

# Flamininus and the Assassination of the Macedonian Prince

Demetrius

Peter Newey

---

**Citer ce document / Cite this document :**

Newey Peter. Flamininus and the Assassination of the Macedonian Prince Demetrius. In: Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire, tome 87, fasc. 1, 2009. pp. 69-83;

doi : <https://doi.org/10.3406/rbph.2009.7660>

[https://www.persee.fr/doc/rbph\\_0035-0818\\_2009\\_num\\_87\\_1\\_7660](https://www.persee.fr/doc/rbph_0035-0818_2009_num_87_1_7660)

---

Fichier pdf généré le 17/04/2018

## Flamininus and the Assassination of the Macedonian Prince Demetrius

Peter NEWHEY  
*Ghent University*

In 188 Roman forces evacuated Greece for the second time in six years, and another seventeen years were to elapse before the next military intervention. During this period, not only did the generally friendly disposition of the various Greek states towards Rome begin to diminish, but the relationship between Rome and Macedon became decidedly frosty <sup>(1)</sup>. Initially, however, in spite of his defeat in 197 at Cynoscephalae in Thessaly, Philip V of Macedon had had the sagacity subsequently to support the Roman cause. His most valuable contribution was undoubtedly his provision of a safe passage for the Roman legions through Macedonia and Thrace, on their way to confront Antiochus in 190, in anticipation of which he was rewarded with the release of his younger son, Demetrius, who had been being held as a hostage in Rome, along with the remission of war indemnity <sup>(2)</sup>. He then proved himself a valuable ally during the Aetolian war, following which he was allowed to keep several cities he had captured from Amynder in Athamania, along with the strategically important stronghold of Demetrias in Thessaly <sup>(3)</sup>. Even so, Philip's lingering dissatisfaction with successive Roman peace settlements soon festered into resentment <sup>(4)</sup>, and by 185 numerous Greek states, along with Eumenes of Pergamum, represented by his brother Athenaeus, were complaining to the senate about his seizure of other territories <sup>(5)</sup>. When Roman commissioners at Tempe ordered him to withdraw his garrisons, he began to plan for another war with Rome, which ultimately would prove disastrous for the house of Macedon, albeit not in Philip's own lifetime.

Although Philip could provide a convincing argument for his occupation of certain territories in Thessaly, he proceeded to make an already difficult situation worse by committing further incursions in Thrace, concentrating on the coastal towns and cities. Matters came to a head when, in early 184,

(1) This resulted eventually in a third military confrontation and the defeat of Macedon by the consular forces

(of L. Aemilius Paullus at Pydna in 168. Although it was not the final conflict between Rome and Macedon, effectively it broke the back of Macedonian power. See e.g. F. W. WALBANK, *Philip V of Macedon*, Cambridge, 1940, p. 223-257, esp. p. 239-252; E. S. GRUEN, *The Hellenistic World and the coming of Rome*, Berkeley, 1984, pp. 402-419.

(2) Polybius, XXI, xxx, 1-4; Livy, XXXVI, xxxv, 11-14 and XXXVII, xxv, 12.; Eutrop., 4, 3, 1; Zonar., 9, 19g.

(3) Livy, XXXIX, xxii, 10-12.

(4) Livy, XXXIX, xxiii, 6-9.

(5) Polybius, XX, vi, 1-7. Livy XXXIX, xxiv, 6-13.

the senate ordered Philip to liberate all occupied Thracian territory, and impulsively he vented his anger on the unfortunate citizens of Maroneia<sup>(6)</sup>. Fearing the consequences, Philip sent his younger son Demetrius as an ambassador to Rome in the hope that the popularity the young prince had enjoyed during his detention as a hostage in the city (197-191) would serve to mitigate the senate's retaliation<sup>(7)</sup>.

Such is the background to a series of events which led to a bitter quarrel between Demetrius and his elder half-brother Perseus, culminating eventually in the assassination of Demetrius on the orders of his own father<sup>(8)</sup>. Roman culpability in this dynastic murder, unparalleled in the history of the Antigonids<sup>(9)</sup>, and its effect on relations between Rome, Macedon and the Hellenistic world have already been examined by previously mentioned scholars. As is to be expected, opinions vary on all aspects of this episode, especially the involvement of Titus Quinctius Flamininus, one of the principal antagonists, and the measure of his responsibility for the death of the young prince. This requires still further examination.

Polybius and Livy recount in detail the sympathetic reception given to Demetrius by the Roman senators, along with their concerted efforts to lighten the burden of convincingly defending his father against the multitude of charges directed at him, a task which was clearly beyond the young man<sup>(10)</sup>. Both Philip and Perseus became jealous of Demetrius' popularity, and their jealousy was compounded by resentment of the Romans due to the patronising manner in which the senate acquitted Philip, not on his own merit, but out of consideration for Demetrius - a clear slap in the face for the king. As if this were not enough, the senate glibly added that a commission would be sent to Macedon to ensure that everything was being done "in accordance with its wishes"- κατὰ τὴν τῆς συγκλήτου βούλησιν - arrogant, even impertinent phraseology, given Philip's undisputed royal status, with the clear implication that he was at the senate's beck and call<sup>(11)</sup>. For Demetrius, as Livy so ominously predicts, this was the beginning of the end<sup>(12)</sup>.

### Intrat Titus Quinctius Flamininus

It is at this point in our ancient authorities that Titus enters the scene<sup>(13)</sup>. Mention of him is relatively scarce for the period between his return from

(6) Polybius, XXII, xiii. Livy, XXXIX, xxxiv, 1-xxxv, 4.

(7) Livy, XXXIX, xxxv, 1-2;

(8) Studies on this topic include C. H. EDSON, Jr., *Perseus and Demetrius*, in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 46, 1935, p. 191-202; G. DE SANCTIS, *Storia dei Roman*, IV, Torino, 1968, I, p. 251-254; WALBANK, 1940, p. 238-254 and ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΣ ΤΡΑΓΩΙΔΟΥΜΕΝΟΣ, in *JHS* 58, 1938, p. 55-68; E. S. GRUEN, *The Last Years of Philip V*, in *GRBS* 15, 1974, p. 221-246; Ch. WALKER, *Hostages in Republican Rome*, Washington, 2005, p. 118, 147-151 (Center for Hellenic Studies); R. PFEILSCHIFTER, *Titus Quinctius Flamininus, Untersuchungen zur römischen Griechenlandpolitik*, Göttingen 2005, p. 354-62.

(9) EDSON, 1935, p. 191.

(10) Polybius, XXIII, ii, 2.

(11) Polybius, XXIII, ii, 10; Livy, XXXIX, xlvii, 11.

(12) Livy, XXXIX, xlviii, 1: *haec, quae augendae amplitudinis eius causa facta erant, extemplo in invidiam, mox etiam in perniciem adulescenti uerterunt*.

(13) Polybius, XXIII, iii, 7-9.

Greece in late 191 and the topic currently under examination. From a purely personal perspective his election to the censorship in 189 was undoubtedly one of the highlights of his career, although his administration was but perfunctory and unremarkable<sup>(14)</sup>. He is next mentioned, albeit incidentally, in connection with events in Boeotia in 186<sup>(15)</sup> and with the removal of his brother from the senatorial role by Cato Maior in mid 184<sup>(16)</sup>. This low profile is easily explained. Since the final defeat of Antiochus in 190, and the conclusion of the peace settlement with the Aetolians in 189, there had been no serious threat from the east. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Titus suddenly reappears as soon as a threat does arise in the form of a resurgent Macedon. Concerning his subsequent inveiglement of Demetrius, Edson argues convincingly that “Flamininus was acting in full accord with the Senate”<sup>(17)</sup>, a notion refuted by Pfeilschifter, who claims that Rome did not play any active role in the struggle for power in Macedon<sup>(18)</sup>. This is a fair point, yet Roman influence was still being exerted in other ways: witness the presence of a pro- Roman faction in Macedon and the close personal association between Demetrius and the entourage of the commissioner Q. Marcius Philippus in the spring of 183<sup>(19)</sup>. Whatever, it is difficult to imagine any direct opposition from the senate, which had never been reluctant to give Titus a free hand in using his own discretion<sup>(20)</sup>. After all, he was the ideal candidate for such an undertaking, either by his own initiative or at the suggestion of his peers, given his unequalled knowledge of eastern politics and, crucially, his undoubted personal familiarity with Philip and, in all probability, other key figures at the Macedonian court. It is a fair assumption, therefore, that, at the very least, Titus was acting with the senate’s tacit approval, especially on so weighty a matter as regime change in Macedon, (if this is what the Romans really had in mind). He had always succeeded in getting the better of Philip on previous occasions, and there was no reason to suppose that he would not do so yet again. Indeed, the decision by the senate to patronise and humiliate Philip smacks very much of Titus. This notion is strongly supported by the juxtaposition in Polybius’ narrative, in which, right on cue and relishing the opportunity of rubbing salt into the wound, Titus picks up where the senate, (acting in concert or otherwise), had left off:

“Ἡ τε γὰρ σύγκλητος ἀπειραισμένη τὴν χάριν ἐπὶ τὸν Δημήτριον ἐμετεώρισε μὲν τὸ μεράκιον, ἐλύπησε δὲ καὶ τὸν Περσέα καὶ τὸν Φίλιππον ἰσχυρῶς τῷ δοκεῖν μὴ δι’ αὐτούς, ἀλλὰ διὰ Δημήτριον τυγχάνειν τῆς παρὰ Ῥωμαίων φιλανθρωπίας. Ὁ τε Τίτος ἐκκαλεσάμενος τὸ μεράκιον καὶ προβιβάσας εἰς λόγους ἀπορρήτους,

(14) Livy, XXXVIII, xxviii, 1-4, xxxvi, 5-10.

(15) Polybius, XXII, iv, 1-17.

(16) Livy, XXXIX, xlii, 5 – xlv, 1, lii, 1-2; Cicero, Sen., 42; Val. Max, II, ix, 3; Vict., Vir. Ill., XLVII, 4-5.

(17) EDSON, 1935, p. 200.

(18) P. 360. “Tatsächlich blieb Rom während des makedonischen Machtkampfes untätig.”

(19) Livy, XXXIX, liii, 9-11.

(20) E.g., the effective *carte blanche* granted to him in conducting the Roman campaign against Nabis in 195: Livy, XXXIII, xlv, 3.

οὐκ ὀλίγα συνεβάλετο πρὸς τὴν αὐτὴν ὑπόθεσιν. Τόν τε γὰρ νεανίσκον ἐψυχαγώγησεν, ὥς αὐτίκα μάλα συγκατασκευασόντων αὐτῷ Ῥωμαίων τὴν βασιλείαν, τοὺς τε περὶ τὸν Φίλιππον ἠρέθισε, γράψας ἐξ αὐτῆς τὸν Δημήτριον ἀποστέλλειν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην μετὰ τῶν φίλων ὥς πλείστων καὶ χρησιμωτάτων. Ταύταις γὰρ ταῖς ἀφορμαῖς χρησάμενος ὁ Περσεὺς μετ' ὀλίγον ἔπεισε τὸν πατέρα συγκαταθέσθαι τῷ Δημητρίῳ θανάτῳ. Περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων ὥς ἐχειρίσθη τὰ κατὰ μέρος ἐν τοῖς ἐξῆς δηλώσομεν. <sup>(21)</sup>

For the senate, in heaping favour upon Demetrius, buoyed the youngster up with false hopes, and seriously angered Perseus and Philip by giving the impression that it was not on their account that the Romans treated them benevolently, but out of consideration for Demetrius. Titus also contributed in no small way to this assumption on their part, by asking the youngster to join him and drawing him into illicit discussions. In fact, he deceived him into thinking that the Romans intended to help him acquire the kingship in the very near future, and he provoked the king's entourage by immediately sending a letter in which he asked them to send Demetrius back to Rome with as many as possible of his friends who would prove the most useful. It was, in fact, by taking advantage of these incitements that Perseus shortly afterwards induced his father to consent to the death of Demetrius, but I shall show point by point and in due order how this was brought about <sup>(22)</sup>.

Concerning Titus' character, the above passage reaffirms what has already been observed: he was devious, manipulative and, given the least chance, mischievous in the extreme <sup>(23)</sup>. Gruen argues convincingly that it was the historical facts that interested Polybius, with the added observation that, "unlike Livy, he is not concerned to exculpate Flamininus – nor, for that matter, to condemn him" <sup>(24)</sup>. Even so, in describing Demetrius, who was twenty-three at this point in time <sup>(25)</sup>, as μειράκιον and νεανίσκος terms generally applicable to a young man of twenty-one or less, Polybius is undoubtedly referring to his lack of experience and his vulnerability rather than to his physiological age <sup>(26)</sup>. The implication is clear: Titus was taking grossly unfair advantage of Demetrius, and with undoubted success, if

(21) Polybius XXIII, iii, 6-iv, 1.

(22) All translations in this article are by the author.

(23) E.g., the manner in which he duped Philip at Nicaea in 198, thereby securing the prorogation of his *imperium* and the opportunity of defeating Philip on the battlefield, rather than negotiating a peace treaty: Polybius, XVIII, 1 – x, 7; Livy, XXXII, xxxii, 1 – xxxvi, 10. Consider also the decidedly cavalier manner in which, without a blow being struck, he secured the possession of Thebes, in early 197: Livy, XXXIII, i, 1-8; Plutarch, *Flam.*, VI, 1-5. For his mischievous side, consider his unprovoked jibe at Philipomen's physical appearance; Plutarch, *Phil.*, II, 5-6 and *Moralia*, 197, C-D.

(24) *Op. cit.*, p. 236.

(25) Livy, XL, vi, 4: --- *Perseus iam tricesimum annum agens, Demetrius quinquennio minor* ---.

(26) Polybius makes Demetrius' youth and inexperience a salient point in recounting this episode throughout the second and third chapters of book XXIII, variously referring to him as νέον ὄντα (once), μειράκιον (also once) and νεανίσκος (three times).

Livy's description of Demetrius' conduct following his return to Macedon is anything to go by<sup>(27)</sup>. As for Titus' mischievousness, he surely revelled in the taunt he aimed at Philip when, not content with suggesting that he should send Demetrius back to Rome, he added, to top it all, that he should be accompanied by as many of his friends who would prove the most useful, i.e., the most useful to Rome!

As will be shown presently, Livy has edited and relocated this material<sup>(28)</sup>, clearly embarrassing as it is from a Roman perspective. By the same token, the non-survival of the detailed explanation promised by Polybius in the closing sentence of the above quotation is equally unsurprising, all strongly reminiscent of his truncated account in which Titus, ever ready to resort to subterfuge, had become involved in the assassination of Brachylles in Boeotia back in 196<sup>(29)</sup>. Whatever, from this point onwards, with the exception of a few minor sources, posterity must yet again make do with Livy's clearly one-sided version<sup>(30)</sup>, more noteworthy for its dramatization and rhetoric than for its historicity.

The next matter for consideration is the point at which Demetrius became captivated by the notion of regime change and the extent of Titus' responsibility for this. There is no evidence of any personal contact between Titus and Demetrius which predates the above passage from Polybius. Such is also the case for the short, intervening period between Philip's defeat at Cynoscephalae and Demetrius' removal from Greece to Rome<sup>(31)</sup>, where he next appears in Titus' triumph three years later in late 194, again with no mention of any personal contact. The same applies to the remaining period until Titus' return to active service in Greece in early 192. In fact, this period of some eighteen months was the only time that the two were concurrently in Rome, and though contact, and even the emergence of a greater or lesser personal relationship was indeed possible, there is no specific mention of it. Finally, Titus returned to Rome after his second tour of duty sometime between the end of 191 and when the new consuls took up office for the following year<sup>(32)</sup>. This was shortly after Demetrius had been granted his freedom, but again there was no personal encounter, since Demetrius had already been handed over to Philip's envoys to be escorted back to his father in Macedon immediately after his release<sup>(33)</sup>.

However, the favourable impression he made on the families of the senatorial order and his resultant popularity leave no reasonable doubt that during the six years he spent in Rome he was admitted to the higher echelons of Roman society. The influence exerted on such a young and naturally

(27) Livy, XXXIX, liii, 8: *et ipse iuvenis haud dubie inflator redierat.*

(28) Livy, XL, xi, 1-4 & xx, 3-4.

(29) Polybius, XVIII, xliii, 1-13. PFEILSCHIFTER, 2005, p. 146-147; S. GRAINGER, *The League of the Aitolians*, Leiden, 1999, p. 408-411.

(30) Livy, XXXIX, xlvii, 6 – xlviii, 5 and liii, 1-16; XL, v, 1 – xvi, 3, xx and xxiii, 1 – xxxiv, 8.

(31) Polybius XVIII, xxxix, 5. Livy, XXXIII, xiii, 14.

(32) Livy, XXXVII, i, 2.

(33) Livy, XXXVI, xxxv, 13: *filius quoque Philippi Demetrius, qui obses Romae erat, ad patrem reducendus legatis datus est.*

impressionable individual over so protracted a period, when normally he would have been receiving instruction in Macedonian state-craft, was both profound and, as later events were to bear out, enduring. Consequently, it would have required little persuasion, either from Titus or anyone else, to have him view matters from a Roman perspective. Even so, there is no evidence of any friction between Perseus and Demetrius when the latter returned to Macedon sometime towards the end of 191<sup>(34)</sup>, so it would appear that the notion of regime change had never been mentioned at any time during his detention in Rome. Furthermore, it was Philip who decided to send Demetrius back to Rome<sup>(35)</sup>, hardly a wise decision if there had been even the least suspicion of dubious conduct, and not just for the seven years in Rome, but also for the intervening period of seven years back home in Macedon since his return. It seems, therefore, that no decision to imbue Demetrius with aspirations to the monarchy was taken at any time between mid 197 and early 184. However, given the sheer magnitude<sup>(36)</sup> of the conference at which Demetrius was due to plead his father's case, the Romans would have known well in advance which ambassadors would be in attendance, Demetrius included. There was a period of several weeks, therefore, if not months, available to prepare the ground for what eventually amounted to the humiliation of Philip, (albeit in his absence), on a massive scale. The decision to acquit him solely as a favour to Demetrius would have been plausible if the latter had proved himself capable of putting up a reasonable case for his father's defence. Despite a performance that was woefully inadequate, however, the Romans still arrived at the same verdict. This lends weight to Gruen's argument that this decision had been made well in advance<sup>(37)</sup>.

So much for the decision. The next point is the manner in which it is so patronisingly couched. Philip, well known for his volatility, must have been totally apoplectic after opening and perusing the senate's correspondence. Indeed, one can easily imagine the shared amusement of the assembled delegates as they envisaged Philip's change of expression and the ensuing verbal outburst. The prime objective, however, was not humiliation *per se*, but, rather, to keep Philip on the back foot. Publicly conveying the notion that he was tolerated only out of consideration for Demetrius constituted a none too thinly veiled threat, i.e., Roman tolerance was not inexhaustible and Philip should be careful to avoid any further transgressions.

### **Was regicide ever considered?**

None of this amounted to anything other than everyday political cut and thrust and did not in itself constitute interference in Macedonian affairs, but the same can hardly be said for the second topic in the passage from Polybius, i.e., the manipulation of Demetrius. In spite of Polybius' explicit language and

(34) EDSON, 1935, p. 192. "Our sources give no indication that there was any bad feeling between Perseus and Demetrius after the latter's return".

(35) Polybius, XXII, xiii, 9-11; Livy, XXXIX, xxxv, 1-3 & XL, xv, 6.

(36) Polybius, XXIII, i, 1

(37) GRUEN, 1974, p. 233-234.

the obvious political advantages<sup>(38)</sup>, Titus' intimation that the Romans would secure the monarchy for Demetrius should be regarded with extreme caution, or even outright scepticism, since there is no reference by any of the extant sources to any specific contingency plans made, or even formulated, by the Romans, invariably the most pragmatic of peoples, to bring this into effect. Walbank speculates, "By favouring Philip solely as the father of Demetrius, no doubt the Senate sought to intimidate him into making Demetrius his heir; ---" (39). A fair point, and consistent with Polybius' statement that it was pure deception (ἐψυχαγωγῆσεν) when Titus assured Demetrius that the Romans would acquire the monarchy for him αὐτίκα μάλα. The problem in bringing this about, however, was twofold: Demetrius was only second in line to the throne, but, even if the Romans could contrive somehow to supplant Perseus, Philip was still very much alive.

One must consider, therefore, the notion of premeditated regicide. Walbank produces implicit evidence. In the winter of 183, the same year in which Demetrius had returned to Macedon, Philip ordered the arrest and imprisonment of the children of Admetus, Pyrrichus, Samus and various others he had executed.<sup>(40)</sup> These executions, believes Walbank, were "the sequel to some kind of conspiracy, and it is not unreasonable to connect this with the faction which favoured Demetrius' policy of collaboration with the senate and had been driven by fear to the desperate scheme of getting rid of Philip".<sup>(41)</sup> There is no reliable explicit evidence, however, in any of the surviving sources.

On the contrary, Livy states with abundant clarity that it was only after his father's death, *post mortem patris*, (presumably in the normal course of events), that the Macedonians were hoping to secure the monarchy for Demetrius<sup>(42)</sup>. Moreover, Philip himself expected to be succeeded only in the natural course of events, as is abundantly clear from a passage in which he remonstrates with Perseus and Demetrius about the gravity of the feud between them:

*eo usque me uiuere uultis, donec alterius uestrum superstes haud ambiguum regem alterum mea morte faciam* (43).

You want me to live just long enough to survive one of you, so that in the act of dying I would make the other undisputed king.

(38) Following the peace treaty of 189 (Polybius, XI, xxix, 1- xxxi, 2; Livy, XXXVIII, viii, 1- x, 2), the Aetolians had remained quiescent. Similarly, ever since the death of Antiochus III in 187 there had been no threat to Rome from his successor, Seleucus IV. In sharp contrast, as a result of Philip's activities since 186, further military confrontation with Macedon, though not imminent, could not be ruled out entirely. The notion of controlling the kingdom through the installation of a puppet regime, therefore was well worth considering.

(39) WALBANK, 1940, p. 240.

(40) Polybius, XXIII, x, 9.

(41) WALBANK, 1938, p. 66.

(42) Livy, XXXIX, liii, 2.

(43) Livy, XL, viii, 18.



In fact, the only mention of any action to be taken against Philip is purely speculative, and that in a highly emotional passage in which Perseus warns his father about Demetrius' collusion with the Romans:

*si me scelus fratris, te senectus absumpserit, aut ne ea quidem exspectata fuerit, regem regnumque Macedoniae [Romani] sua futura sciunt* <sup>(44)</sup>.

Should I fall a victim of my brother's wickedness, and you of old age, or even if they do not wait for your death, they know that the king and the territory of Macedonia will be theirs to control.

In Livy's account, therefore, the only accusations, with no supporting evidence whatsoever, are put in the mouth of Perseus and directed exclusively against Demetrius, without even the least implication of Roman complicity. Such is the case in Orosius' account, in which Demetrius is portrayed as the unfortunate and innocent victim of a needlessly suspicious father cynically manipulated, yet again by Perseus, who succeeds in convincing the king that Demetrius really intended to kill him <sup>(45)</sup>. As for Justinus, regicide is never an issue. In fact, it was his own life, not that of his father, that Perseus was fearful for, otherwise his accusations against Demetrius are limited to friendliness with the Romans and treachery, not murder <sup>(46)</sup>.

There remains Dio's version:

προσφιλὴς τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις ἐκ τῆς ὀμηρείας ἐγένετο ὁ Δημήτριος, καὶ αὐτός τε καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν Μακεδόνων ἤλπιζον ὅτι μετὰ τὸν Φίλιππον τὴν Βασιλείαν λήψεται, ---. <sup>(47)</sup>

Demetrius had become endeared to the Romans during the time he was a hostage and hoped, along with the rest of the Macedonian people, to secure the kingdom after Philip.

The phrase μετὰ τὸν Φίλιππον is open to interpretation, i.e., either after Philip's death, be that in the normal course of events or by assassination, or after Philip was no longer in power. However, the second alternative is, to say the least, highly fanciful. Philip, always fiercely independent, was hardly inclined to be put out to grass, or even, as Walbank argues with conviction, to accept the notion of becoming a client king, a "second Eumenes" <sup>(48)</sup>. Therefore, since there is no concrete evidence of any plot to assassinate Philip, it is fair to conclude that it was Demetrius' intention to maintain his popularity with the Romans and the mass of the Macedonian people and to use their support to supplant his elder brother, the natural heir to the throne, after Philip eventually died, be it of old age, from a debilitating sickness, a natural disaster, or whatever.

(44) Livy, XL, x, 6.

(45) Orosius, IV, xx, 28.

(46) Justinus, XXXII, ii, 8-9.

(47) Dio Cassius, XX, i, 1-2.

(48) WALBANK, 1940, p. 241.

In the event, it was not until five years after Titus' original overtures to Demetrius that Philip actually passed away, in abject misery resulting from his decision to execute his younger son<sup>(49)</sup>, and this in itself makes it highly improbable that the Romans had ever entertained the notion of killing him.

### Roman Meddling

It seems, therefore, that, unless some unexpected turn of events facilitated the promotion of Demetrius to the monarchy, the Romans sought only to increase Philip's sense of insecurity by disrupting the Macedonian court, with no consideration for the possible consequences for Demetrius. Given the tragic outcome of this episode, Livy is decidedly elusive on this point, since such conduct is hardly consistent with the image of Rome that he was seeking to present. Whereas a genuine, concerted effort to remove Philip, though ethically reprehensible, might nonetheless have been appreciated, and even condoned, for its political expedience, this cannot be said for the crass irresponsibility which cost Demetrius his life. At every step of the way Philip and Perseus are portrayed as the villains of the piece, as Gruen has observed<sup>(50)</sup>, with Livy resorting to specious rationale and the suppression and relocation of material, either to excuse or to mask discreditable Roman interference and intrigue. Consider, for example, his account of Demetrius' return to Macedon in early 183:

*uulgus Macedonum, quos belli ab Romanis imminetis metus terruerat, Demetrium ut pacis auctorem cum ingenti fauore conspiciebant, simul et spe haud dubia regnum ei post mortem patris destinabant. nam etsi minor aetate quam Perseus esset, hunc iusta matre familiae, illum paelice ortum esse; illum ut ex uulgato corpore genitum nullam certi patris notam habere, hunc insignem Philippi similitudinem prae se ferre. ad hoc Romanos Demetrium in paterno solio locaturos, Persei nullam apud eos gratiam esse. haec uulgo loquebantur*<sup>(51)</sup>.

Most of the Macedonians, terrified at the prospect of a war with the Romans hanging over their heads, viewed Demetrius as the author of peace with great enthusiasm and had great hopes of securing the monarchy for him after his father's death. For even though he was younger than Perseus, he was a legitimate child, whereas Perseus was the son of a concubine. Perseus was born of common stock with no distinguishing characteristic of any particular father, whereas Demetrius bore a remarkable resemblance to Philip. Accordingly, Perseus was not favoured by the Romans and it was Demetrius they would place on his father's throne. Such was the common talk.

(49) Diod., XXIX, xxv, 1; Livy, XL, liv, 1-3; Pausanias, II, ix, 4-5; Justinus, XXXII, iii, 1-5; Dio, XX, I, 1-2.

(50) GRUEN, 1974, p. 235. See Livy, XL, v, 2-14.

(51) Livy, XXXIX, liii, 2-5

Perseus is clinically dismembered and then summarily brushed aside as a nonentity, though, significantly, not by the Romans, but by the Macedonian people. Moreover, it is they who are credited with the notion of regime change, and so Roman integrity in this decidedly dubious business remains unimpaired. In fact, Livy is clutching at a straw, as shown by his concluding observation, “haec uulgo loquebantur”, an obvious attempt to impart some degree of respectability to what might well have been construed as unwarranted Roman interference, on the premise that, since their alleged policy was being openly discussed and universally approved, it could hardly be considered discreditable.

Material concerning Titus’ part in all this occurs sporadically throughout Livy’s exhaustive account of Perseus’ incrimination of Demetrius<sup>(52)</sup>, during which no consideration whatsoever is given to the blunt fact that Perseus had very good reason to be afraid and every right to protect himself<sup>(53)</sup>. Indeed, he and his father are still very much portrayed as *bêtes noires*. As an opening gambit, Perseus draws his father’s attention to his younger brother’s complete subservience to Rome<sup>(54)</sup>. He then develops this theme, concentrating specifically on Titus’ involvement, in Livy’s carefully doctored version of the previously quoted passage from Polybius:

*quo spectare illas litteras ad te nunc missas T. Quinctii credis, quibus et bene te consuluisse rebus tuis ait, quod Demetrium Romam miseris, et hortatur ut iterum et cum pluribus legatis et primoribus eum remittas Macedonum? T. Quinctius nunc est auctor omnium rerum isti et magister. eum sibi te abdicato patre in locum tuum substituit. Illic ante omnia clandestina cocta sunt consilia. quaeruntur adiutores consiliis, cum te plures et principes Macedonum cum isto mittere iubet. qui hinc integri et sinceri Romam eunt, Philippum regem se habere credentes, imbuti illinc et infecti Romanis delenimentis redeunt*<sup>(55)</sup>.

What do you think you should make of that letter just sent to you by T. Quinctius, in which he says you made a wise decision in sending Demetrius to Rome, and urges you to send him back with a larger delegation and the most prominent men of Macedonia? T. Quinctius is now the instigator and director of everything he does. He has renounced you and installed him in your place to suit his own purposes. It was there previously in Rome that all the secret plots were hatched. He is looking for people to help him when he bids you to send more eminent Macedonians along with that person. They will leave for Rome untainted and pure of heart, believing that they have a king in Philip, and they will come back stained and infected with Roman blandishments.

This is a perfect example of chronological relocation by Livy. Whereas Polybius attributes Titus’ conspiratorial dealings with Demetrius and the

(52) Livy, XL, v-xvi.

(53) GRUEN, 1974, p. 222.

(54) Livy, XL, v, 12: *cuius [Demetrii], ex quo obses Romae fuit, corpus nobis reddiderunt Romani, animum ipsi habent.*

(55) Livy, XL, xi, 1-3.

subsequent, deliberately provocative letter to late 184, Livy has Perseus refer to these events as contemporaneous – *illas litteras ad te nunc missas* – i.e. some eighteen months after they had taken place. Equally deceptive is the manner in which Titus' involvement is mentioned, i.e., allegedly by Perseus, rather than factually by Polybius, yet another attempt to clear both Rome and Titus of any direct culpability. So far so good, but Livy's customary sleight of hand clearly backfires when he attempts to excuse Titus' triumphalist taunt, ἐξ αὐτῆς τὸν Δημήτριον ἀποστέλλειν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην μετὰ τῶν φίλων ὡς πλείστων καὶ χρησιμωτάτων. In Polybius, the implications are already clear enough, but in using his rhetorical skills to portray them as nothing more than the rantings of a distraught, paranoid Perseus, Livy draws the reader's attention to points of detail which might have escaped him if simply left to his own devices.

Livy resorts to the same technique just a few chapters later. Alerted by Perseus' accusations concerning Demetrius' aspirations to the throne, Philip sent two ambassadors to a senatorial convention at the end of 182:

*et a Philippo rege Macedonum duo legati uenerunt, Philocles et Appelles, nulla super re, quae petenda ab senatu esset, speculatum magis inquisitumque missi de iis, quorum Perseus Demetrium insimulasset sermonum cum Romanis, maxime cum T. Quinctio, aduersus fratrem de regno habitorem* <sup>(56)</sup>.

Two envoys also arrived from Philip the king of Macedonia, namely Philocles and Apelles, not to make any specific petition to the senate, but rather to observe the proceedings and make inquiries into the discussions which Perseus had accused Demetrius of having with the Romans, particularly with T. Quinctius, about the succession to the throne in opposition to his brother.

Livy's syntax deserves comment here, whereby he relegates what Polybius, in *oratio recta*, clearly records as a *fact*, to nothing more than *accusations*, carefully hidden away in a subordinate clause, and all this as much as two years after the event. Clever, yet upon closer examination, not altogether convincing, and Flamininus' culpability remains embarrassingly obvious.

### Who wrote the Letter?

Perseus' persistency paid off and he finally convinced Philip that Demetrius constituted a serious threat. According to Livy, Philip's decision to order the execution of Demetrius was prompted by two carefully contrived events. Didas, the governor of Paeonia, was induced by Perseus to win the confidence of Demetrius. He duly reported that Demetrius was planning to flee Macedon and seek sanctuary in Rome, and Perseus in turn relayed this information to Philip <sup>(57)</sup>. Taking Livy at face value, this would simply be construed as a measure of the success of Perseus' carefully crafted campaign

(56) Livy, XL, xx, 3.

(57) Livy, XL, xxxiii, 1- 4.

falsely to incriminate his younger brother. However, although Demetrius was far from blameless, there can be little doubt that his decidedly precarious situation was primarily the result of ill-considered interference on the part of the Romans, with no apparent consideration of the consequences. At no point throughout the entire course of Perseus' relentless, protracted incrimination is there any mention of Demetrius receiving support, or even encouragement, from Rome, and it was undoubtedly this complete isolation that eventually drove him to despair. Even so, at this stage Philip took no action, opting rather to spend an anxious few months in waiting for the return of Apelles and Philocles, who had been sent to Rome to look for incriminating material concerning Demetrius and Titus. Livy claims that the envoys' mission was no more than perfunctory deception, since, unbeknown to Philip, even before their departure they had settled beforehand what report they would bring back from Rome. Moreover, upon their return, continues Livy, to add to all their other impious deeds, they handed Philip a forged letter – *falsas --- litteras* -, allegedly from Titus, closed for authenticity's sake with a counterfeit version of his personal seal – *signo adulterino T. Quinctii signatas* -:

*deprecatio in litteris erat, si quid adulescens cupiditate regni prolapsus secum egisset: nihil eum aduersus suorum quemquam facturum neque eum se esse, qui ullius impii consilii auctor futurus uideri possit. hae litterae fidem Persei criminibus fecerunt*<sup>(58)</sup>.

The letter contained a request for forgiveness, should the young man, misguided by his eagerness to become king, have colluded with him: neither would Demetrius do anything to injure any of his relatives, he said, nor could he personally be considered to have had any impious plans in mind. This letter lent weight to Perseus' accusations.

In spite of Livy's claim that this document was a forgery, its authenticity has long been the subject of inconclusive scholarly debate. Walbank questions the feasibility of sending a letter which, by incriminating Demetrius, would have directly impeded Roman interests<sup>(59)</sup>. Edson argues, "it should be made very clear that the authenticity or falsity of this letter has no bearing upon Demetrius' guilt, since the letter merely confirmed events which had really taken place in Rome three years before. Demetrius was guilty of listening to Flaminius' treasonable suggestions and of concealing them from his father, so that the letter, whether authentic or forged, acquainted Philip with an actual fact"<sup>(60)</sup>. Gruen makes the same point, more succinctly, "Nothing was reported therein that was not already known or rumoured"<sup>(61)</sup>. This raises an obvious question: then why bother to send the letter at all, especially since the Romans were under no apparent constraint to communicate with Philip in the first place, and for the last two years Demetrius had been anxious to avoid all contact with Rome in order to reduce the credibility of the accusations continually being levelled at him by his brother<sup>(62)</sup>? However, at first sight,

(58) Livy, XL, xxiii, 8.

(59) WALBANK, 1940, p. 251. Similarly, PFEILSCHIFTER, 2005, p. 359.

(60) Edson, p. 198.

(61) GRUEN, 1974, p. 244. Similarly, PFEILSCHIFTER, 2005, p. 359.

(62) Livy, XL, xx, 6.

a fair case for authenticity can be inferred from Livy's statement that when, some months after Demetrius' execution, Philip suspected that the letter might have been a forgery<sup>(63)</sup>, Apelles, one of the alleged counterfeiters, fled to Italy, hardly the place to seek sanctuary if he had really forged the seal of one of the most influential and prestigious senators upon a letter which resulted in the assassination of a Roman protégé at the very heart of the Macedonian court<sup>(64)</sup>. Then again, Livy later recounts how Perseus, with Philip long since deceased, enticed Apelles back to Macedon and had him assassinated<sup>(65)</sup>, but although his complicity is referred to - *ministerium quondam fraudis in fratre tollendo* - Livy makes no mention of the letter, so it is impossible to state if this was the specific reason for Apelles' execution. Perseus had for some time been well established as the undisputed monarch of Macedon, so it must be asked whether he would have felt any way compelled, long after the event, to conceal the alleged falsification of the letter, or if there was some other reason for Apelles' removal. Such is a fair sample of how the arguments fluctuate for and against the authenticity of this document, with Edson even considering the possibility that, "the letter was more guarded and less incriminating than reported by Livy"<sup>(66)</sup>.

Essentially there are two points at issue: a) extreme, and therefore, highly improbable, naïveté on the part of Titus<sup>(67)</sup>, and, b) devilishly clever manipulation by Perseus<sup>(68)</sup>. The key, emotive phrase, cynically calculated to intensify Philip's suspicion and fear, and which in all probability sealed Demetrius' fate, is "*cupiditate regni*", reminiscent of Perseus' contention some two years earlier that the Romans were already addressing Demetrius as king even though Philip himself was still alive<sup>(69)</sup>. Perseus, understandably motivated by genuine fear for his own security and frustrated by Philip's reluctance to take any definite action, shrewdly calculated that written confirmation of Philip's long held suspicion that Titus, of all people, had been involved in this business, would finally push him over the edge. These men went back nearly twenty years, during which time Philip had experienced at first hand, and witnessed on countless other occasions, just how cunning and manipulative Titus could be, rarely failing to achieve his objective. For this very reason, the second part of the above quotation, designed superficially to allay Philip's suspicions, inevitably produced, as cleverly intended, precisely the opposite effect.

This document also rings false when one considers the relative situations of Titus and Philip. Rome had been on the ascendancy in the east ever since the declaration of the war against Macedon in 200, and if Titus had thought that it was in the interests of the republic to ensure the safety of the young Demetrius, any letter to Philip, far from being conciliatory in tone, would almost certainly have conveyed a strict warning.

(63) Livy, XL, lv, 6

(64) EDSON, 1935, p. 199-200; WALBANK, 1940, p. 251; GRUEN, 1974, p. 244; WALKER, 2005, p. 149.

(65) Livy, XLII, v, 4.

(66) EDSON, 1935, p. 149.

(67) WALKER, 2005, p. 150

(68) PFEILSCHIFTER, 2005, p. 359: "Andererseits diente er Perseus' Plänen so perfekt, dass er selbst ihn nicht besser hätte schreiben können."

(69) Livy, XL, xi, 4.

A crucial point which has been overlooked is that none of this is in any way consistent with what can otherwise be deduced about Titus' character. In fostering Demetrius' ambitions and then leaving him in the lurch, the Romans were undoubtedly guilty of irresponsible meddling of the highest order. Furthermore, their total lack of concern is poignantly illustrated by their failure to complain about the eventual assassination of their erstwhile protégé and by their readiness to recognise Perseus as king after Philip's death in 179<sup>(70)</sup>. Even so, this is a far cry from the composition and dispatch, under no compulsion whatsoever, of a document which would have been tantamount to a death warrant for Demetrius. Titus was mischievous, confrontational and manipulative. When provoked he could be vindictive, as in his dealings with the Boeotians in 196<sup>(71)</sup> and with Nabis in 195<sup>(72)</sup>, for example, although even here there are mitigating circumstances: in Boeotia an unsought opportunity for revenge fell unexpectedly into his lap, and whatever personal score he had to settle with Nabis was inextricably combined with his duty to the republic. There is no surviving evidence, however, to suggest that, (unlike Nabis), he was ever gratuitously cruel, or even malevolent.

On the contrary. In 195, for example, it was out of pity for the citizens of Argos, occupied by a Spartan garrison, that he summoned a counsel of the Greek allies to consider the wisdom of attacking the city<sup>(73)</sup>. In 191 he persuaded the consul Acilius Glabrio to raise the siege of Naupactus, this time out of pity for the Aetolians, who, left completely at the mercy of the Romans after the flight of Antiochus from Europe following his defeat at Thermopylae, had taken refuge there<sup>(74)</sup>. Although Flamininus was undoubtedly motivated by political expediency on both of these occasions, a decidedly compassionate side to his character is nonetheless unmistakable.

Equally telling is a seemingly off-hand remark by Livy, designed specifically to reflect the mood of the Achaeans during the counsel concerning their disputed claim to the ownership of Zacynthus, also in 191:

*erat Quinctius sicut aduersantibus asper, ita, si cederes, idem placabilis*<sup>(75)</sup>.

Just as Quinctius was harsh on those who opposed him, so was he easily appeased if you submitted to him.

On this second point, two passages of Plutarch's should also be taken into consideration:

τὸ δ' ἦθος ὁξὺς λέγεται γενέσθαι καὶ πρὸς ὀργὴν καὶ πρὸς χάριν, οὐ μὴν ὁμοίως, ἀλλ' ἑλαφρὸς μὲν ἐν τῷ κολάζειν καὶ οὐκ ἐπίμονος, πρὸς δὲ τὰς χάριτας τελεσιουργός, καὶ τοῖς εὐεργετηθεῖσι διὰ παντὸς ὥσπερ εὐεργέταις εὖνους, ---<sup>76</sup>

(70) Polybius, XXV, iii, 1 ; Livy, XL, lviii, 8 and XLV, ix, 3

(71) Livy, XXXIII, xxvii, 5 – xxix, 12. WALBANK, 1940, p. 178; PFEILSCHIFTER, 2005, p. 194-196.

(72) Livy, XXXIV, xxxii. GRUEN, 1984, p. 450-455; PFEILSCHIFTER, 2005, p. 204-225.

(73) Livy, XXXIV, xxvi, 4

(74) Livy, XXXVI, xxxv, 3-4; Plutarch, *Flam.*, XV, 4-5

(75) Livy, XXXVI, xxxii, 5.

(76) Plutarch, *Flam.*, I, 1-2.

As for his disposition, it is said that he was quick to show anger and to bestow a favour, though not in equal measure, for he applied his punishments leniently with no lingering after effects, whereas he always granted favours in full measure and always well disposed towards his beneficiaries as if they were his benefactors, ---.

καὶ γὰρ εἴ τισιν ἐκ πραγμάτων ἢ φιλοτιμίας ἔνεκα, καθάπερ Φιλοποίμενι καὶ πάλιν Διοφάνει στρατηγοῦντι τῶν Ἀχαιῶν, προσέκρουσεν, οὐκ ἦν βαρὺς οὐδ' εἰς ἔργα διατείνων ὁ θυμός, ἀλλ' ἐν λόγῳ παρρησίαν τινὰ πολιτικὴν ἔχοντι παυόμενος, πικρὸς μὲν οὖν οὐδενί, πολλοῖς δ' ὁξὺς ἐδόκει καὶ κοῦφος εἶναι τὴν φύσιν, ἄλλως δὲ συγγενέσθαι πάντων ἡδιστος καὶ εἰπεῖν ἐπίχαρις μετὰ δεινότητος, (77)

For even if he took offence with any of them over a matter of policy or ambitious rivalry, as, for example, with Philopoemen and then again with Diophanes, when they were acting generals, his anger was not severe, nor did it prompt him to take drastic action, but always ended in a certain kind of diplomatic outspokenness. He was bitter towards no-one, although to many he appeared quick to anger and shallow by nature, yet in other respects a most agreeable companion and one who spoke with grace and intensity.

Thus, if Titus was so well disposed even towards those who were in any way compelled to submit to him, it is difficult to imagine that those who willingly cooperated with him - Demetrius, for example - would be wantonly thrown to the wolves. This suggests, therefore, that the letter was indeed a forgery. Next, in attempting to identify the culprit one should consider who would have been the greatest beneficiary, and, in spite of the decidedly one-sided nature of Livy's account, this was undoubtedly Perseus, probably acting in collusion with Philocles and Apelles. This letter could well have been composed at the same time as the spurious, predetermined report Philocles and Apelles had decided to make even before their departure to Rome, concerning which Livy supplies no details, since any such information would have been fully eclipsed by the incriminatory contents of the letter.

Finally, in spite of Livy's persistent obfuscation, Titus' responsibility for the animosity between Perseus and Demetrius and the subsequent assassination of the latter is abundantly clear, as would be the case even without the explicit evidence supplied by Polybius. Even so, it had no repercussions whatsoever on his career<sup>(78)</sup>. In fact, the support so glibly promised to Demetrius was never provided, and the total lack of Roman concern is clearly illustrated by the senate's choice of Titus, Demetrius' self-appointed mentor, for a special mission to Prusias of Bithynia, at the very time that Demetrius' situation in Macedon, thanks to Titus, was at its most precarious.

(77) Plutarch, *Flam.*, XVII, 1-2.

(78) For a succinct summary of Flamininus' remarkable career, including comment on his immunity from the consequences of his shortcomings and errors, see GRUEN, 1974, p. 220-221.