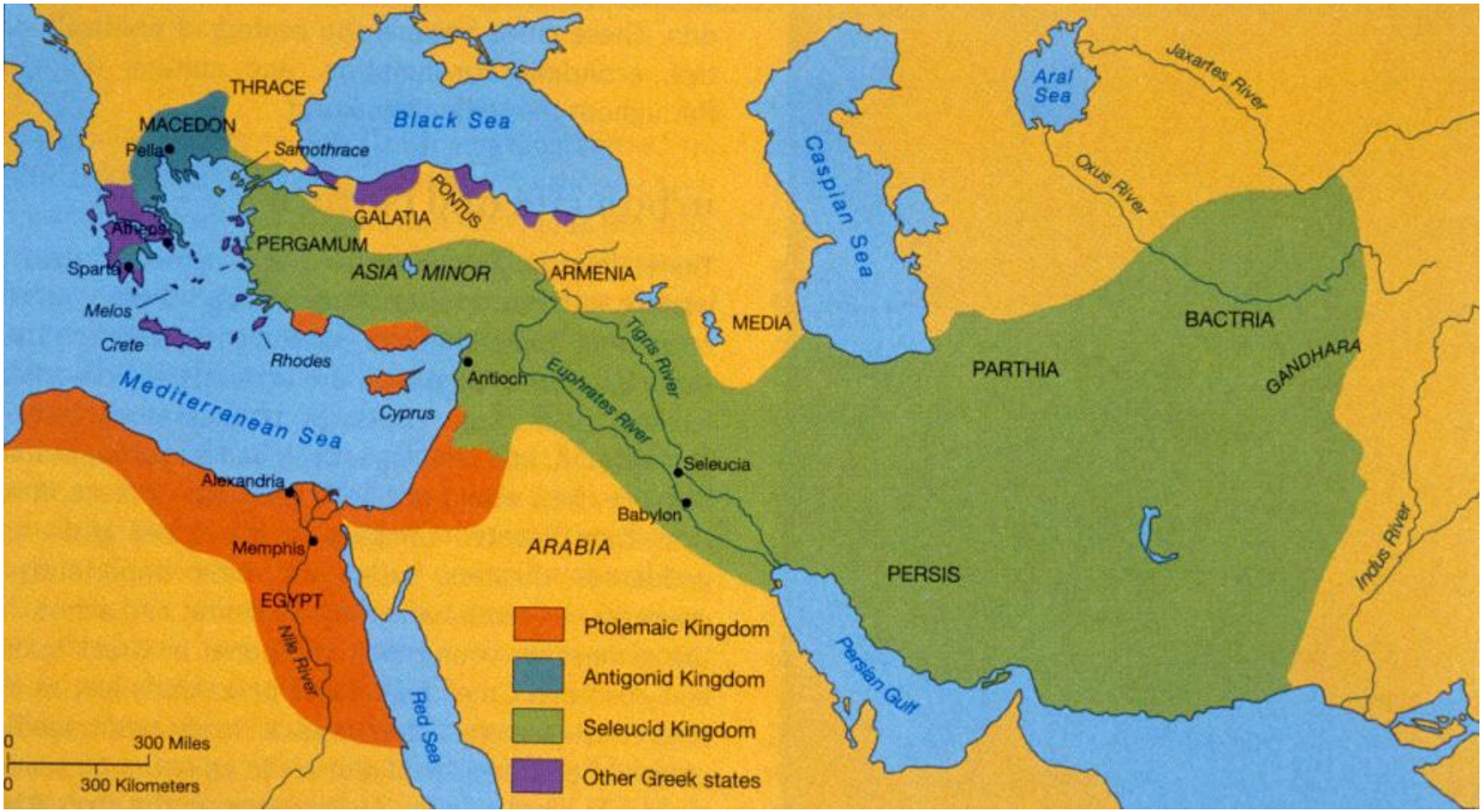
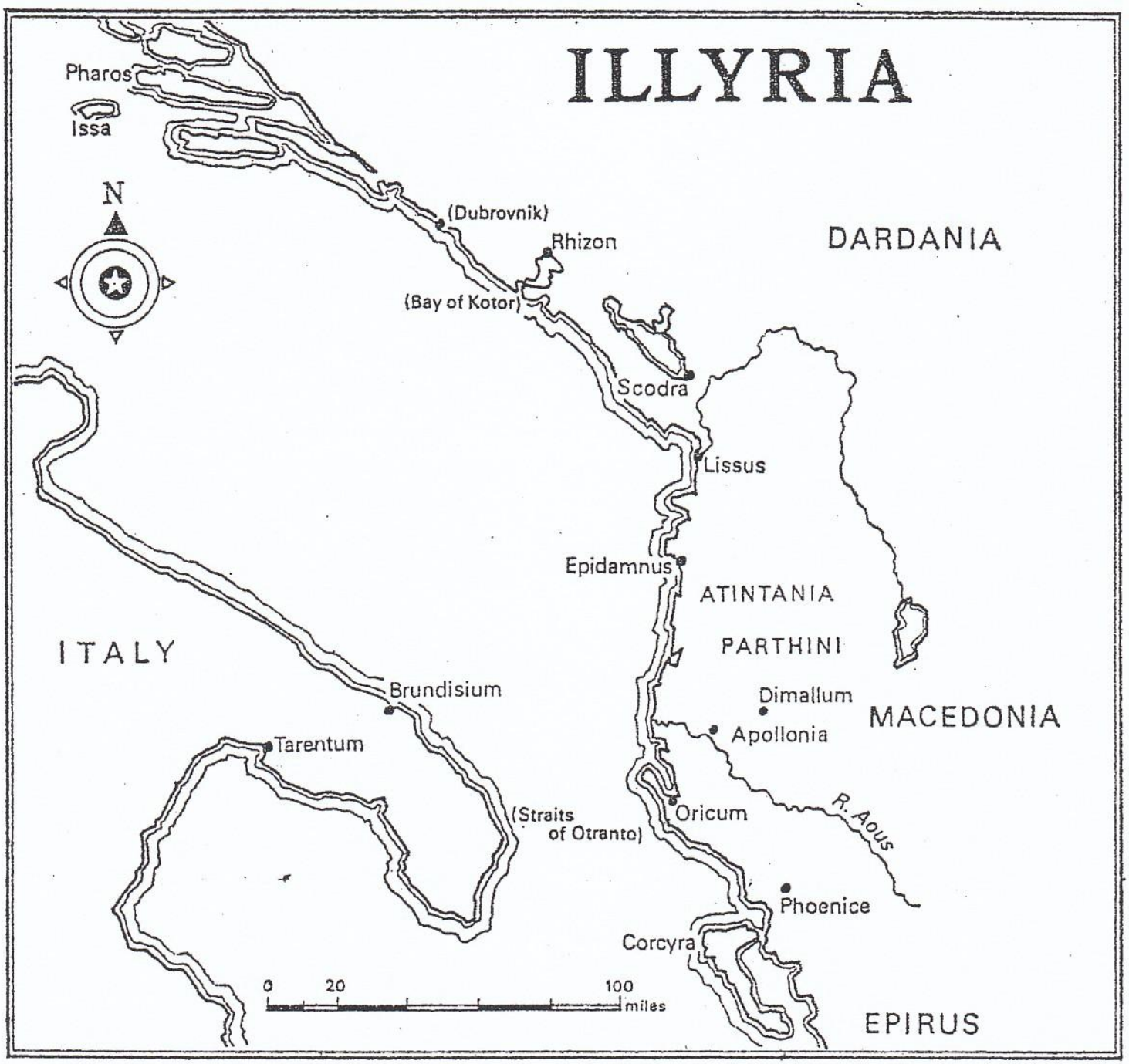
From Village to Empire: an Introduction to the History of Rome

Lecture 7: Rome in the Hellenistic World I

The kingdoms of the ‘successors’ of Alexander the Great



Aegean c. 200 BC



Agron

Teuta

Corcyra

Demetrius of Pharos

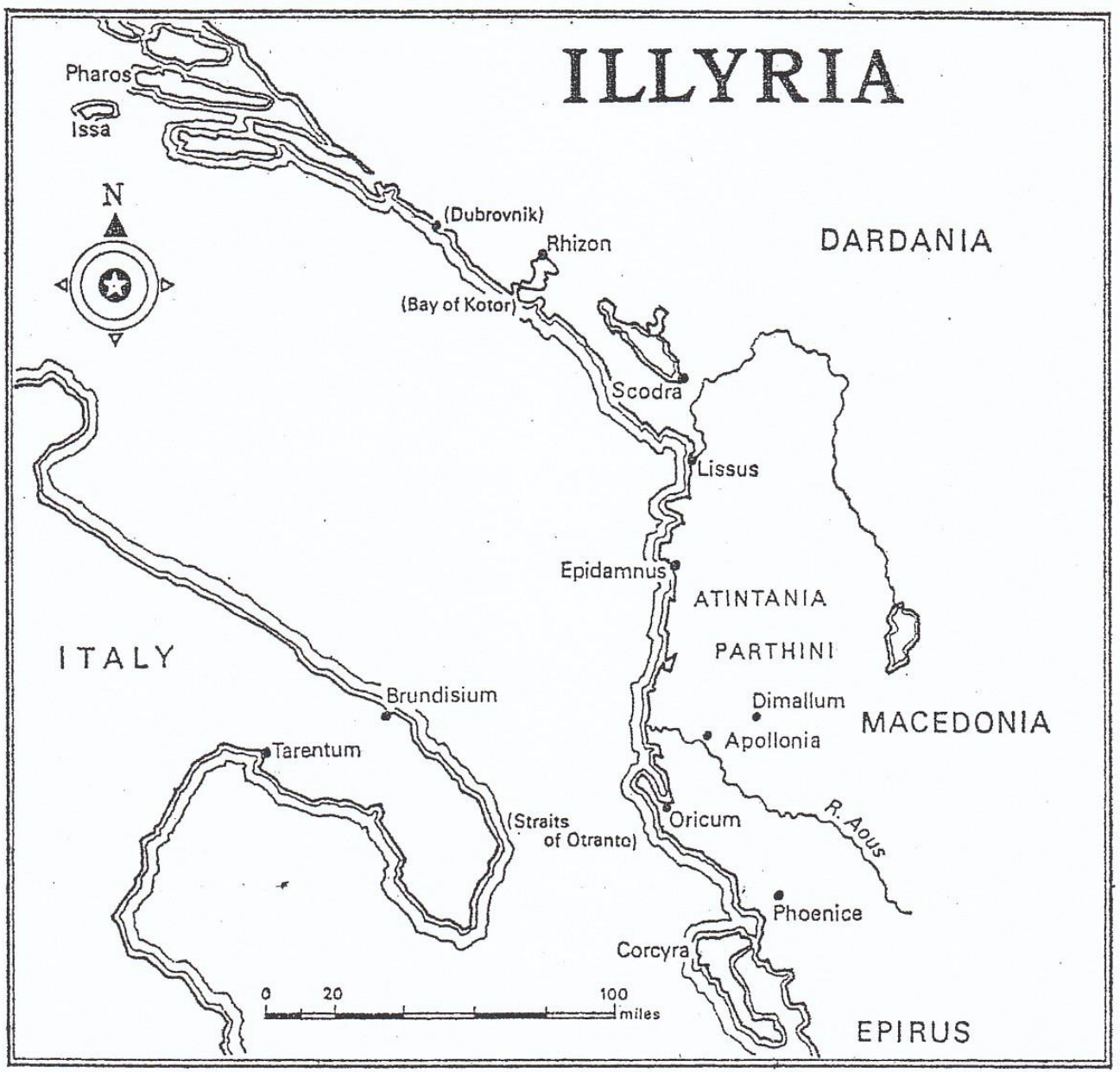
M. Valerius Laevinus

The alliance between the Romans and the Aetolian League

Livy 26.24: … [1] Should they so wish it, the Eleans, the Lacedaemonians, Attalus King of Asia, Pleuratus King of Thrace, and Scerdilaedus King of Illyria, should enjoy the same rights of friendship; [2] the Aetolians should immediately declare war on Philip by land, the Romans supporting them with a fleet of not less than twenty-five quinqueremes; [3] of the towns from Aetolia northwards as far as Corcyra, the soil, buildings, walls and farmlands should belong to the Aetolians, while all other captured material should belong to the Romans, who should make it their object that Acarnania should go to the Aetolians; [4] if the Aetolians should make peace with Philip, the treaty should contain the provision that peace would be valid only if Philip abstained from attacking the Romans or their allies or those who were under their control; similarly, if the Roman people made a pact with the king, they should add a clause denying him the right of making war on the Aetolians or their allies.

The Peace of Phoenice (205 BC)

Livy 29.12: About this time the Epirotes, sick of the long and tedious war, first assured themselves of Roman sympathy and then sent envoys to Philip to propose negotiating a general peace and to express their confidence that it would be agreed upon if he entered into personal talks with the Roman commander Sempronius. Philip, being by no means averse to peace, was easily persuaded to go to Epirus; at the town of Phoenice he held preliminary talks with the Epirote officials Aeropus, Derdas, and Philippus, and afterwards met Sempronius. Present at the conversation between the two leaders were Amynander, King of the Athamanians, and other high officials of the Epirotes and Acarnanians. The first to speak was the Epirote magistrate Philippus, who made a joint request to the king and the Roman commander to do his people the favour of stopping hostilities. Sempronius then laid down as the conditions of peace the cession to Rome of the Parthini, Dimallum, Bargullum, and Eugenium, and the annexation of Atintania to Macedon, provided that Philip sent envoys to Rome and obtained the Senate's permission. These terms being agreed upon, Prusias King of Bithynia, the Achaeans, Boeotians, Thessalians, Acarnanians, and Epirotes were written into the treaty as on Philip's side, with the Ilii, King Attalus, Pleuratus, Nabis tyrant of Lacedaemon, the Eleans, Messenians, and Athenians on the Roman. The treaty was put in writing and signed…



P. Sulpicius Galba

T. Quinctius Flamininus

The ‘fetters of Greece’

Corinth, Chalcis and Demetrias

Negotiations with Philip V (at Nicaea, November 198 BC, and subsequently)

Polybius 18.1-9: The conference at Nicaea, November 198 BC

Polybius 18.10-12: [10] When the Greeks noticed that Flamininus was by no means averse to referring the matter to the Senate, they quickly agreed to his plan. It was decided that Philip should be allowed to send an embassy to Rome, and that the other states should also send envoys to speak before the Senate and put their case against him. […].

[11] When these envoys arrived in Rome the Senate had not yet decided whether it would be necessary to send both the consuls for the year to Gaul or one of them against Philip. However, when Flamininus' friends were assured that both consuls were to remain in Italy because of the threat of an attack by the Celts, all the Greek envoys appeared before the Senate and stated their grievances against Philip in outspoken terms. In general their accusations dealt with the same matters as they had raised with the King at their previous meeting, but the point which they especially emphasised for the benefit of the Senate was that so long as the cities of Chalcis, Corinth and Demetrias remained under Macedonian rule, it was impossible for the Greeks to entertain any thought of liberty. When Philip himself described these places as 'the fetters of Greece', his words, the Greeks insisted, were only too true.

Negotiations with Philip V (at Nicaea, November 198 BC, and subsequently)

[…] Philip's representatives had prepared a lengthy statement in reply, but they were prevented at the very outset from delivering it; for when the question was put to them as to whether they would withdraw from Corinth, Chalcis and Demetrias they answered that they had no instructions on that subject.

[12] When Philip's delegates were cut short in this way, they made no further statement. Thereupon the Senate, as I have mentioned above, proceeded to dispatch both consuls to Gaul and voted to continue the war against Philip. At the same time they placed Flamininus in charge of affairs in Greece. These decisions were quickly reported there, so that the whole business turned out very much as Flamininus had wished. In the event chance had played only a very small part: the outcome was very largely due to his own skill and foresight in handling the problem. […].

Greece proclaimed free at the Isthmian Games of 196 BC

Polybius 18.46: By the time that these decisions had been taken the moment for the celebration of the Isthmian Games had arrived. The expectation of what would happen there had attracted men of the highest rank from almost every quarter of the civilized world, and all kinds of reports and speculations concerning the outcome circulated throughout the festival. … In the midst of this atmosphere of uncertainty, and at the moment when the crowd had assembled in the stadium to watch the games and the trumpeter had called for silence, the herald came forward and delivered the following proclamation: *'The Senate of Rome and Titus Quinctius Flamininus the proconsul, having defeated King Philip and the Macedonians in battle, leave the following states and cities free, without garrisons, subject to no tribute and in full enjoyment of their ancestral laws: the peoples of Corinth, Phocis, Locri, Euboea, Phthiotic Achaea, Magnesia, Thessaly and Perrhaebia.'*

At the very beginning of this announcement a deafening shout arose, so that some people never heard the proclamation at all, while others were anxious to hear it again. The greater part of the crowd could not believe their ears, for what had happened was so unexpected that it was as if they were listening to the words in a kind of dream. They clamoured and shouted, each of them moved perhaps by a different impulse, for the herald and the trumpeter to come forward into the middle of the stadium and repeat the proclamation; they wished, no doubt, not only to hear the speaker but to see him, so difficult did it seem to believe what he was saying. But when the herald came forward into the centre of the arena once more silenced the clamour with the help of his trumpeter, and read out exactly the same text, such a tremendous outburst of cheering arose that it is difficult for those who can only read of the event today to imagine how it sounded.

Gold Stater of T. Quinctius Flamininus, c. 196 BC

The Empire of Antiochus III, c. 200 BC

Aegean c. 200 BC

Relevant reading

- Badian, E. (1958), *Foreign Clientelae*, Oxford.

- Derow, P. S. (1989), 'Rome, the fall of Macedon and the sack of Corinth', in A. E. Astin, *et al*., eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History,* volume 8: Rome and Mediterranean to 133 B.C., second edition, Cambridge, 290-323.

- Errington, R. M. (1971), *The Dawn of Empire: Rome's Rise to World Power*, London. [principal thesis out-of-date; see Harris' *War and Imperialism*].

- Errington, R. M. (1989), 'Rome and Greece to 205 B.C.', in A. E. Astin, *et al*., eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History,* volume 8: Rome and Mediterranean to 133 B.C., second edition, Cambridge, 81-106.

- Errington, R. M. (1989), 'Rome against Philip and Antiochus', in A. E. Astin, *et al*., eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History,* volume 8: Rome and Mediterranean to 133 B.C., second edition, Cambridge, 244-289.

- Gruen, E. (1985), *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*, Berkeley.

- Scullard, H. H. (1980), *A History of the Roman World, 753 to 146 BC*, fourth edition, London.