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## Pompey, Minerva and Rome's Presence in the Near East

**ABSTRACT:** This paper deals with the political implications of the dedication of a temple to Minerva in Rome by Pompey the Great after his Eastern campaign (61 BC). Among the hypotheses on the reasons for the choice of this goddess by the general, PALMER's – that this Minerva has to be put in connection with the Athena of Troy – is here considered as the most likely, and is thus analysed in depth. Pompey's dedication arguably derives its meaning from earlier relationships between the Near East and Rome, and possibly more recent Mithridatic anti-Roman propaganda, and might symbolise the ecumenical character of Pompey's conquests.

**Keywords:** Pompey the Great, Minerva, Ilium, Mithridatic wars, Athena Ilias, Palladium

In a recent article, Federico SANTANGELO<sup>1</sup> brought attention to an aspect of the life of Pompey the Great which has received little, if any, consideration: the relationship between the great general and religion. Admittedly, not much evidence about it is extant. Nevertheless, one of the most significant points his article makes is the fact that, after returning from the Eastern campaigns against Mithridates, Pompey, like many generals before him, made a dedication *de manubiis* of a temple to Minerva.

Pompey's choice of Minerva as the goddess to whom he would dedicate the *manubiae* of a most challenging campaign, which sanctioned his conquest 'of the whole world', has been mostly ignored or cursorily treated by scholars<sup>2</sup>. When it has been discussed, it has often aroused some perplexities as to its reasons. This article intends to explore this issue, and develop some ideas in interpreting the great political and religious significance of such a dedication for the triumphant of the East. Although archaeology cannot provide much help on this front, important insights can be gathered by setting the dedication in the context of historically attested relationships between East and West in antiquity, and, more specifically, of the propaganda themes used by and against Rome during the Mithridatic Wars and earlier conflicts.

1 SANTANGELO 2007.

2 An exception is PALMER 1990.



## The temple

The only evidence that we possess of Pompey's temple is literary: namely, the testimony of Pliny the Elder<sup>3</sup>, who mentioned the monument and reported its inscription:

Subsequently he was despatched to the whole of the seas and then to the far east, and he brought back titles without limit for his country, after the manner of those who conquer in the sacred contests – for these are not crowned with wreaths themselves but crown their native land; consequently he bestowed these honours on the city in the shrine of Minerva that he was dedicating out of the proceeds of the spoils of war: Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, Commander-in-Chief, having completed a thirty years' war, routed, scattered, slain or received the surrender of 1,183,000 people, sunk or taken 846 ships, received the capitulation of 1,538 towns and forts, subdued the lands from the Maeotians to the Red Sea, duly dedicated his offering vowed to Minerva<sup>4</sup>.

Diodorus Siculus<sup>5</sup> reports a similar inscription, but as it only mentions 'a goddess', some scholars doubt that he was referring to the temple of Minerva, and they connect the passage with the dedication to Venus Victrix of a temple on the top of the cavea of Pompey's theatre<sup>6</sup>. Pliny, on the contrary, is more explicit, and from him we can gather the following information:

- He describes the monument to Minerva as a *delubrum*, that is either an uncovered sacred area, or an *aedes* in a porticoed area<sup>7</sup>;
- The dedication was made *de manubiis*;
- Pompey had made a vow to Minerva;
- This dedication was made for his successful conclusion of a thirty-year war (that is, for the conclusion of the Mithridatic Wars).

It is therefore surprising that this dedication has not attracted more attention, since, as the inscription reported by Pliny seems to suggest, Pompey intended the monument to remind the Roman people of his conquest of the East; this, more than the theatrical complex, was the triumphal monument for that campaign, dedicated with the *manubiae*. Nevertheless, Pompey's subsequent dedication in 55 BC – the first and greatest stone theatre in Rome –, doubtless because of its grandeur and comparably much more prominent presence in sources and archaeology, outshone the temple of Minerva in scholarship.

3 Plin., *HN*, 7.26.97.

4 '[...] *postea ad tota maria et deinde solis ortus missus infinitos retulit patriae titulos more sacris certaminibus vincuntium – neque enim ipsi coronantur, sed patrias suas coronant; hos ergo honores urbi tribuit in delubro Minervae quod ex manubiis dicabat: Cn. Pompeius Magnus imperator bello xxx annorum confecto fuis fugatis occisis in deditionem acceptis hominum centiens viciens semel lxxxiii depressis aut captis navibus dcccxlvi oppidis castellis mdxxxviii in fidem receptis terris a Maeotis ad Rubrum mare subactis votum merito Minervae.*'

5 Diod. Sic., 40.4.

6 See for example GELZER 1959, p. 123; SEAGER 1979, p. 77 f. 27; DAVIES 2017, p. 231.

7 CASTAGNOLI 1954, p. 4.

The little attention attracted by the temple of Minerva is also probably due to the fact that we do not know precisely where it was located in Rome. Among the various hypotheses, it has been put forward that the sanctuary could have been located at the foot of the Pincian Hill, where PALMER<sup>8</sup> identified Pompey's *horti superiores*, and highlighted the presence of a *vicus Minervae* in Regio VII, Via Lata. Nevertheless, as COARELLI<sup>9</sup> has pointed out, the name of the *vicus* might have derived from the presence of a statue, or a shrine; he also criticises PALMER's location of the *horti superiores*, thus also disproving the localisation of the temple. PALOMBI<sup>10</sup>, on the other hand, has suggested that the Pompeian temple could be identified as one of the known temples of Minerva whose chronology and patrons are not yet identifiable. He excludes the identification with the temple of Minerva Chalcidica, and puts forward two likely options: the temple of Minerva in Regio I, mentioned in the Cataloghi Regionari, which would therefore be outside the Porta Capena, where other triumphal monuments were located (for example, the temple of Honos and Virtus). Alternatively, the temple in the area between the Forum and the Velabrum, whose presence would be evinced by the report of some 1st century AD military diplomas, copies of those that hung *Romae, in muro post templum divi Augusti ad Minervam*<sup>11</sup>. The last two suggestions seem to be the most attractive ones, since they imply that this temple *de manubiis* was located along or near the triumphal path; this would be consistent with the location of the two other monuments promoted by Pompey, the temple of Hercules Pompeianus<sup>12</sup> – dedicated perhaps in relation to his first triumph<sup>13</sup> – and his famous theatre complex<sup>14</sup>. The existence of a temple of Minerva in the Velabrum is also accepted by CECAMORE<sup>15</sup>, who adds that archaeological core samples taken by AMMERMANN<sup>16</sup> in the valley between the Palatine and Capitoline Hills identified the presence of an important structure in *opus caementicium*, and that this would confirm the presence in that area of a temple, represented in a now lost fragment of the *Forma Urbis Romae*. This hypothesis is however strongly contested by COARELLI, who maintains that this temple is the *templum novum Divi Augusti*<sup>17</sup>, and that the Minerva mentioned in the military diplomas is a statue located in the *bibliotheca domus Tiberianae*, identified in the Domitianic building west of the church of Santa Maria Antiqua and just behind the tem-

8 PALMER 1990, pp. 1–15, and pp. 9–13 in particular.

9 COARELLI 1997, p. 546–547.

10 PALOMBI 1996, p. 253.

11 See ROXAN and HOLDER 2003 for the military diplomas. The *Curiosum* also mentions a *templum Castorum et Minervae* in the Regio VIII, and the same building is probably referred to by Martial (4, 53, 1) as *penetralia nostrae Pallados* (see COARELLI 2012, p. 473).

12 Located near the *carceres* of the Circus Maximus; Vitruvius, *De Arch.*, 3, 3, 5; see COARELLI 1988, p. 84; ZIOLKOWSKI 1992, p. 48.

13 The date of Pompey's first triumph, that of the dedication of the temple of Hercules and the relation between the two are disputed. See in particular the discussion in RAWSON 1970 and MARSHALL 1974. Personally, I find Rawson's argument (pp. 31–32 in particular) more convincing, particularly in the light of THEIN's (2006) considerations on Sulla's authority during his dictatorship.

14 COARELLI 1997, pp. 543–544.

15 CECAMORE 2002, p. 182.

16 AMMERMANN and FILIPPI 1998.

17 COARELLI 2012, pp. 101–102.

ple of the Castores in the Roman Forum<sup>18</sup>. As can be seen, the question of the location of Pompey's temple might never be solved, and therefore it cannot unfortunately give us any further evidence for the ideological significance of this building.

### Why Minerva? Some hypotheses

If the exact location of the Minerva temple is difficult to pinpoint, it is nevertheless interesting to explore the reasons for which Pompey dedicated it to the goddess, since, at least initially, the *delubrum Minervae* had to be the building memorialising his deeds in the East. This would help us further investigate the propaganda promoted by Pompey around the time of the dedication, and his politics both in the provinces and in Rome. PALOMBI<sup>19</sup> and SANTANGELO<sup>20</sup> highlight the relevance of the dedication, but the latter notes that the reasons for it are quite unclear. According to him, the most satisfactory explanation is that the new temple to Minerva, one of the gods of the Capitoline Triad, was built as an alternative to the refurbishment of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, which Caesar had tried to have assigned to Pompey<sup>21</sup>. Nevertheless, it can be pointed out that, although the date of Pompey's vow to Minerva is unknown, it is likely to have been made before the end of 63 BC, when the war was concluded and the general already started reorganising the Eastern provinces. Therefore, it would seem unlikely that Caesar's actions in 62 BC had an impact on the choice of deity for the dedication of the temple. Alternatively, SANTANGELO notes that Pompey had very good relations with cities where the cult of Athena was particularly important – Athens and Ilium, for example –, but in Rome an association with a god established in the Greek East might not have been welcome. DAVIES<sup>22</sup>, on the other hand, points to Minerva's aspect as a war goddess. Finally, PALMER<sup>23</sup> explores the connection between Pompey's Minerva to the Athena of Troy<sup>24</sup>, and underlines that the latter figured prominently in Alexander the Great's history, and that Pompey aimed at presenting himself as the new Alexander. In particular, the Hellenistic monarch had made a sacrifice to Athena in Ilium in 334 BC<sup>25</sup>; and in the same year, after the victory at the Granicus, he sent Persian panoplies to the Athena of Athens<sup>26</sup>; in 327 BC he was protected and saved by a sacred shield that he had taken from the sanctuary of Athena Ilias at Troy<sup>27</sup>. According to PALMER, then, a vow

18 COARELLI 2012, pp. 467–474.

19 PALOMBI 1996, p. 253.

20 SANTANGELO 2007, p. 232.

21 Cass. Dio, 37.44.1–2.

22 DAVIES 2017, p. 219.

23 PALMER 1990, p. 3–9.

24 BALLESTEROS-PASTOR (2009, p. 220) has subsequently underlined the ideological importance of a connection with Ilium and Athena Ilias for both Mithridates VI and Sulla during the first Mithridatic War, but has only touched upon Pompey's dedication to Minerva.

25 Arr., *Anab.*, 1, 11, 7; Diod. Sic., 17, 17, 5; 18, 1; 18, 4, 5; Strabo, 13, 1, 26–27; Plut., *Alex.*, 15, 4.

26 Arr., *Anab.*, 1, 16, 7.

27 Arr., *Anab.*, 6, 9, 4; cf. Diod. Sic. 17, 21, 2.

to Minerva would conform with Pompey's claim<sup>28</sup>, and it would gain an even stronger meaning if related to the fact that even Mithridates VI sought to present himself as a second Alexander. Moreover, Pompey wore a cloak during his triumph that had been found among the properties of the Pontic king and had allegedly belonged to Alexander the Great<sup>29</sup>. His dedication to Athena/Minerva therefore explicitly stated that he enjoyed protection from the same goddess as the great Macedonian king.

These explanations are significant for exploring the motivations for Pompey's choice of this particular goddess, to whom at least four temples had been dedicated in Rome by the Late Republic<sup>30</sup>. Minerva had long held a prominent role in Rome, being one of the gods of the Capitoline Triad, and also present among the gods of the 'alternative' triad on the Aventine Hill (Iuppiter Libertas, Iuno Regina and Minerva) at least from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>31</sup>. Cicero described her as '*custos Urbis*', the 'guardian of the city'<sup>32</sup>. As far as Pompey's political propaganda in Rome is concerned, the goddess does not seem to be present anywhere else compared to other deities: Venus, for example, is connected with Pompey's three triumphs in a coin minted by Faustus Sulla in 56 BC<sup>33</sup>, whereas the prominence of Hercules is even more evident (examples include *denarii* minted by Faustus Sulla in 56 BC representing Hercules wearing a lion skin<sup>34</sup>, or the fact that, during the battle of Pharsalus, Pompey's watchword was *Hercules Invictus*<sup>35</sup>).

The reason for Pompey's ultimate choice of Minerva seems to lie in the link with the Athena of Troy highlighted by PALMER, to which all of the abovementioned hypotheses are in some way connected, but for reasons that are more complex than, although they certainly involve, reference to Alexander. This answer is dependent on the geographical and political context of the war Pompey had won at the time; on the religious and cultural policy that he, and probably others before him, adopted on that occasion on behalf of the Republic; as well as on the history of conflicts between Rome and the Eastern kings. As will be discussed below, the reasons stem from pro- and anti-Roman propaganda carried out in the context of Rome's wars in the East since the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

28 A similar point is made by MARSHALL 2016, 132: as for Alexander, Athena had been the main patron in the war against the Persians, so Pompey dedicated a temple to Minerva at the end of his Eastern campaigns.

29 App., *Mith.*, 117.

30 Apart from the *delubrum* in the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, there was a temple of Minerva on the Aventine Hill (Liv., 9, 30, 5–10) at least from the 4th century BC (see f. 31), a temple of Minerva Capta on the Celian Hill (Varro, *Ling. Lat.*, 5, 158), probably dating to the Archaic period (COARELLI 1996, p. 255), a temple of Minerva Medica in the Regio V Exquiliae, probably dating between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (*Not., Reg. V; Cur., Reg. V*; see CARLUCCI 1996), and a temple of Minerva in the Regio I Porta Capena (*Not. Reg. I*; see PALOMBI 1996b), whose chronology is unknown, but its presence might be put in connection with a pit, discovered in 1767 near *Porta Latina*, filled with Late Republican or Early Imperial statues (COLONNA 1996).

31 VENDITTELLI 1996, p. 254.

32 Cic., *Dom.*, 142; *Fam.*, 12, 25; see also Plut., *Cic.*, 31, 6.

33 RRC 426/3.

34 RRC 426/4a-b.

35 App., *B civ.*, 2, 76.

## Minerva/Athena and the East

In considering the importance of Minerva/Athena and the East in Roman politics, let us start from the earliest known references. SORDI<sup>36</sup>, in an article on the use of oracles as psychological terrorism in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, recently re-examined the historical context of a passage of the contemporary peripatetic philosopher Antisthenes of Rhodes<sup>37</sup>, handed down by Phlegon of Tralles<sup>38</sup>, a freedman of Hadrian, in his work “Περὶ θαυμασίων”<sup>39</sup>.

Antisthenes' fragment, dated to 188–187 BC<sup>40</sup>, narrates events between the Roman victory at Thermopylae in 191 BC and the defeat of Vulso in Thrace in 188 BC, and in particular it mentions some prophecies against the Romans. On the day after the victory at Thermopylae, while the Romans were retrieving the bodies of their fallen and spoils of the enemies, one of the latter, the Syrian hipparchus Bouplagus, was resurrected, and announced to the Romans the impending wrath of Zeus, who would lead against them a great army and put an end to their empire. Terrified, the Romans performed a rite of purification of the army (*lustratio*), made sacrifice to Zeus Apotropaïos and headed for Delphi in order to consult the oracle. There, the Pythia announced to the Romans further calamities, saying that Athena Pallas would bring death to their country. In the meantime, in Naupattos, the commander Publius (a clear reference to Scipio Africanus<sup>41</sup>) pronounced a prophecy on the destruction of Italy by a king and a great army from Asia, followed by the description of the events of the Syrian wars up to Vulso's defeat in Thrace and the peace with Antiochus III. He then climbed a tree, announced his own death and was devoured by a red wolf; the animal left nothing but Publius' head, which prophesied again the wrath of Athena, who would bring a king and a great army from the East to put an end to Rome's expansion.

A great king<sup>42</sup> and an army coming from the East bringing destruction and death to the West is a very common theme in the narratives of the conflicts between East and West, and, as will be seen, is also present in the context of Mithridatic propaganda. It appears notably in the third book of the Judaic Sibylline books (vv. 350–360), as well as in the Oracle of Hystaspes, but it seems to have even more ancient origins: Lysias<sup>43</sup> presented Darius, Xerxes and Artaxerxes as symbols of the Eastern menace looming over Europe; and Herodotus<sup>44</sup> pointed to the Trojan War as the origin of the Persian conflict. The eastern provenience of this theme is further confirmed by vv. 67–71 of the fourth

36 SORDI 2006.

37 On the identity of Antisthenes, see PORQUEDDU SALVIOLI 1982, pp. 7–10.

38 *FgrHist* 257, 36, III.

39 This fragment and the political use of oracles in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC had already been analysed by a research group on ancient propaganda at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, led by SORDI, and the results had been published in SORDI 1982.

40 GABBA 1975, p. 9; PORQUEDDU SALVIOLI 1982, pp. 5–6; FERRARY 1988, pp. 238–264; SORDI 2006, p. 141.

41 GABBA 1975, p. 9; see also MAZZARINO 1966, p. 158.

42 On the title of 'king of Asia' see MUCCIOLI 2004.

43 *Lys.*, 2, 60.

44 *Her., Hist.*, 1, 4.

book of the Judaic Sibylline Oracles, which present a prophecy that can be traced back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, or even earlier<sup>45</sup>. That both the Romans and Antiochus conceived their war as a conflict between East and West can be inferred from the words of the ambassadors of Antiochus in 192<sup>46</sup>, as well as from Glabrio's speech to his soldiers before the battle of Thermopylae<sup>47</sup>, and, as testified by Antisthenes' fragment, the theme was used in Syrian propaganda and in anti-Roman oracles.

However, Antisthenes' insistence on the wrath of Athena constituted a novelty in the tradition. This has been explained in relation to a particular event that took place after Thermopylae. We know from Livy<sup>48</sup> that Glabrio, after the victory at Thermopylae, engaged in a short campaign in Phocis and Boeotia. There, in Coroneia, he found a statue of Antiochus erected in the local sanctuary of Athena Itonia, and thus had the countryside around it plundered<sup>49</sup>. Accordingly, this violation of the sanctuary by Glabrio and his troops has been seen in scholarship as the event that brought about the focus on the use of Athena by the eastern anti-Roman propaganda<sup>50</sup>.

In the context of this paper, the most important point is that the Athena Itonia of Coroneia was a Palladium<sup>51</sup>, like the Athena of Troy (Athena Ilios), whose statue had, according to the tradition, fallen from the sky with particular magic properties, among which was the guarantee of protection and dominion over the whole world to the city that possessed it. SORDI<sup>52</sup> points out that Athena's curse is placed in a context where the Athena Ilios already had great importance. In 192 BC, Antiochus, before passing to Europe from Asia, performed a sacrifice to Athena Ilios<sup>53</sup>, evoking earlier examples of this act performed by Alexander the Great in 334 BC<sup>54</sup>, and Xerxes in 481 BC<sup>55</sup>. Both Alexander and Xerxes did not only offer sacrifice to Athena Ilios, but also libations to the heroes of the Trojan War; it seems therefore that both acts refer back to events and rites that were connected with the first great war between Europe and Asia, the Trojan War<sup>56</sup>. Thus, it is also understandable that sacrificing to Athena Ilios had become a necessary act for those who sought divine protection when leaving to conquer 'the other side of the world', Asia or Europe<sup>57</sup>. The Romans were clearly aware of this tradition, as

45 AMIOTTI 1982, p. 24.

46 Liv., 35, 47–48.

47 Liv., 36, 17, 13–15.

48 Liv., 36, 20, 1–3.

49 The reasons for Antisthenes' overlooking of this fact are explained in BEARZOT 1982a, pp. 16–17.

50 BEARZOT 1982a, p. 13.

51 BEARZOT 1982b.

52 SORDI 2006, p. 142; SORDI 1982a, pp. 140–143.

53 Liv., 35, 43, 2.

54 Diod., 17, 18, 1; Plut., *Alex.*, 15 ff.; Arr., *an.*, 1, 11, 6 ff.; Iust., 11, 5, 6 ff.

55 Hdt., 7, 43.

56 SORDI 1982a, p. 142.

57 SORDI 1982a, p. 142; there, Sordi also highlights that the value of the sacrifice to Athena had been theorised by Dicearchus of Messina, contemporary of Alexander, in his work *On the sacrifice in Ilium* (with further bibliography in f. 11). ERSKINE 2001, p. 227, notes that being the sanctuary of Athena Ilios the last great sanctuary for those who were moving to Europe (or the first for those moving into Asia), the sacrifice there might have functioned as a liminal ritual, marking the passage from one continent to the other.

Antiochus' act and the emergence of Athena in anti-Roman propaganda prompted the following actions on their part<sup>58</sup>:

- The Scipiones, when passing into Asia in 190, performed a sacrifice to Athena Ilias<sup>59</sup>, as the praetor Salinator had done shortly before<sup>60</sup>;
- Before moving to Asia, Scipio Africanus had dedicated an arch with seven statues (Athena/Minerva being associated with the number seven) on the Capitoline Hill, and he had delayed the departure to Asia to celebrate the days of the *Quinquatrus*<sup>61</sup> (18<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> March), sacred to Minerva<sup>62</sup>;
- In the same period, the historian Cassius Hemina<sup>63</sup> is the first to state that Rome possessed the real Palladium<sup>64</sup>.

To the Romans of the time, the war against Antiochus had opened the prospect that they could achieve the dominion of Asia, and, as a result, the whole world (a theme which returns in Pompeian propaganda). This is clear from the aforementioned words of Glabrio<sup>65</sup>, testified by Publius Scipio's opinion (as reported by Polybius) that 'the aim of the war and of the whole enterprise was not to subdue the Aetolian League, but to conquer Antiochus and become masters of Asia'<sup>66</sup>, and confirmed in the words of Antiochus' ambassadors after Magnesia<sup>67</sup>: 'Fortune had made them [the Romans] rulers and masters of the whole world'. The connection with Athena Ilias and the Palladium had thus acquired importance in the political discourse both in Rome and in the East, and this is probably the reason why around this time the Romans started to claim that they possessed the real Palladium<sup>68</sup>. This, together with the sacral acts of Salinator and the Scipiones, allowed the Romans to re-affirm their devotion towards Athena/Minerva (which the destruction of the sanctuary in Coroneia had called into question) and the favour that Rome cherished from her (in opposition to the anti-Roman oracles), but especially reminded people of the Trojan origins of the Romans, who could therefore legitimate their presence in Asia, and their consequent right to the dominion of those territories. After all, following 196 BC, it had been the Greeks who had exploited the motif of the Trojan origins of the Romans to invoke their help in opposing the Eastern kings, and the people of Ilium had been glad to re-unite with their descendants<sup>69</sup>.

58 SORDI 2006, p. 142; SORDI 1982a, p. 142.

59 Liv., 37, 37, 1.

60 Liv., 37, 9, 7.

61 Liv., 37, 33, 6.

62 Ov., Fast., 809 ff.

63 FRHist. 7 Peter.

64 SORDI 1982b, p. 76; *contra* ASSENMAKER 2007, p. 385 f. 21.

65 Liv., 36, 17, 14–16.

66 Polyb., 21, 4, 5: '... τὸ τέλος ἐστὶ τοῦ πολέμου καὶ τῆς ὅλης ἐπιβολῆς οὐκ ἐν τῷ χειρώσασθαι τὸ τῶν Αἰτωλῶν ἔθνος, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ νικήσαντας τὸν Ἀντίοχον κρατῆσαι τῆς Ἀσίας.'

67 Polyb., 21, 16, 8: 'ἡ τύχη παρέδωκεν αὐτοῖς τὴν τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀρχὴν καὶ δυναστείαν'; see also 21, 23, 4.

68 See footnote 64. In the same period the cult of the Palladium in Lavinium is obliterated: SORDI 1982b, p. 66–67, with further bibliography on f. 6.

69 MASTROCINQUE 1977–78, pp. 14–15.



## Mithridates, Ilium, Athena

Is it possible that Athena re-emerged in anti-Roman propaganda a century later? Certainly the theme of the conflict between East and West, Asia and Europe, remained prominent in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC anti-Roman propaganda of king Mithridates VI. Some of his propagandistic themes are known to us thanks to his coinage, inscriptions with dedications to him, and re-elaborations and use of Eastern sources by later writers. It is in fact generally accepted that Mithridates' speech to his soldiers before the first war against Rome, reported by Justin<sup>70</sup> via Pompeius Trogus, and Mithridates' letter to the Parthian king Arsaces XII (Phraates III), included in Sallust's *Historiae*<sup>71</sup>, both display themes that can be traced back to the actual propaganda of Mithridates<sup>72</sup>, which presents many points of contact with that of Antiochus III<sup>73</sup>. Most interesting is that Mithridates was most probably making use of prophecies and Sibylline Oracles to promote his cause: a fragment of Posidonius<sup>74</sup> shows Athenion delivering a speech to the citizens of Athens in 88 BC, informing them of the rapid advance of the Pontic troops in Asia, and stating that oracles from everywhere predicted Mithridates' victory.

In this, Mithridates was observant of earlier Eastern tradition. Even if we do not know with certainty which oracles he used, it seems that he was drawing on earlier Near Eastern material, and some hypotheses have been formulated. Although still debated, the chronology of the main body of the above mentioned third book of the Sibylline Oracles has in fact been set by most scholars between the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC<sup>75</sup>; however, as it is a composite work<sup>76</sup>, some of its sections were probably composed in different moments, and in particular the vv. 350–360 have been dated by some to the Mithridatic period<sup>77</sup>. In any case, as most scholars date most of the book to the mid-second century BC, Mithridates could at any rate have made use of it<sup>78</sup>. Other works, such as the the Oracle of Hystaspes (which presents analogies with both the vv. 350–360 of the third book of the Sibylline Oracles and Antisthenes' fragment) and the Oracle of the Potter seem to have been re-written or translated into Greek in the first century BC<sup>79</sup>.

70 Justin., 38, 4, 1–7, 10.

71 Sall., *hist.*, IV, 69 M.

72 On the reliability of Justin, see SALOMONE GAGGERO 1979.

73 For Antiochus' propaganda, see MASTROCINQUE 1977–78.

74 Posid. in F. Jacoby, *FgrHist.*, IIA, n. 87, F36, 213B.

75 SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE 2007, p. 68, with bibliography. In particular, for the mid-2nd century BC, COLLINS, most recently in COLLINS 2005, p. 94; BUITENWERF 2003, p. 382, thinks that the book was composed in the Roman province of Asia during the aftermath of the Mithridatic Wars; NIKIPROWETZKY 1970, pp. 206–217, argues for the age of Cleopatra VII.

76 COLLINS 2005, p. 85.

77 GEFCKEN 1902, p. 8; AMIOTTI 1982, p. 19 (who also attributes the vv. 464–469 of the third book to the time of Mithridates); AMIOTTI acknowledges the possibility to date these verses to 33–30 BC, as the *de-spoina* mentioned there could be Cleopatra, but she rightly remarks that this does not exclude a reuse by Cleopatra of an oracle circulating at Mithridates' time (p. 21).

78 MCGING 1986, 104.

79 MCGING 1986, 103–104; the scholar maintains that the Oracle of Hystaspes was originally a Persian oracle of anti-Macedonian propaganda, but was then re-written as anti-Roman in the time of Mithridates, who is then to be recognised in the king mentioned there.

In all these oracles, the theme of a king coming from the East appears, and, under this perspective, as the sacrifice to Athena Ilias had become the necessary rite for those who wanted to conquer 'the other side' of the world, it seems obvious that a link with the city of Troy and its sanctuary would have been propagandistically important for Mithridates. The rite had been performed by Antiochus III and Alexander, two important figures in Mithridates' self-representation. In particular, in his efforts to gain the support of both the Asian populations and of the Greeks, Mithridates claimed descent from Cyrus the Great on his father's side and from Alexander the Great on his mother's side<sup>80</sup>, as well as trying to present himself as a second Alexander<sup>81</sup>. Considering Alexander's liberality towards Ilium and Athena Ilias, Mithridates' interest towards the city might have been justified in order to strengthen his similarity with Alexander, as has been hypothesised in relation to Pompey. However, Athena is not explicitly mentioned in any of the aforementioned oracles.

In addition, we do not possess any strong evidence of a relationship between Mithridates and Ilium; it is possible that during the first Mithridatic War the city had sided with Mithridates<sup>82</sup>, as the sources say that he conquered the northern part of Asia Minor<sup>83</sup>, and as in 85 BC the Roman commander Fimbria, after re-conquering other Asian cities, found the gates of Ilium closed to him and besieged it<sup>84</sup>. Nevertheless, no source explicitly states this. The presence of Pegasus as a control mark on the coins of the *koinon* of Athena Ilias at the time of the first Mithridatic War has been seen as a sign of the city's support for Mithridates<sup>85</sup>, perhaps signifying his interest in the city and the goddess. However, as has been pointed out<sup>86</sup>, that motifs on coins might be a sign of loyalty is a debatable issue.

### Rome, Athena Ilias and the Mithridatic Wars

Yet, Athena Ilias can be found in connection to the Romans in four instances during the period of the Mithridatic Wars, before (and in one case after) Pompey was assigned the command in the East, which seems to suggest that the protection of the goddess was still an important political theme in the context of Rome's conflicts against the East, and that the great general sought to insert himself into this tradition:

1. In 85, Fimbria, after Ilium closed its gates to him, destroyed the city and the temple of Athena; some sources<sup>87</sup> report that, after the temple had been burnt down, the statue of Athena (probably the Palladium) was found undamaged;

80 Just., *Epit.*, 38.7.1.

81 MCGING 1986, pp. 101–102.

82 ERSKINE 2001, p. 238.

83 App., *Mith.*, 20–21; Liv., *Per.*, 81 says that only Magnesia had remained loyal.

84 App., *Mith.*, 53; Liv., *Per.*, 83; Strab., 13, 1, 27; Oros., 6, 2, 11; August., *Civ. Dei*, 3, 7.

85 ELLIS-EVANS 2016, pp. 149–151, with previous bibliography.

86 ERSKINE 2001, p. 238.

87 App., *Mith.*, 53; Obs., 56b; August., *Civ. Dei*, 3, 7 quoting Liv., 83, fr.17.

2. Plutarch<sup>88</sup> says that in 73, on the occasion of the siege of the city of Cyzicus by Mithridates, the inhabitants of Ilium had an apparition: the goddess Athena informed them that she had just come back from helping the besieged city;
3. A quaestor L. Julius Caesar appears in an inscription in Ilium<sup>89</sup> in the context of a meeting of the *koinon* of Athena Ilias for the reorganisation of the *koinon's* finances (particularly on how to cut the costs of its festival);
4. A censor L. Julius Caesar was honoured by the inhabitants of Ilium for reassigning them the possession of the sacred land of the temple of Athena Ilias, which had previously been confiscated by the Roman *publicani* (tax contractors), and for confirming its exemption from taxes<sup>90</sup>.

Let us consider these four points in order. In 85 BC, after killing the consul Flaccus and taking the command of his army, Fimbria entered the province of Asia, reported some victories against one of Mithridates' sons and destroyed the territory of the cities that would not open their gates to him<sup>91</sup>. When he arrived at Ilium, he encountered further resistance. The sources report two versions of the story: Fimbria tricked the inhabitants into thinking that he was a friend, exploiting the Roman-Trojan kinship connection, and entered the city<sup>92</sup>; Fimbria besieged it for 11 days<sup>93</sup>. The outcome, in all sources, was the complete destruction of the city. What is interesting here is the fact that Appian, Augustine (quoting Livy), Obsequens and Servius<sup>94</sup> report that after the temple of Athena Ilias burnt down, the statue of the goddess was found standing and unscathed. Obsequens says that this meant hope for the restoration of the town; Appian affirms that the event might be true, unless the statue had been taken from Troy by Diomedes and Ulysses during the Trojan War.

MASTROCINQUE<sup>95</sup> has affirmed that the similarities between Appian's *Mithridatika* and Livy (from whom Augustine, Obsequens and Servius ultimately derive), much less in number than the differences, are to be referred to the authors' direct or indirect use of a common source, the *Memoirs* of Sulla<sup>96</sup>. If this is true, we might infer that the *prodigium* of the Palladium's survival from the Fimbrian fire might have been an invention of Sulla<sup>97</sup>; this would not be too surprising, considering that the commander created around

88 Plut., *Luc.*, 10, 4.

89 IK 3, nr. 10.

90 IK 3, nr. 71.

91 App., *Mith.*, 51–53.

92 App., *Mith.*, 53; Cass. Dio, Fr. 104, 7.

93 Strab., 13, 1, 27; Liv., *Per.*, 83 (who does not specify the number of days of the siege).

94 App., *Mith.*, 53; Obs., 56b; August., *Civ. Dei*, 3, 7; Servius auctus., *ad Aen.*, 2, 166. In *Vir. Ill.* 70, 3 it is stated that the whole temple was not touched by the fire (*ubi Minervae templum inviolatum stetit*).

95 MASTROCINQUE 1999, p. 62.

96 On the use of Sulla's *Memoirs* as a common source by Appian and Plutarch see PALAZZO 2015. BALLESTEROS-PASTOR 2009 considers the episode of the destruction of Troy by Fimbria related by Appian a product of an anti-Roman bias.

97 So BALLESTEROS-PASTOR 2009, p. 218; ZIEHEN (1949, p. 174) considers it an invention of the inhabitants of Ilium, in order to justify the continuation of the cult of Athena in the city.

himself an aura full of oracles, *prodigia* and divine interventions<sup>98</sup>, and that his *Memoirs* were full of accounts of them<sup>99</sup>. Why would such an invention have been useful to Sulla? When Flaccus was sent to Asia, Sulla had been declared enemy of Rome. After Flaccus' death, the future dictator had every interest to delegitimise Fimbria's presence in Asia and his position of command of the army; not much later, in fact, Sulla had forced him to commit suicide and had incorporated Fimbria's army (a consular army) into his own. Appian (probably because of his derivation from Sulla) is the only source to designate Fimbria as a *privatus* when he left Rome in company of the consul Flaccus, thus depriving him of any legitimacy to take the command of the consular army after Flaccus' death<sup>100</sup>. This might then explain Fimbria's sneer at the common origins of Rome and Ilium in Appian's account<sup>101</sup>, his impatience to enter the city – although it had committed itself to Sulla –, and his behaviour towards the inhabitants of Ilium seeking refuge in the temple<sup>102</sup>, similar to that of the Greek cities siding with Mithridates during the massacre of the Italians in 88 BC<sup>103</sup>. If this whole account comes from Sulla's *Memoirs*, it would mean that Fimbria, who was leading an army of the Marian faction<sup>104</sup>, was represented as a 'non-Roman', not acting on behalf of the Republic or having any respect for it; if the Palladium of Ilium survived the fire and profanation of the sanctuary caused by him, from the point of view of Sulla this should have symbolised the support of the goddess for the 'true' Roman side, his own side, as the inhabitants of the city had supported him against Fimbria. The benevolence of Athena Ilias, granting the success in and dominion of Asia to Sulla, could have also lent weight to his decision to hastily close the war with the Peace of Dardanus, bitterly criticised by his contemporaries<sup>105</sup>.

Sulla later showed clemency to the city by bestowing freedom upon it, and declaring the Ilians friends of the Roman people<sup>106</sup>. This demonstration of respect for the city, especially by an individual who called himself *Epaphroditos* (loved by Venus), can also be seen as a strengthening of the legend of the mythical origins of the Romans in the face of Mithridatic propaganda, which attributed them a mixed origin<sup>107</sup>. Furthermore, as mentioned by BALLESTEROS-PASTOR<sup>108</sup>, the presence of the prodigy by Athena, favourable to the Romans, could recall the reaction of the Romans against Antiochus' propaganda

98 GABBA 1975, p. 14.

99 SMITH 2009, p. 72.

100 MASTROCINQUE 1999, pp. 60–61. On Fimbria's magistracy, see LINTOTT 1971.

101 App., *Mith.*, 53.

102 *Ibid.*: Fimbria burnt with the temple the people who had sought refuge inside it.

103 App., *Mith.*, 23.

104 L. Valerius Flaccus became consul in 86 BC, after Marius' death (Vell. Pat., 2, 23, 2).

105 See Plut., *Sulla*, 24; for MASTROCINQUE, one of the reasons for which Sulla's *Memoirs* have to be regarded as the ultimate source of Appian (perhaps through the mediation of Sisenna) is that the future dictator had all reasons for presenting the beginning and end of the hostilities with Mithridates in a way that legitimated his leniency in the treatment of Mithridates after the peace of Dardanus (MASTRONCINQUE 1999, p. 64).

106 App., *Mith.*, 59–61; Oros., 6, 2, 11.

107 BALLESTEROS-PASTOR 2009, p. 219. Most lately on the topic RUSSO 2009, pp. 381–387.

108 BALLESTEROS-PASTOR 2009, p. 220.

in the previous century, and thus reveal the use of prophecies or oracles involving the goddess in the anti-Roman propaganda of Mithridates.

The most interesting point regarding the Fimbria episode is that Servius<sup>109</sup>, commenting on the *Aeneid*, first mentions the same alternative tradition reported by Appian – that Diomedes and Ulysses had stolen the Palladium from Troy –, quoting then Varro and saying that Diomedes later gave the statue to Aeneas. However, a few lines later, he states:

However others say that this statue had been hidden behind a wall built for the purpose, after they realised that Troy was destined to perish. Later, during the Mithridatic War a certain Fimbria, a Roman, is said to have made it known that it had been found: and it is certain that it was brought to Rome<sup>110</sup>.

As ASSENMAKER<sup>111</sup> has pointed out, it is not possible to consider Fimbria himself as the instigator of this tradition, since he never returned to Rome. It would be possible, though, according to what has been said above, to attribute the origin of this story to Sulla himself<sup>112</sup>. The commander would have had every interest in bringing the Palladium to Rome after the Peace of Dardanus, as it would have symbolised Roman possession of the Eastern side of the world, and therefore of the whole world. This tradition, however, did not take root, probably because the conflict with Mithridates was resumed a few years later, or perhaps because of the abrogation of the Sullan reforms in the 70s. In Augustan times, the identity of the objects kept inside the temple of Vesta in the Forum was still uncertain<sup>113</sup>. The story reported by Servius clearly clashes with the events quoted by Cicero<sup>114</sup> in *pro Scauro* from 54 BC, where he says that in 241 BC, on occasion of a fire that destroyed the temple of Vesta, the *pontifex maximus* Caecilius Metellus brought the Palladium, which was kept inside the temple, to safety. Still, the *prodigium* that allegedly took place in Ilium, and – if a product of Sulla's self-promotion – the alleged transport of the Palladium to Rome prove that at the beginning of the first century BC, the figure of Athena Ilias as protector of those who wished to conquer 'the other side of the world' was still an important propagandistic theme in the context of Rome's conflicts with the East.

This seems to be confirmed in the second event mentioned above: in a passage of Plutarch's *Life of Lucullus*, during the siege of Cyzicus by Mithridates, the goddess appeared to the Ilians in a dream, dishevelled and with her *peplum* partly torn, announcing that she just came back from helping the inhabitants of the city. The siege ended with

109 Servius auctus, *ad Aen.*, 2, 166.

110 *Quamquam alii dicant, simulacrum hoc a Troianis absconditum fuisse intra exstructum parietem, postquam agnoverunt Troiam esse perituram: quod postea bello Mithridatico dicitur Fimbria quidam Romanus inventum indicasse: quod Romam constat advectum.*

111 ASSENMAKER 2007, p. 395.

112 Same opinion in ASSENMAKER 2007, p. 396–399.

113 ASSENMAKER 2007, 388.

114 Cic., *Scaur.*, 48.

a Roman victory, and games were instituted in the city in honour of Lucullus<sup>115</sup>. The episode, as with other instances of prodigies and apparitions in Lucullus' life, is thought to have been taken by Plutarch from an epic poem<sup>116</sup> written by the poet A. Licinius Archia and celebrating Lucullus' deeds<sup>117</sup>. However, it is most interesting that Plutarch, just after narrating the episode, points out that 'the people of Ilium used to show a stele with decrees and inscriptions related to these facts'<sup>118</sup>; it is thus possible to think that this prodigy too had been the result of a conscious response to the propagandistic needs of Rome in the frame of its conquest of Asia at the time of the Mithridatic wars.

As far as the inscriptions with the name of a L. Julius Caesar are concerned, it is not surprising that members of the *gens Iulia* were interested in creating a connection with Ilium, as the clan claimed its descent from Venus from at least the early second century BC<sup>119</sup>. The problem lies in the correct identification of the people mentioned in the two inscriptions. In the first, the quaestor L. Julius Caesar has been identified with the consul of 64 BC<sup>120</sup>, whose quaestorship took place in 77 BC, therefore between the second and the third Mithridatic War. The other L. Julius Caesar had initially been identified with the censor of 89 BC (cos. 90 BC), father of the aforementioned. As for the consul of 64 BC, there is no unequivocal evidence of him holding a censorship. However, the discovery of an inscription<sup>121</sup> from 58 BC in Delos, mentioning a censor L CAE[-], has led to the hypothesis of L. Caesar (cos. 64 BC) having been a censor in 61 BC<sup>122</sup>. This, of course, has led to the question whether the censor mentioned in the second inscription from Ilium is L. Caesar cos. 90 or L. Caesar cos. 64; modern scholarship tends to agree on the latter<sup>123</sup>.

In the context of the present argument, if demonstration of piety towards the goddess was still important in the first century BC, in order to gain her protection for a campaign of conquest of Asia and legitimise the Romans' presence in the province by restating their origin, either chronology would be fitting. Both in the context of the beginning of the conflicts with Mithridates (89 BC) and of the organisation of the Eastern provinces by Pompey (61 BC), a demonstration of good will and particularly the dis-

115 App., *Mith*, 76.

116 PICCIRILLI 2008, p. 794; RIZZO 1963, pp.79–80.

117 FgrHist 186 T 1, 2 b

118 Plut., *Luc.*, 10, 4; 'καὶ στήλην τινὰ δόγματα καὶ γράμματα περὶ τούτων ἔχουσαν ἐδείκνυον Ἰλίδεις.'

119 SMITH 2010, p. 253.

120 ROBERT 1966, pp. 16–17; NICOLET *et al.* 1980, p. 119; see also MRR 2.89.

121 CIL I<sup>2</sup>.2500.

122 NICOLET *et al.* 1980, pp. 111–118; see also MRR 3.110.

123 NICOLET *et al.* 1980, pp. 119–122; ERSKINE 2001, pp. 246–247; see also MMR 3.110; *contra* ROSE 2014, 223. One of Nicolet's arguments against L. Caesar cos. 90 – that the statue dedicated to him and its base would have not survived the destruction of Ilium by Fimbria in 85 BC – is not very compelling, as excavations have revealed that the damage to the city, on that occasion, was much less extensive than what the sources testify (ROSE 2014, pp. 220–221). However, as noted by ERSKINE 2001, p. 247, the presence in Ilium of another inscription mentioning a Julia daughter of L. Julius Caesar is not a strong argument in favour of L. Caesar cos. 90 either, as his son might have had a daughter too, who would have had the same name and whose presence has not necessarily to be denied because of a lack of information on her. Overall, the year 61 BC provides a much more fitting historical context for a tax exemption.

patch by the Senate of a magistrate of the most ancient Roman aristocracy, whose family traced their origin back to Aeneas and Venus, would have had a strong propagandistic impact. This, in particular, if it is considered that two of the main anti-Roman themes in the self-promotion of Mithridates attacked the Romans' greed<sup>124</sup> and, as mentioned, their mixed origin. However, the year 61 BC is not only a more fitting context for a tax exemption to the benefit of the temple, but, as will be argued below, it could also offer a more suitable ideological framework for the reassigning of the possession of the temple's sacred land to Ilium.

### Pompey and Athena Ilias

In the light of what has been said, the presence of two dedications to Pompey in Ilium does not come as a surprise. The first inscription<sup>125</sup> only reports a dedication by the people of Ilium to the general, *imperator* for the third time. The second inscription<sup>126</sup> provides more information<sup>127</sup>:

- 1 ὁ δῆμος κα[ὶ οἱ ν]έοι  
 [Γναῖον Πο]μπήιον, Γναίου [ύ]ιον, Μάγνον, τὸ τρίτον  
 [Αὐτοκράτ]ορα, τὸν πάτρινα καὶ εὐεργέτην τῆς πόλεως  
 [εὐσεβεία]ς ἔνεκεν τῆς πρὸς τὴν θεὸν τὴν οὖσαν αὐτῶι  
 5 [-----]ν καὶ εὐνοίας τῆς πρὸς τὸν δῆμον ἀπολύσαντα  
 [τοὺς μὲν ἀ]νθρώπους ἀπὸ τε τῶν βαρβαρικῶν πολέμων  
 [καὶ τῶν π]ιρατικῶν κινδύνων ἀποκαθεστάκοτα δὲ  
 [τὴν εἰρ]ῆνην καὶ τὴν ἀσφάλειαν καὶ κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλασσαν.

The people and the *neoi*<sup>128</sup> (honour) Gnaeus Pompeius, son of Gnaeus, Magnus, *imperator* for the third time, the patron and benefactor of the city, because of his piety towards the goddess, who was (is) ... to him, and because of his benevolence towards the people, since he freed men from the war against the barbarians and from the dangers of piracy, and he restored peace and security both on land and at sea.

The inscription was engraved on a marble base that presents, on its top side, recesses for the placement of a life-size statue<sup>129</sup>. It has been dated, similarly to the other inscription, to 63–62 BC<sup>130</sup> on the basis of Pompey's third acclamation as *imperator*, which probably occurred before his return to Rome.

The text presents some interesting features. Firstly, one of the reasons for the dedication is the piety showed by Pompey towards the goddess (Athena); although the

124 Justin., 38, 4, 1–7, 10; Sall., *Hist.*, IV, 69 M.

125 IK 3, nr. 74; IGR IV, 198; CIG 3608.

126 AE 1990 nr. 940. The restorations reported here are those of WINTER 1996, p. 176.

127 The text of the inscription has been published by SCHWERTHEIM 1989 and WINTER 1996.

128 On the identity of the *neoi*, see WINTER 1996, pp. 184–185.

129 WINTER 1996, p. 175.

130 WINTER 1996, pp. 176–177.

theme of εὐσεβεία (either towards Athena or the sanctuary) is commonly found in other dedications in the Troad<sup>131</sup>, to my knowledge no other inscription from the region makes explicit the attitude of the goddess towards the dedicatee, as this one does. WINTER<sup>132</sup> has proposed the restoration of the unfortunate lacuna in line 5 with adjectives such as 'well-disposed', 'benevolent', or 'well-intentioned', which would correspond to εὐνοῦς, πρόθυμος or φίλος, attested in other inscriptions in the Troad, but never referred to a deity. It might therefore be possible to think that the stress on the benevolence of the goddess towards the commander is a product of the Pompeian propaganda; this can also be suggested by other features of the inscription which seem to comply with other themes recurring in the Pompeian narrative of the Eastern campaigns.

Another particularity of the inscription is in fact that it mentions Pompey having freed men from the war against the barbarians and from the dangers of piracy. This clearly refers to Pompey's campaign against the pirates, quickly and most successfully concluded in 67 BC, and to the war against Mithridates. WINTER<sup>133</sup> points out that the use of the expression βαρβαρικοί πόλεμοι is not otherwise epigraphically attested; furthermore, as it was used by Thucydides with reference to the Persian Wars, the scholar maintains<sup>134</sup> that the inhabitants of Ilium thus wanted to celebrate Pompey as victor over the Persians (as noted above, Mithridates claimed descent from Cyrus on his father's side). This would make sense in the context of the above mentioned conflict between East and West, and would imply that the Ilians were setting themselves on Europe's side, that is on Rome's side. However, it could be added that the classing of Pompey's enemies as 'barbarians' during the Mithridatic conflict can be found in the sources<sup>135</sup>. Furthermore, if Mithridates, by claiming descent from Alexander, had presented himself as the protector and defender of Greece and of the Hellenistic East against the 'barbarian' Romans, now Pompey, by using his cognomen *Magnus* and honouring the goddess to whom Alexander the Great had also shown piety, was taking the place of the great commander in the struggle against the barbarians, turning against Mithridates' supporters and descendants the dead king's own Persian origins. The phrase βαρβαρικοί πόλεμοι thus reveals, as noted by MOTTA<sup>136</sup>, the use of Pompeian propagandistic themes on the part of the Ilians.

Finally, the expression κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλασσαν is noteworthy. Used already in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries to define political hegemony, it passed to the Hellenistic world and was then first introduced in the Roman world in connection with Pompey<sup>137</sup>, who clearly made it a part of his self-representation<sup>138</sup>. In the same period it was used in the

131 IK 3, nr. 12; 15; 16; 17; 32; 42; 62; 75; 86. WINTER (1996, p. 187) maintains that the theme of Pompey's piety, together with the epithet εὐεργέτης, might allude to a refurbishment of the temple of Athena carried out by the commander.

132 WINTER 1996, p. 177.

133 WINTER 1996, p. 177.

134 WINTER 1996, p. 189.

135 See, for example, Plut., *Pomp.*, 35, 3; Cass. Dio 36, 45, 2; 48, 4-5; 49, 3; 54, 4; MOTTA 2010, p. 125.

136 MOTTA 2010, pp. 123 and 125.

137 MOMIGLIANO 1942, pp. 62-63; AMELA VALVERDE 2004, p. 226.

138 See for example Cic., *leg. Man.*, 19, 56; *Balb.*, 6, 16; *Sest.*, 31, 68.



context of dedications to those who fought against the pirates, so the Roman general could rightfully claim it, but, as MOTTA<sup>139</sup> notes, he made it an integral part of his self-representation as the peacemaker of the whole world. The ecumenical significance of this expression, also highlighted by the phrase ‘he freed men (i. e., not only the Ilians) from war ...’<sup>140</sup>, is then particularly fitting in this context, as it is perfectly in agreement with the type of domination granted by the possession of the Palladium. This implies that the Palladium, its magic attributes and the cult of Athena Ilias could prove extremely useful to Pompey, on the one hand, to introduce the Hellenistic concept of dominion of the *oikoumene* in Rome – being a cult from Ilium, this Athena might have been not considered as a ‘foreign’ cult. On the other, it could have helped the general make Roman domination more acceptable in the East through mediation via a cult in the East, but rooted in the mythical birthplace of Rome. It is interesting to point out that the connotation of Pompey as a restorer of peace (another characteristic of Hellenistic kings<sup>141</sup>) in this particular inscription, although also present in other dedications to him, might recall two other inscriptions<sup>142</sup>, both dedicated to Minerva *Pacifera* (whose authenticity is however doubted) found in the area of the Velabrum<sup>143</sup>, therefore in one of the hypothesised locations for Pompey’s temple discussed above.

### Conclusions: Pompey, Minerva, Rome and the East

The first war which opened up the prospect of the dominion of the whole world to the Romans saw, on their part, the violation of the sanctuary of the Athena in Coroneia, a Palladium, a deity thus connected to Athena Ilias. This prompted the modification of oracles and predictions embedded in Near Eastern tradition with the addition of the theme of Athena’s wrath against the Romans, which derived meaning from a long tradition that identified Athena Ilias as the protector of those seeking to conquer ‘the other side’ of the world. The Romans, Scipio in particular, reacted by inserting themselves into this tradition, and performing a series of ritual acts aimed at demonstrating their devotion towards the goddess and securing her favour.

Although we do not possess direct evidence of a propagandistic use of Athena Ilias against the Romans by Mithridates or his supporters, the importance of this cult in earlier conflicts between East and West and the evidence for its relevance for the Romans during the Mithridatic Wars strongly suggest that both parties involved in the conflict were aware of its previous use, and that the benevolence of the goddess was still considered pivotal for a successful outcome of the conquest of ‘the other part of the world’ even during the first half of the first century BC. It might even be suggested that the im-

139 MOTTA 2010, pp. 124–125.

140 AS WINTER 1996, p. 194, pointed out.

141 MOMIGLIANO 1942, p. 63.

142 CIL VI 570 and 575.

143 LA ROCCA 2002, p. 7, who already suggests the presence of these two inscriptions point to the existence of a temple of Minerva in the area.

petus for Athena's presence in the Mithridatic anti-Roman propaganda was the burning of the temple of Athena Ilias by Fimbria, as in the previous century the trigger had been Glabrio's profanation of the territory around the temple of Athena Itonia. Sulla, in his *Memoirs*, might have exploited to his advantage the version of the story unfavourable to Fimbria, while turning to his (and Rome's) advantage the survival of the Palladium. The other instances of propagandistic use of the cult of Athena Ilias are dated either close to or after the probable publication of Sulla's work following his death in 78 BC<sup>144</sup>.

Pompey, following Lucullus in the command against Mithridates and probably taking up Sulla's example<sup>145</sup>, seems to have continued the same propagandistic line, and adapted it for his own purposes. As mentioned, the inscription dedicated to Pompey in Ilium presents themes – the universalising perspective and the peace and safety – which, although they were characteristic of Hellenistic kings, were first attributed to Pompey in the Roman world, were central in his propaganda after the Eastern campaign, and are particularly fitting in connection to the magical properties of the Palladium. A particular attitude of Athena towards the dedicatee is also stressed; if WINTER is correct, then the benevolence of the goddess can be put in connection with and seen as a consequence of Pompey's *votum* mentioned in the dedicatory inscription of Minerva's temple in Rome handed down by Pliny. Pompey's piety towards the goddess who had favoured him in his conquests might have expressed itself in some dedications towards the sanctuary. WINTER<sup>146</sup> hypothesises that the epithet 'ἐυεργέτης' attributed to Pompey in the Ilian inscription implies some kind of benefit bestowed by the general on the temple – a reconstruction or a refurbishment. There is no evidence for a Pompeian intervention in the temple of Athena Ilias, but the inscription in Rome testifies that the construction of the temple there was a fulfilment of the general's *votum*. Finally, both inscriptions, in Ilium and Rome, designate Pompey as the one who put an end to the whole Mithridatic conflict – the 'βαρβαρικοί πόλεμοι' or the '30-year war'. These are all motifs of the Pompeian propaganda at the end of the Eastern campaign; it seems thus very probable that the Minerva honoured in Pompey's temple in Rome was the goddess of Ilium.

This identification has important implications. First, it allows us to answer the initial question: why Minerva? Pompey's *votum* and dedication find an explanation in the frame of his Eastern campaign, not only as a reference to Alexander the Great's deeds; the protection of Minerva establishes Pompey within a tradition of Roman relationships with the East. It furthermore characterises him as the last but most successful in a series of Roman generals who fought Mithridates, the only one who could bring the whole conflict to an end, as he had managed to secure the protection of the goddess. Through the temple, the general was finally asserting Athena's benevolence towards Rome, which she would from now on protect. It is most interesting that during the following decade Cicero insisted repeatedly on the character of Minerva as *custos Urbis* (a Minerva who

144 FLOWER 2015, p. 209.

145 For a detailed account of the connection between Sulla and Pompey and on the negativity of Sulla's model, see LAFFI 1967.

146 WINTER 1996, p. 187.

offered the protection usually associated with the Palladium), both in public and private contexts<sup>147</sup>, and that, according to Plutarch<sup>148</sup>, the orator, before going into exile, brought a statue of Minerva from his house to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, and dedicated it there with the inscription ‘To Minerva, protector of the city’.

At the same time, the dedication became embedded in Pompey’s vision of Rome and its dominions: he was proclaiming the direct connection between Rome and its origins in Ilium, between West and East, Europe and Asia, in a very tangible way. The doubling of the cult could in this way symbolise the ecumenical character of his victory and Rome’s domination, and of the peace that came with them. As a consequence of these two aspects, the general could present himself as the guarantor of that peace, and thus protector of the Republic. Therefore, the dedication of the temple served a double purpose: on the one hand, it helped make the Roman conquest of the East more justifiable in the eyes of the local populations, and helped undermine the potential claims of future rebels who might have wanted to guide an Eastern revolt against Rome. On the other hand, it contributed to the construction of Pompey’s new public image as a good governor, smoothing the Hellenistic features through references to Rome’s origins. This strategy seems to have been maintained with the subsequent dedication of the temple to Venus Victrix in the Pompeian theatrical complex, and that probably supported Pompey’s progressive rapprochement with the Senate, eventually leading to his appointment as consul *sine collega* in 52 BC.

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147 Cic., *Scaur.*, 48; *Dom.*, 142; *Fam.*, 12, 25.

148 Plut., *Cic.*, 31, 6.

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