are often left out in preference to verbose but hollow rhetorical tirades: the expression “style over substance” comes to mind. What Justin was seeking in the work of Trogus were emotionally heavy, self-contained anecdotes that could be read and used by orators.¹⁹ If an

¹⁵ Forni, G., Bertinelli M. G. A. ‘Pompeo Trogo come fonte di storia’, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.30.2 (1982), pp 1312-1314. For Justin’s language and his dependence on earlier authors, see Yardley, Y. C. *op. cit.*, pp. 116-213. Steele, R. B. ‘Pompeus Trogus and Justinus’, *The American Journal of Philology* 38.1 (1917), pp. 28-35 used the epitomator’s vocabulary to argue for African origin. This was accepted with some additional comments by Syme, R. *op. cit.*, pp. 369-370, but nowadays has few supporters, see Borgna, A. *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39.

¹⁶ In general, most scholars opted for the Antonine period. Some outliers are Steele, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-41 who argued, with striking precision, for 144-145 AD; Seel, O. *op. cit.*, 346-347, who favored a time around 200 AD, and Syme, R. *op. cit.*, pp. 362-365, who proposed a very late date of ca. 395 AD. For a summary of this debate, see Borgna, A. *op. cit.*, 39-45; Hofmann, D. *Griechische Weltgeschichte auf Latein. Iustins „Epitoma historiarum Pompei Trogi“ und die Geschichtskonzeption des Pompeius Trogus*, Stuttgart, 2018, pp. 23-29.

¹⁷ Develin R. ‘Introduction’, in: Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, trans. Y. C. Yardley, Atlanta GA, 1994, p. 1-2; Hofmann, D. *op. cit.*, p. 16; Borgna, A. ‘Texts and Personalities. Justin and his *Epitoma* of Pompeius Trogus’, *Latinitas* 8.1 (2020), p. 33-34.

¹⁸ Forni, G., Bertinelli M. G. A. *op. cit.*, pp. 1307-1312.

¹⁹ Borgna, A. *op. cit.*, p. 34.

anecdote was less than satisfactory in this regard, he did not hesitate to “improve” it, usually at the expense of accuracy and coherency. Factual errors are, therefore, numerous and chronology is at best problematic. The annalistic framework of the original, stressed as important in the *Preface*,²⁰ is largely broken by Justin’s rewriting. Personal, ethnic and geographical names are frequently confused, omitted or transcribed in unexpected ways. The very length of abbreviated books varies wildly. The logical tendency to shorten and simplify complicated events is sometimes brought to such extreme that they become garbled beyond recognition. Greek terms are mostly Romanised, though this was probably already done by Trogus.²¹

For a long time the consensus among scholars was that Justin followed Trogus closely.²² This opinion necessarily led to conclusion that most glaring deficiencies of the epitome were already present in the original work, and that Trogus must have been a historian of humble abilities and achievements.²³ Such judgment, however, stands in sharp contrast with the high opinion that later generations had of this writer.²⁴ In past several decades reasons were brought forward in support of a different verdict: Justin had an agenda of his own, he was rather liberal in the treatment of the original text, which he reshaped freely. Comparison between the epitome and the *Prologues* reveals that the epitomator decided to exclude many sections that were obviously important to Trogus. Justin inserted sentences of his own as well.²⁵ Moreover, he frequently speaks in first person and directs reader to earlier places in the abridged text. Yardley’s study of vocabulary has shown that we can actually recognize and separate some sentences of Trogus from those of Justin.²⁶

Keeping all this in mind, let us examine what the author and the epitomator have to say regarding the *Imperium Macedonicum*.

²⁰ Just. *Ep. Praef.* 3: “Et quae historici Graecorum, prout commodum cuique fuit, inter se gratiose occupauerunt, omissis quae sine fructu erant, ea omnia Pompeius divisa temporibus et serie rerum digesta composuit.”

²¹ Forni, G., Bertinelli M. G. A. *op. cit.*, pp. 1300-1301.

²² Cf. Ferrero, L. *Struttura e metodo dell'Epitome di Giustino*, Torino, 1957, pp. 155-157.

²³ Exactly the opinion of Syme, R. *op. cit.*, p. 370, Trogus “may have been little better than a superior journalist, anticipating the manner of Curtius Rufus. However eloquent in exposition and improving in tone, he cannot come anywhere near the authentic historian...” The opposite assumption is that of Ferrero, L. *op. cit.* where clear sentences and solid information is ascribed by default to Trogus, confused and problematic sections to Justin.

²⁴ Unsurprisingly, this was downplayed by Syme, R. *op. cit.*, pp. 370-371.

²⁵ Steele, R. B. *op. cit.*, p. 26; Goodyear, F. R. D. ‘On the Character and Text of Justin’s Compilation of Trogus’, *Proceedings of the African Classical Associations*, 16 (1982), p. 1; Borgna, A. *op. cit.*, pp. 19-22.

²⁶ Yardley, Y. C. *op. cit.*, pp 4-5.

The phrase “Macedonian Empire” (*Imperium Macedoniae* in this instance) is used for the first time in the context of the Thracian conquests of Philip II: the entire country became a province of the Empire (Just. *Ep.* 8.3.6.).²⁷ Later we read that king Philip laid the foundations of a world empire (“*Orbis Imperii fundamenta*”, 9.8.21). Through victory at Gaugamela Alexander gained rule over Asia (“*Asiae Imperium*”, 11.14.6). With his final breath, Darius III wished for his conqueror to achieve rule over the entire world (“*terrarum omnium victori contingat imperium*”, 11.15.10). Alexander marched into India with a desire “to make the Ocean and the furthestmost East the frontier of his Empire” (“*ut Oceano ultimoque Oriente finiret Imperium*”, 12.7.4). Later he set the frontiers of the Empire (“*Imperii terminis*”, 12.10.5) as far as geographical obstacles would permit. On his deathbed, Alexander is confronted with the issue of the one whom he would “make heir to his Empire” (“*quem Imperii faciat heredem*”, 12.15.8). After the king’s passing, we are reminded of the prophecies that marked his birth: among others, a double empire of Europe and Asia was foretold (“*omen duplicis Imperii, Europae Asiaeque*”, 12.16.5).

So far, the picture is tolerably clear. There is a single empire, referred to in the beginning as the “Macedonian Empire”. Philip II is the one who founded it, and Alexander the man who spread it to the far reaches of the known world.²⁸ But, when retelling the events following the king’s death, the author suddenly becomes wary of similar expressions, save as a retrospective reference to Alexander’s world empire (14.6.8). He is also careful not to address any of the successors with royal or similar titles prematurely. “Ptolemy held Egypt and a greater part of Africa, also Cyprus and Phoenicia. Cassander held in subjugation Macedonia with Greece. Antigonus took Asia and the parts of the East.” (“*Tenebat Ptolomeus Aegyptum cum Africae parte maiore et Cypro et Phoenice. Cassandro parebat Macedonia cum Graecia. Asiam et partem Orientis occupauerat Antigonus*”, 15.1.5). No kings here, and no verbs that would imply legal, hereditary possession, until after Alexander’s wife and son are dead, and the legitimate dynasty is out of the scene.²⁹

Antigonus and Demetrius are first to take the royal mantle, though others react to this ideological challenge almost immediately. How-

²⁷ In most manuscripts of Justin the wording in 8.3.6 is “*Inde [From Thessaly – N.V.] veluti rebus egregie gestis in Cappadociam traicit...*” (my italics). This is obviously a scribal error, usually emended into “*Chalcidiam*” or “*Thraciam*”. The second solution makes better sense, given the context, because we are immediately told that in the new area Philip fought and defeated local kings, *finitimi reges*.

²⁸ There are other instances when the empire of Philip and Alexander is mentioned retroactively later in the text, for example in Just. *Ep.* 28.4.1.

²⁹ Cf. Just. *Ep.* 41.42.2: “After that, when the Macedonians were split asunder in civil war...” (“*Postea diductis Macedonibus in bellum civile...*”).

ever, in the account of Trogus/Justin all of them are merely kings (*reges*) without specific designation. There is no direct mention of any “Macedonian kings”, kingdom of empire.³⁰ It is possible that this caution and hesitation merely reflects the confusing reality of the age of successors, but perhaps there is more to it. In 15.4.10 we read that Seleucus “fought many wars in the East, after the Macedonian kingdom was divided among the allies.” (“*Multa in Oriente post divisionem inter socios regni Macedonici bella gessit.*”).³¹ The aftermath of the battle of Ipsus did not bring stability, but more conflicts. “Thus, as if from a new source, wars began again for Macedonia” (“*Sic quasi ex integro nova Macedoniae bella nascuntur.*”, 15.4.).

The terminology shifts once more in book 16, and now it seems that the Macedonian realm is somehow constituted once again. However, the expression is not used to designate the Seleucid Empire in Asia but the old European homeland of the Argeads. Whoever rules this ancestral country is called the king of the Macedonians. We read that “Demetrius, in his hope to take the Macedonian kingdom, made no delay” (“*Nec Demetrius spe invadendi Macedonici regni moram fecit*”, 16.1.6), later he killed Alexander, son of Cassander, “and occupied Macedonian kingdom” (“*occupatoque Macedoniae regno*”, 16.1.9). He asserted, before Macedonian people, that the right to be king of Macedonia was his (“*Regem autem se Macedoniae... esse*”, 16.1.11), among other reasons because he posed as the avenger of the Argeads (16.1.17). Impressed by his speech, the people declared him the “king of Macedonia” (“*rex Macedoniae*”, 16.1.18). Later, with “the whole might of the Macedonian kingdom” (“*totis Macedonici regni viribus*”, 16.2.1) behind him, Demetrius plans conquests in Asia, but this only leads to his downfall. The “Kingdom of Macedonia” (“*Regnum Macedoniae*”, 16.2.3) is taken by Pyrrhus, the king of Epirus.³² At the same time, Antipater, another son of Cassander, demands “*Regnum Macedoniae*” for himself, but is murdered by Lysimachus, his father-in-law (16.2.4).

The disputed kingdom is then taken by Lysimachus (16.3.2), who is in turn defeated by Seleucus (17.2.1). Soon, Seleucus falls as well, as a victim to assassination, at once “losing his life and the Kingdom of Macedonia, which he took from Lysimachus” (“*Regnumque Macedoniae, quod Lysimacho eripuerat, cum vita pariter amittit*”, 17.2.5). The last sentence is particular significant. In 17.3.20 the usurper Cassander is referred to as the “*Macedoniae rex*”. Another usurper, Ptolemy Ceraunus is titled similarly in 24.4.8. His arrogance leads to

³⁰ Just. *Ep.* 15.2.

³¹ The division and multiplication of kingdoms is referred to again later in the text, in the context of early history of the Parthians (41.4.1-2).

³² Reoccupation of the Macedonian kingdom by Pyrrhus: Justin. *Ep.* 25.3.6; and his son Alexander II: 26.2.10.

the fall of the “Macedoniae Regnum” (24.4.11). During the Gallic invasion, Sosthenes the general proves himself as the best candidate for the “kingship of Macedonia” (“regnum Macedoniae”, 24.5.13), but he declines the honor. Later Antigonus Gonatas is called the “king of Macedonia” (“Macedoniae rex”, 25.3.1). Philip V is likewise the “Macedonian king” (“rex Macedonum”, 32.2.3, 37.3.2).

In 29.1.10, in the context of the accession of Philip V, the remark is made that “the Dardanians, and other peoples on the borders, held eternal hatred for the kings of Macedonia...” (“Dardani ceterique omnes finitimi populi, quibus velut inmortale odium cum Macedonum regibus erat...”). Obviously, the Dardanians hold no grudge against the Seleucid (or Ptolemaic) kings. When the statement is made that even the Romans were apprehensive of the Macedonian kingdom (“Macedonicum”, 29.3.7), “because they were afraid of the ancient glory of the Macedonians as the conquerors of the East” (“quippe terrebat eos et vetus Macedonum devicti Orientis gloria”, 29.3.8), this is done to introduce the conflicts between Rome and Philip V. Clearly, the understanding of Trogus is that Macedonian state is identical with the territory of the former Argead kingdom in Europe, and that whoever actually rules over this land is the Macedonian king.

Let us now move to terminology used to describe the Seleucids in Asia. It is fairly varied and not entirely consistent. Many rulers are named without any title, and we do not know if this was Trogus’ or Justin’s choice. Did the epitomator consider titles superfluous because the readers would already be familiar with persons in question? For example, Seleucus I is never referred to as king directly. We can only assume that his name and deeds were so well known in antiquity that any title was almost redundant.³³ Antiochus I and II are simply called kings (24.1.1, 27.1.1, 28.1.2), likewise Seleucus II (41.4.4, 41.4.9), Antiochus Hierax (41.4.4), Antiochus the Great (29.1.3) and Antiochus VII (39.1.9). But the title “king of Syria” is by far the most frequent. Antiochus II is styled thus twice (“Syriae rex”: 27.1.1, “rex Syriae”: 28.1.2), and so are Seleucus II (27.1.1), Antiochus III (31.1.1), Antiochus IV (34.2.7), Demetrius II (38.9.1), Antiochus VII (42.1.1-2) and Antiochus XIII (40.2.2, here confused with his father, Antiochus X).

Several variations are encountered in Justin’s epitome regarding the naming of the Seleucid state. Sometimes it is designated in purely personal or dynastic terms, in 27.1.9 it is called the “Kingdom of Se-

³³ Interestingly, when speaking of the successors who took royal titles after Antigonus and Demetrius were declared kings, the epitomator does not mention Seleucus but only Ptolemy, Cassander and Lysimachus, in that order (Just. *Ep.* 15.2.10-14). But Seleucus is titled “founder” (*conditor*) of the Macedonian Empire in 38.7.1; in the same sentence he is called “Nicator”, likewise in 41.4.3.

leucus” (“Regnum Seleuci”), in 29.1.3 it is “Asia”.³⁴ However, the “Kingdom of Syria” (“Syriae regnum”) is the usual phrase (31.7.8, 35.1.1, 36.1.7, 36.3.8, 36.4.1, 38.9.10, 39.1.4, 39.2.1, 39.3.1, 39.5.4, 40.1.1, 40.1.3). The simple designation “Syria” is used as well (32.2.1, several instances in 39.1, 39.5.6, many times in 40.1-2), though it is not always clear if this is meant in political or geographical sense.³⁵

Not until book 36, close to the end of his epitome, does Justin actually begin to describe Seleucid kingdom as the “old Empire of the Macedonians” (“veterum Macedonum Imperium”, 36.1.2). A bit further we read that the Jews recently liberated themselves from the “Macedonicum Imperium”, and that from then on they would suffer “no Macedonian king” (“nullum Macedonum regem”, 36.1.10). At the end of summary of earlier Jewish history, Justin says that “afterwards they, similarly to the Persians themselves, fell under the rule of Alexander the Great, and for a long time remained within the power of the Macedonian Empire, subjected to the Kingdom of Syria” (“postea cum ipsis Persis in dicionem Alexandri Magni venere diuque in potestate Macedonici Imperii subiecti Syriae regno fuere”, 36.3.8).

Similar references are absent from book 37, but in 38.7.1. Alexander the Great and Seleucus Nicator are jointly praised as the “founders of the Macedonian Empire” (“conditores Imperii Macedonici”). Books 39 and 40 are again devoid of such expressions, but in the 41st the “Macedonian Empire” is back, this time to offer comparison with the rising power of the Parthians. After the Macedonian triumph over the East, it is said, the Parthians were subservient to them (41.1.5). But Parthia separated itself from the Macedonian Empire (41.2.1) in the time of Seleucus II and Antiochus Hierax (41.4.4). Other peoples of the

³⁴ When narrating Hellenistic history, Justin often uses the word “Asia” in the sense of “Asia Minor”, see for example Just. *Ep.* 27.2.6, 27.2.11 or 27.3.1-6.

³⁵ Terms “Syria” and the “kings of Syria” as descriptors for the Seleucid state and rulers are ubiquitous among the later writers. However, not even they reflect the official Hellenistic usage. Contemporary writers used similar expressions only rarely and informally, for example, Polyb. 5.34.6 writes that Ptolemaic kings “maintained an aggressive posture towards *the kings of Syria*, both on land and sea, being in possession of Coele Syria and Cyprus.” (τοιγαροῦν ἐπέκειντο μὲν τοῖς τῆς Συρίας βασιλεῦσι καὶ κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλατταν, Κοίλης Συρίας καὶ Κύπρου κυριεύοντες); my italics. In Polyb. 28.20.6 Seleucid kings are “kings in Syria” (ἐν Συρίᾳ βασιλεῖς), but in the next sentence Antigonus the One-Eyed is described as “the first who held the kingship of Syria” (“τοῦ πρώτου κατασχόντος τὴν ἐν Συρίᾳ βασιλείαν”). The earliest epigraphic attestations of similar expressions come from Delphi (101 BC), where an inscription mentions “the kings who rule in Syria” (*FD* III 4, 37, l. 9: τοὺς βασιλεῖς τοὺς ἐν Συρίᾳ βασιλεύον[τας] and Miletus (early 1st century BC), where a deceased persons is styled as “admiral of Alexander, the king of Syria” (*Milet* VI 2, 422, ll. 1-2: ναύαρχος Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Συρίας βασιλέως). The king in question is either Alexander I Balas or Alexander II Zabinas. Of course, neither text is an official Seleucid document. Cf. Hermann, P. ‘Milesier am Seleukidenhof. Prosopographische Beiträge zur Geschichte Milets im 2. Jhdt. v. Chr.’, *Chiron* 17 (1987), pp. 183-190.

East eventually followed suit and defected the Macedonian rule (“a Macedonibus defecere”, 41.4.5).

So much for the state, how are the people and the army named? This kind of expression is not very frequent. In 31.6.9 we find the “Asian soldiers” (“Asiani milites”) for the crews of Seleucid warships, in 39.1.5 the people of the realm are the “Syrians” (“Syri”, 39.1.5), in 41.4.5 the rulers of the empire are the “Macedonians” (“Macedones”), and in 42.1.45 we read “Greek army” (“exercitum Graecorum”) for the troops of late Antiochus VII. The usage of the word “Macedonians” for the imperial elite demands no explanation. The term “Syrians” for the population of the now severely shrunken empire is likewise expected, and in tune with the general terminology of Trogus. Interestingly, the Seleucid soldiers and sailors are described as “Asians” when confronting the Romans, but as “Greeks” when set against the Parthians and the Scythians. Given how rarely the ethnic descriptors are given for the Seleucid troops and population, there is not much basis for any conclusion, save that the empire was obviously multicultural, though dominated by a foreign elite of conquerors.

What are we to make from all this? Certainly not that the Seleucids were proper and true “Macedonian kings”, whereas the Ptolemies and even the Antigonids were not. True, the Ptolemies are never called thus by the Justin, but this is not necessarily indicative of Trogus.³⁶ Their title is merely king or “king of Egypt” (“rex Aegypti”, 27.1.2, 27.3.4, 31.1.1, 34.2.7, 35.1.6, 39.1.4, 39.3.1), which is perfectly analogous to expressions such as “king of Macedonia” or “king of Syria”, which are usually employed for their rivals (cf. 21.1.1: „Agathocles, rex Siciliae“; 35.1.6: “Attalus, rex Asiae”). If we follow the terminology of Trogus prior to book 36, we could easily conclude that this author began with a conception of a single Macedonian empire, the power that grew out of the old Macedonian kingdom, but fell apart soon after Alexander the Great’s death. After that, he went back to a Macedonian kingdom in Europe, and successor states in Asia (Syria) and Egypt. A simple and fairly logical scheme.

But if that is all there is, how do we explain the alternative usage in books 36-41? The Seleucid state is suddenly “the old Empire

³⁶ Other Greek and Latin sources describe the Ptolemaic dynasty as Macedonian without any caveat, showing no appreciation for Edson’s “negative fact of high significance”. Callim. *Hymn* IV, 167, a contemporary court poet, calls Ptolemy II “a Macedonian” (Μακεδόν). Theoc. *Id.* XVII, 13-33 makes Ptolemy II a descendant of Heracles (thus, a member of the Argead royal house) and, through the same lineage, of Alexander the Great. For Tac. *Hist.* 4.83 king Ptolemy Soter is “the first of Macedonians to secure the power of Egypt” (“Ptolemaeo regi, qui Macedonum primus Aegypti opes firmavit...”), while in *Ann.* 6.28 Euergetes is the one who “reigned third among the Macedonian kings” (“Ptolemaeo, qui ex Macedonibus tertius regnavit”). For Paus. 1.6-7 Ptolemy I is clearly a Macedonian ruler. Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.21 (128.3) speaks of Ptolemies as τῶν Μακεδονικῶν βασιλεῖς and (129.2) τῶν Μακεδόνων βασιλεῖς. There are many other examples.

of the Macedonians”, and Seleucus I is praised as the founder of the said empire, conjoined in this role with none other than Alexander the Great. Edson was at least correct in noticing the significance of these expressions, as he was in deciding not to treat them as mere invention or negligence of Justin.³⁷ The issues of this sort are often solved, usually with some name-calling thrown in the mix, by merely declaring Justin negligent and useless.³⁸ True, he can be both at times, but there are strong reasons to assume that these expressions go back to Trogus. Justin is largely uninterested in proper titles and exact legal formulations. He either omits them or copies them mechanically, but he does not, so far as I can see, make up titles, institutions or state names on his own. If such specific terms are found in his text, they must have originated with Trogus. And this Gallo-Roman historian utilized them with a very specific purpose.

To understand what purpose, we need to go back to another aspect that Justin cared little about: the overall historical conception of Trogus. As I said previously, his was a world history, more precisely – a history of the rise and fall of various great imperial states, with the Macedonian Empire of Philip and Alexander at its center. The first empire he speaks of is that of the Assyrians, with the hint of an even earlier power of the Egyptians. A (completely mythical) history of the Assyrian Empire is told (*Trog. Prol. I*; *Just. Ep.* 1.1-3) until the time that the imperial flame was transferred to the Medes. There is practically no history of the Median Empire, but only of its downfall and the rise of the Persians (1.4-6). Then the Persian history is told until the Scythian campaign of Darius I (1.7-10). Book 2 deals with the failure of the Persians to conquer either the Scythians or the Greeks, and the rise of the Athenians to great power status. Book 3 is a history of Persia and Greece in the 5th century, up to the peace of Nicias in 421 BC. The entire fourth Book is dedicated to the ill-fated Athenian expedition in Sicily of 415-413 BC. In book 5 the Greek and Persian history is continued until the early 4th century B.C. The epochs of the Spartan and the Theban hegemony are narrated in book 6, at the very end of which a comment on the declining state of Greece is used to introduce the rise of Macedonia, as the power that would “put the slavery like a yoke on the necks of Greece and Asia” (“*Graeciae et Asiae cervicibus veluti iugum servitutis inponeret.*”, 6.9.7).³⁹

³⁷ Edson, Ch., *op. cit.*, p. 155.

³⁸ Cf. Tarn, W. W. *Alexander the Great II: Sources and Studies*, Cambridge, 1949, p. 124: “To talk of sources for this mass of rubbish would be idle”, and p. 125: “Is there any bread at all to this intolerable deal of sack?” Syme, R. *op. cit.*, p. “Justin, a text rather than a personality”. Hammond, N. G. L. *Three Historians of Alexander the Great. The So-Called ‘Vulgate’ Authors: Diodorus, Justin and Curtius*, Cambridge, 1983, p. 86: “As an epitomiser, Justin was both ruthless and careless.” And even Edson, Ch. *op. cit.*, p. 154: “Justin is a late and notoriously careless source... So much must indeed be granted.”

³⁹ Cf. *Trog. Prol. VI*: “*Transitus hinc ad res Macedonicas*”.

This brief overview of the first six books of Trogus show his interests and the overall framework of his work clearly. He is combining two well-known ancient models of historical development, both of them Greek in origin, with Macedonian history as the linchpin that connects them. The first is the concept of world history as a succession of great empires, each of them created by a single, dominant ethnicity. In this case – and there are variants – they are the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, the Macedonians and, finally, the Romans and the Parthians. This model is very old, it probably originates from the Greeks spectators contemplating rapid political changes in the Near East during the 7th and 6th centuries BC. In Herodotus' work the scheme is already present in a fairly developed form.⁴⁰ The other model is of a more narrow scope, its purpose is to summarize the Greek past. Again, it is developed around military power and domination, it sees Greek history as a sequence of hegemonistic powers, in this case the Spartans, the Athenians, the Spartans again, the Thebans, and, finally, the Macedonians. Both historical threads drew close by the Persian invasion of Greece, and finally were joined together from book 7 onward, when the time comes for the kings of Macedonia to take the mantle of power in both West and East. The Macedonian hegemony in Greece anticipates and directly leads to conquest of Asia.

This scheme was easy to follow and develop when writing the history of Philip II and Alexander III. The rise of the Macedonian empire was quick and, seemingly, unstoppable. But then the sudden death of Alexander the Great introduced difficulties in the otherwise straightforward and simple model. The recently founded empire went to pieces almost immediately. Both models, the succession of empires and the succession of hegemonies, demand an outside challenger as the primary agent of change. There needs to be a new, rising power to force the collapse of its predecessor, only to be cast down in turn, when its time comes. The power of the Assyrians was terminated by the Medes who were in the next cycle brought low by the Persians, and so on. But the unified empire of the Macedonians failed to observe the rule, and imploded from within.

There are further complications. The break-up of an empire is usually synonymous with its end, but this is not really true of the Macedonian rule in Asia and Egypt. Alexander's Empire did formally end in 305 BC, and realistically its dissolution was a foregone conclusion by 316 BC at the latest. Several of its successor states/dynasties proved to be short-lived. However, the three main dynasties had a firmer

⁴⁰ Hdt. 1.95, 1.130. Herodotus' model was by necessity less developed, dealing with only three empires (the Assyrians, the Medes and, in his own time, the Persians) that ruled Asia in sequence. The Babylonians, the Lydians and the Scythians are treated as important powers in the same book, but apparently not important enough to warrant their own place within the imperial succession scheme.

hold on their domains and continued to exist and exercise great influence for centuries to come. Thus, in one sense the Macedonian Empire disappeared early, but in another it went on for two or three centuries more. And when the end actually came, it was not simultaneous in every part of the Hellenistic world. There was not even a single succeeding power, but two, operating from different ends of the known world. Trogus seems to struggle to properly integrate this peculiar development into his broader scheme of world history.

His solution was to use more precise and neutral terminology when describing internal relations and conflicts of the Hellenistic powers, but to go back to the general concept of the Macedonian Empire when outside challengers finally do appear. We read about kings of Syria (of Macedonia, Egypt, Pontus, Asia Minor etc.) until the time of imperial transition is near, when the Macedonian Empire suddenly reappears. And since there were two outside challengers, materializing at different times and places, the tale of the Macedonian imperial downfall is told twice.

In 30.4.4 we read, concerning the earthquake that shattered Rhodes and much of the eastern Aegean: “With everyone terrified by this omen, prophets chanted that the rising Empire of the Romans would devour the old Empire of the Greeks and Macedonians.” (“*Quo prodigio territis omnibus vates cecinere, oriens Romanorum imperium vetus Graecorum ac Macedonum voraturum.*”). What is this “old Empire of the Greeks and Macedonians”, did it not already fall apart, a century ago? It did, and yet it did not. The Macedonian hegemony in Greece was not finished with the breakup of the Empire, certainly not permanently. In reality it had its ups and downs, but Trogus decided to simplify an otherwise complex development, and to treat the entire period between Philip II and Philip V as one of unbroken Macedonian dominion.⁴¹ He emphasized this by making special mention of exceptional cases, political entities that somehow managed to resist the Macedonians for a long time, namely the Aetolians and the Spartans.⁴² Only the

⁴¹ Just. *Ep.* 33.2.6. gives the total duration of the Macedonian dominion in Greece, ending, curiously, with the battle of Pydna, rather than that of Cynoscephalae. The number differs between manuscripts. The most common variants are 192 (thus, the hegemony would begin in 360 BC), 152 (320 BC) or 150 years (318 BC), none of which makes much sense. Did Trogus (or Justin?) decide to include the whole reign of Philip II within the time of hegemony? If the ending point were the battle of Cynoscephalae, the ca. 150 years period would be slightly more acceptable, though still problematic, from 348 (the fall of Olynthus?) to 197 BC.

⁴² In 28.2.12 we read that the Aetolians „alone always despised the Macedonians, even when these were flourishing and held dominion over the world, and did not fear king Philip and ignored orders of Alexander the Great when, after his conquests of the Persians and the Indians, all feared his name.“ (“*Solos denique esse qui Macedonas imperio terrarum semper florentes contempserint, qui Philippum regem non timuerint, qui Alexandri Magni post Persas Indosque devictos, cum omnes nomen eius horrerent, edicta spreuerint.*”).

triumph of Roman arms over Philip V brought Macedonian hegemony to its end. The conflict following that one resulted not merely in further humiliation, but in the actual dissolution of the kingdom.

And yet, a form of Macedonian rule in the East persevered. In fact, in the moment of Roman victory at Cynoscephalae, two great Macedonian dynasties were in control of almost all of Alexander's Empire in Asia and Africa. The kings of Media, Parthia and Bactria were still Seleucid vassals. Antiochus III only recently came back from another imperial *Anabasis* in the Far East, following in the footsteps of Alexander the Great and Seleucus Nicator. The defeat at Magnesia in 190/189 BC at the hands of Romans and Attalids was indeed a serious blow to Seleucid power and prestige – the ensuing peace effectively meant their withdrawal from the Aegean and most of Asia Minor – but it was by no means the terminus for their empire in Western Asia. This came only gradually, first by the final succession of Parthia and Bactria after the death of Antiochus III in 187 BC and, especially, some decades later, by slow but persistent Parthian encroachment on Iran and Mesopotamia. With the failed and belated attempts by Demetrius II and Antiochus VII to eliminate the Parthian threat in 139-129 BC came the end of the Seleucid/Macedonian Empire in Asia in earnest. But at this point we are already seven decades past Cynoscephalae (197 BC) and three past Pydna (168 BC). And even this did not mean the dissolution of Seleucid state as such: reduced to Syria and eastern Cilicia, it continued to struggle for another six decades.

Ultimately, Trogus made compromises in an attempt to fit a complicated historical reality within a crude and rigid model. The scheme was not fully compatible with reality even when dealing with the earlier powers: the Assyrian period was not in fact one of uninterrupted rule that went on for centuries, the Medes never enjoyed complete dominion over Western Asia comparable to that of the Assyrians and the Persians, etc. But it ran into particular difficulties when trying to deal with complicated and unwieldy topic of Macedonian imperialism. The expression “*Imperium Macedonicum*” was utilized with a dual purpose of emphasizing continuity between Alexander's Empire and that of the Seleucids, and of making sharp distinction between the foreign conquerors of Asia (“the Macedonians”) and the indigenous ethnicities resisting their rule (the Jews, Parthians, Scythians etc.). It was never intended to be a final word on the character, ideology and status of the Seleucid state.

Almost immediately after this (28.4.1), the same claim is made of the Spartans: “After this he began war with the Spartans, who alone of all people, during the wars of Philip and Alexander, have shown contempt for the Macedonian Empire and its fearsome arms.” (“*Post haec bellum Spartanis infert, qui soli Philippi Alexandrique bellis et Imperium Macedonum et omnibus metuenda arma contempserant.*”). The statements are not quite true in either case, but make much sense narratively.

Today, the prevailing consensus on the matter is that the Seleucid Empire was as complicated as its history.⁴³ Its official language was Greek, and Greek was the culture of its elite and many newfound cities. It was ruled by a dynasty of Macedonian, but also partly of Iranian descent. It maintained strong Macedonian traditions, especially in the spheres of court and military organization, but also many traditions of its Achaemenid predecessor. Other eastern cultures, such as that of Babylonia, continued to exist, to be influential and to develop further within the borders of the empire. And of course, this Hellenistic state was not a mere extension of former practices, but was capable of innovation in its own right.⁴⁴ Especially its early rulers displayed a striking ability to adapt, innovate and improvise, if circumstances so demanded. This elaborate picture may change in the future, but for that to happen it will take stronger evidence than a few seductive expressions in a late source.

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⁴³ For a summary of the current understanding of the Seleucid Empire see Sherwin-White, S., Khurt, A. *From Samarkand to Sardis. A New Approach to Seleucid Empire*, Berkley, Los Angeles, 1993, pp. 38-39; Captedrey, L. *Le pouvoir séleucide. Territoire, administration, finances, d'un royaume hellénistique (312-129 avant J.-C.)*, Rennes, 2007, pp. 11-19; Strootman, R. *Courts and Elites in the Hellenistic Empires. The Near East After the Achaemenids, c. 330 to 30 BCE*, Edinburgh, 2014, p. 4; Engels, D. *Benefactors, Kings, Rulers. Studies on the Seleucid Empire Between East and West*, Leuven, Paris, Bristol, 2017, pp. 4-11.

⁴⁴ Sherwin-White, S., Khurt, A. *op. cit.*, pp. 20-37.

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