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THE GRAND ARMY OF DEMETRIUS POLIORCETES

NEMANJA VUJČIĆ*

“After murdering Alexander IV, Demetrius was in 294 declared the king of Macedonia... He was now the most powerful ruler in the Aegean... He had an army that was greater than that of Philip II... His rule over Macedonia, nearly seven years long, is the single longest stretch of time he spent in one place. But even this time was used to prepare a new campaign with the intent of conquering the East. In all the shipyards... the vessels of an unprecedented size were constructed, five hundred warships in total...”¹ These words by Fanoula Papazoglou can serve as an excellent summary of the Plutarch’s account of Demetrius’ Macedonian years. Modern scholars have largely followed Plutarch’s version of these events: Demetrius became the king of Macedonia through violence and treachery, he was an intolerable neighbor to his fellow-kings and an unbearable ruler to his Macedonian subjects, and he was engaged in some grand military and naval projects, only to be cast out of Macedonia by a powerful coalition of Hellenistic rulers, an alliance not unlike the one that defeated his father, Antigonus the One-eyed, and carved up his short-lived Asian empire.² The most extraordinary claim made by Plutarch is the one concerning the size and strength of the forces Demetrius assembled during final years of his rule: an army of over one hundred thousand soldiers and a war fleet of five hundred ships. Not only was this a force larger than that of any Macedonian king before or after, it was also superior to that of Demetrius’ father at the peak of his power, when he ruled over an extensive and populous empire. It was “a force... the like of which no one had since Alexander.”³ These striking claims were surprisingly rarely contested by modern

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¹ F. Papazoglou, *Istorija helenizma: Vladavina Aleksandra Velikog. Doba dijadoha*, Beograd, 1995, pp. 219: “Demetrije je 294, pošto je ubio Aleksandra V, proglašen makedonskim kraljem... On je sada bio najmoćniji vladar u Egeji... Imao je vojsku veću od vojske Filipa II... Njegova skoro sedmogodišnja vladavina nad Makedonijom predstavlja najduži period koji je on proveo na jednom mestu. Pa i to vreme upotrebio je na pripremanje novog pohoda sanjajući o osvajanju Istoka. U svim brodogradilištima... građeni su brodovi kakvi ranije nisu viđeni, ukupno 500 lađa...”

² Plut. *Demet.* 36–45.

³ Plut. *Demet.* 44.1: Αἰρομένης οὖν τοσαύτης δυνάμεως ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν ὅσην μετ’ Ἀλέξανδρον οὐδεὶς ἔσχε πρότερον...

historians, in spite of many reasons to do so. Indeed, they are well integrated in the standard works on the period and are even occasionally used to support more general theories about the 3rd century BC Macedonian society and demography.

Plutarch makes these claims in his biographies of Demetrius and Pyrrhus. The main points of his account are: 1) Demetrius initiated an ambitious plan to regain the former empire of his father. 2) To this end, he gathered an army of 110,000 men and a built a fleet of 500 ships.⁴ 3) The army was actually assembled for battle (συνετέτακτο) and the construction of the fleet began in earnest (καταβαλλόμενος, “laid the keels for” in Perrin’s translation). 4) All this took place after the Pyrrhus’ abortive invasion of Macedonia in late 289 or early 288 BC. 5) Three kings, Seleucus, Ptolemy and Lysimachus, truly alarmed by the possibility of a large scale invasion by Demetrius, made an alliance against him.⁵ 6) Pyrrhus joined the coalition, in spite of a recent peace treaty with the king of Macedonia.⁶ 7) When the fighting began in earnest, the grand army was nowhere to be seen, not even as a partially assembled force: Demetrius was not strong enough to fight Lysimachus and Pyrrhus at the same time. In fact, even Pyrrhus alone proved too strong for him and he had serious issues with the loyalty of his soldiers. After some initial setbacks, Demetrius was abandoned by the bulk of his men and forced to flee.⁷

The essential information is provided in two places in Plutarch’s texts:

Plut. Demet. 43, 2–3:

Διανοεῖτο δὲ οὐθὲν ὀλίγον, ἀλλὰ πᾶσαν ἀναλαμβάνειν τὴν ὑπὸ τῷ πατρὶ γενομένην ἀρχήν. Καὶ τῆς ἐλπίδος ταύτης καὶ τῆς ἐπιβολῆς οὐκ ἀπελείπετο τὰ

⁴ Plut. *Demet.* 43.2–3; *Pyrrh.* 10.3. Both passages are quoted in full on the next page.

⁵ Plut. *Demet.* 44.1: ...οἱ τρεῖς συνέστησαν ἐπὶ τὸν Δημήτριον, Σέλευκος, Πτολεμαῖος, Λυσιμάχος; ἔπειτα κοινῇ πρὸς Πύρρον ἀποστείλαντες ἐκέλευον ἐξάπτεσθαι Μακεδονίας καὶ μὴ νομίζειν σπονδὰς αἷς Δημήτριος οὐκ ἐκείνῳ τὸ μὴ πολεμεῖσθαι δέδωκεν, ἀλλ’ εἴληφεν ἑαυτῷ τὸ πολεμεῖν οἷς βούλεται πρότερον. *Pyrrh.* 10.3–4: Γενομένων δὲ διὰ ταῦτα τῶν ὁμολογιῶν, καὶ τῆς γνώμης ἅμα τῷ μεγέθει τῆς παρασκευῆς ἐκφανείσης τοῦ Δημητρίου, φοβηθέντες οἱ βασιλεῖς διεπέμποντο πρὸς τὸν Πύρρον ἀγγέλους καὶ γράμματα, θαυμάζειν φάσκοντες εἰ τὸν αὐτοῦ προέμενος καιρόν, ἐν τῷ Δημητρίου πολεμῆσαι περιμένει.

⁶ Plut. *Pyrrh.* 11.1: Ταῦτα πρὸς τὸν Πύρρον οἱ βασιλεῖς... Πύρρος δὲ τούτοις ἅμα συνεξαναστάς ἐπὶ Βέροιαν ἤλαυνε, προσδοκῶν, ὅπερ συνέβη, Δημήτριον ὑπαντιάζοντα Λυσιμάχῳ τὴν κάτω χώραν ἀπολείπειν ἔρημον.

⁷ Plut. *Demet.* 44.2–6 (cf. 44.6: Τέλος δὲ τῷ Δημητρίῳ τολμήσαντές τινες προσελθεῖν ἐκέλευον ἀπιέναι καὶ σώζειν αὐτόν: ἀπειρηκέναι γὰρ ἤδη Μακεδόνας ὑπὲρ τῆς ἐκείνου τρυφῆς πολεμοῦντας. Οὗτοι μετριώτατοι τῶν λόγων ἐφάινοντο τῷ Δημητρίῳ πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἄλλων τραχύτητα: καὶ παρελθὼν ἐπὶ σκιρῆν, ὥσπερ οὐ βασιλεὺς, ἀλλ’ ὑποκριτῆς, μεταμφιέννυται γλαμύδα φαίαν ἀντὶ τῆς τραγικῆς ἐκείνης, καὶ διαλαθὼν ὑπεχώρησεν.); *Pyrrh.* 11.1–6 (cf. 11.6: Ἐδὴ δὲ καὶ πρὸς αὐτόν τινες ἐτόλμων λέγειν τὸν Δημήτριον ὡς ὑπεκστάς καὶ προέμενος τὰ πράγματα καλῶς δόξει βεβουλεῦσθαι. Τούτοις τοῖς λόγοις ὅμοιον ὁρῶν τὸ κίνημα τοῦ στρατοπέδου καὶ φοβηθεὶς κρύφα διεξέπεσε, καυσία τινὶ καὶ λιτῷ γλαμυδίῳ περιστείλας ἑαυτόν, ἐπελθὼν δὲ ὁ Πύρρος ἀμαχεῖ παρέλαβε τὸ στρατόπεδον καὶ βασιλεὺς ἀνηγορεύθη Μακεδόνων.).

τῆς παρασκευῆς, ἀλλὰ στρατιᾶς μὲν ἤδη συνετέτακτο πεζῆς μυριάδας δέκα δισχιλίων ἀνδρῶν ἀποδεούσας, καὶ χωρὶς ἰππέας ὀλίγω δισχιλίων καὶ μυρίων ἐλάττους. Στόλον δὲ νεῶν ἅμα πεντακοσίων καταβαλλόμενος τὰς μὲν ἐν Πειραιεῖ τρόπεις ἔθετο, τὰς δὲ ἐν Κορίνθῳ, τὰς δὲ ἐν Χαλκίδι, τὰς δὲ περὶ Πέλλαν, αὐτὸς ἐπιῶν ἐκασταχόσε καὶ διδάσκων ἅ χρῆ καὶ συντεχνώμενος, ἐκπληττομένων ἀπάντων οὐ τὰ πλήθη μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ μεγέθη τῶν ἔργων.

And his purpose was nothing less than the recovery of the realm that had been subject to his father. Moreover, his preparations were fully commensurate with his hopes and undertakings. He had already gathered an army which numbered *ninety-eight thousand foot*, and besides, *nearly twelve thousand horsemen*. At the same time, moreover, he had laid the keels for a *fleet of five hundred ships*, some of which were in Piraeus, some at Corinth, some at Chalics and some at Pella. And he would visit all these places in person, showing what was to be done and aiding in the plans, while all men wondered not only at the multitude, but also at the magnitude of the works. (my italics, English trans. by B. Perrin)

And Plut. *Pyrrh.* 10, 3:

Οὐ μὴν ὄτι ῥαδίως καὶ ταχὺ τὸν Πύρρον ἐξέβαλε τῆς χώρας ὁ Δημήτριος ἠμέλησεν, ἐγνωκὼς δὲ μεγάλων πραγμάτων ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι καὶ τὴν πατρῶαν ἀρχὴν ἀνακτᾶσθαι **δέκα μυριάσι στρατοῦ καὶ ναυσὶ πεντακοσίαις**, οὐκ ἐβούλετο τῷ Πύρρῳ προσπταῖσαι, οὐδὲ ἀπολιπεῖν Μακεδόσι πάροικον ἐργώδη καὶ χαλεπὸν, ἀλλ', ἐπεὶ μὴ ἐσχόλαζε πολεμεῖν πρὸς αὐτόν, διαλυθεὶς καὶ θέμενος εἰρήνην οὕτως ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄλλους βασιλεῖς τραπέσθαι.

However, because Demetrius had easily and speedily driven Pyrrhus out of the country, he did not leave him to his own devices, but now that he had determined to undertake a great enterprise and to recover his father's realm with a *hundred thousand soldiers and five hundred ships*, he did not wish to have collisions with Pyrrhus, nor yet to leave behind in him an enterprising and troublesome neighbour for the Macedonians. He wished, rather, since he had no time to wage war against Pyrrhus, to come to terms and make peace with him, and then turn his arms against the other kings. (my italics, English trans. by B. Perrin)

Several ancient authors speak of these events, but the outstanding claims about Demetrius' forces are found exclusively in Plutarch. They are not directly corroborated by any other source and even convincing implicit confirmations are lacking.⁸ In the account of Pausanias there are no allusions either to the military preparations or to the coalition mentioned by Plutarch and other sources. Demetrius was attacked by Lysimachus, whom he managed to beat soundly near Amphipolis, but then Pyrrhus joined the war and the outcome was reversed.⁹

⁸ For an attempt to use Demetrius' coinage as indirect proof, see n. 37.

⁹ Paus. 1.10.1–2: **1** Λυσιμάχῳ δὲ ἐπὶ μὲν Ἀριδαίου βασιλεύοντος καὶ ὕστερον Κασσάνδρου καὶ τῶν παίδων φιλία διέμεινε πρὸς Μακεδόνας: περιελθούσης δὲ ἐς

Justin states that Demetrius had plans for a campaign in Asia and “the full power of Macedonia behind him”, but no mention whatsoever is made of the exceptional size of his army and fleet. The other kings formed an alliance against him, aware that power lies in concord. In spite of this, it was Pyrrhus alone that expelled Demetrius from Macedonia, an accomplishment just as quick and easy as Demetrius’ ascension to the throne.¹⁰ According to Orosius’ brief sketch of these events, Demetrius, elevated by his conquests in Europe, sought to expand into Asia. The coalition was formed against him, he was abandoned by his army and fled, and only after this did Pyrrhus invade Macedonia and took the throne.¹¹ Cicero mentions that Macedonians abandoned Demetrius and turned to Pyrrhus.¹² There is perhaps an allusion to these events in Polyaeus, but it is of little use for the present discussion.¹³

In spite of many possible objections against them, Plutarch’s figures for the army of Demetrius were rarely contested by scholars. This was not always the case: the opinions of the early historians of the Hellenistic world were divided on this issue.¹⁴ However, in his 1913 monograph on Antigonos Gonatas, Tarn

Δημήτριον τὸν Ἀντιγόνου τῆς ἀρχῆς, ἐνταῦθα ἤδη Λυσιμάχος πολεμήσεσθαι ἤλπιζεν ὑπὸ Δημητρίου καὶ αὐτὸς ἄρχειν ἡξίου πολέμου, πατρῶον ἐπιστάμενος ὃν Δημητρίῳ προσπεριβάλλεσθαι τι ἐθέλειν καὶ ἅμα ὁρῶν αὐτὸν παρελθόντα ἐς Μακεδονίαν μετὰπεμπτον ὑπὸ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Κασσάνδρου, ὡς δὲ ἀφίκετο, αὐτὸν τε Ἀλέξανδρον φονεύσαντα καὶ ἔχοντα ἀντ’ ἐκείνου τὴν Μακεδόνων ἀρχὴν. **2** Τούτων ἕνεκα Δημητρίῳ συμβαλὼν πρὸς Ἀμφιπόλει παρ’ ὀλίγον μὲν ἦλθεν ἐκπεσεῖν Θράκης, ἀμύναντος δὲ οἱ Πύρρου τὴν τε Θράκην κατέσχε καὶ ὕστερον ἐπῆρξε Νεστίων καὶ Μακεδόνων: τὸ δὲ πολὺ Μακεδονίας αὐτὸς Πύρρος κατεῖχε, δυνάμει τε ἤκων ἐξ Ἡπείρου καὶ πρὸς Λυσιμάχον ἐν τῷ παρόντι ἔχων ἐπιτηδείως.

¹⁰ Just. 16. 2. 1–3: “**1** Igitur Demetrius totis Macedonici regni viribus instructus cum Asiam occupare stauisset, iterato Ptolomeus, Seleucus et Lysimachus, experti priore certamine, quantae vires essent concordiae, pacta societate adunatisque exercitibus bellum adversus Demetrium transferunt in Europam. **2** His comitem se et belli socium iungit Pyrrus, rex Epiri, sperans non difficilium Demetrium amittere Macedoniam posse quam adquisierat. **3** Nec spes frustra fuit quippe exercitu eius corrupto ipsoque in fugam acto regnum Macedoniae occupavit.”

¹¹ Oros. 3.23. 53–55: “Demetrius augmento Graeciae et totius Macedoniae elatus, in Asiam transire disponit. **54** Ptolemaeus autem et Seleucus et Lysimachus experti priore certamine, quantae vires essent concordiae, iterum societate pacta adunatisque exercitibus, bellum in Europam transferunt adversus Demetrium. **55** His se comitem et belli socium Pyrrhus rex Epiri iungit, sperans Demetrium Macedonia posse depelli. nec spes frustra fuit: quippe exercitu eius corrupto ipsoque in fugam acto, regnum Macedoniae Pyrrhus invasit.”

¹² Cic. *De Off.* 2.7 (26): “Quid? Macedones nonne Demetrium reliquerunt universique se ad Pyrrhum contulerunt?”

¹³ Polyaeus. 4.12. 2 recounts that Lysimachus took Amphipolis from Demetrius thanks to the treachery of one Andragathus, whom he bribed. The traitor, lulled by the false promises of future rewards in the king’s service, was soon stripped of his prize, tortured and executed. It is unclear, however, whether the capture of Amphipolis took place before or after Demetrius marched off to confront Pyrrhus.

¹⁴ Droysen accepted Plutarch’s figures at face value (J. G. Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus II: Geschichte der Diadochen*, Basel, 1952, p. 399). According to

wrote a lengthy discussion of Poliorcetes' military resources in which he vindicated Plutarch's claims. I shall examine his arguments presently. Later historians mostly followed Tarn, Wilhelm Fellmann and Pierre Lévêque being among the few who had any misgivings.¹⁵ The list of those that accept Plutarch's claim (and Tarn's interpretation) is infinitely longer and it incorporates many major historians of the Hellenistic age, including Fanoula Papazoglou herself.¹⁶ The historicity of these claims is commonly accepted without debate. If any doubts are raised, they are usually removed simply by referring to Tarn.¹⁷

Let us then consider B. Niese and W. W. Tarn. In the main text of his *Geschichte der griechischen und makedonischen Staaten seit der Schlacht bei*

Beloch, Demetrius's plans for the invasion of Asia were not based on any numerical superiority but on the firm belief in the higher military qualities of European levies, that were expected to compensate for the greater manpower and wealth of his adversaries (cf. J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte* III–I, Strassburg, 1904, p. 236; id., *Griechische Geschichte*² IV–1, Berlin–Leipzig, 1925, p. 228–229). Beloch omitted Plutarch's figures for the army of Demetrius from his discussion of the population of the ancient Macedonia, discussion largely based on the size of the Macedonian citizen-army (see. n. 74). Benedikt Niese expressed some very cautious reservations (see n. 18).

¹⁵ W. Fellman, *Antigonos Gonatas, König der Makedonen, und die Griechischen Staaten*, Inaug. Diss., Würzburg, 1930, pp. 17–18; P. Lévêque, *Pyrrhos*, Paris, 1957, p. 151. Fellmann's objections were noted but not accepted by É. Will, *The Formation of the Hellenistic Kingdoms*, *CAH* VII–1², Cambridge, 1984, p. 108, n. 26.

¹⁶ Among others: C. F. Edson, *The Antigonids, Heracles, and Beroea*, *HSCPh* 45 (1934), pp. 242–243; M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World I*, Oxford, 1941, p. 20; E. Manni, *Demetrio Poliorcete*, Roma, 1951, pp. 56–57; M. Cary, *A History of the Greek World from 323 to 146 B.C.*, London, 1963, p. 49; C. Wehrli, *Antigone et Démétrios*, Genève, 1968, p. 182; H. Bengston, *Herrschergestalten des Hellenismus*, München, 1975, p. 82; T. L. Shear, *Kallias of Sphettos and the Revolt of Athens in 286 B. C.*, *Hesperia Supplements* 17, Princeton, 1978, pp. 61–62; K. Buraselis, *Das hellenistische Makedonien und die Ägäis*, München, 1982, pp. 89–90; É. Will, op. cit., p. 108; N. G. L. Hammond, F. W. Walbank, *A History of Macedonia III: 336–167 B.C.*, Oxford, 1988, p. 226; R. M. Errington, *A History of Macedonia*, Berkley–Los Angeles–Oxford, 1990, pp. 152–154 (cf. id., *A History of the Hellenistic World 323–30 BC*, Oxford, 2008, p. 58); P. Green, *Alexander to Actium: the Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age*, Berkley–Los Angeles, 1990, p. 127; F. Papazoglou, *Istorija helenizma: Vladavina Aleksandra Velikog. Doba dijadoha*, Beograd, 1995, p. 219; Ch. Habicht, *Athens from Alexander to Antony*, Cambridge MA, 1997, p. 95; J. J. Gabbert, *Antigonos II Gonatas*, London–New York, 1997, pp. 16–17; F. Chamoux, *Hellenistic Civilization*, Oxford, 2003, p. 60.

¹⁷ Cf. C. Wehrli, loc. cit.: “Durant l'hiver 289/288, Démétrios réunit une armée et une flotte considérables. Plutarque nous apprend que le Poliorcète leva quatre-vingt-dix-huit mille fantassins et douze mille cavaliers ; dans les chantiers navals du Pirée, de Corinthe, de Chalcis et des environs de Pella cinq cents vaisseaux étaient en construction. Les effectifs donnés par Plutarque sont-ils exagérés? Non, si l'on tient compte des mercenaires, des pirates et des garnisons (Cf. W.W. Tarn, *Antigonos Gonatas*, 70...)” Or, for example N. G. L. Hammond, op. cit., 226, n. 2: “The number of troops (rounded off in *PPyrhh* 10.3) need not be regarded as exaggerated, if they included garrison troops and mercenaries (Niese I. 174; Tarn, *AG* 71 n. 42).”

Chaeronea, Niese simply paraphrased Plutarch's words. However, in a footnote he expressed a doubt on whether the alleged army was ever actually assembled: perhaps we are merely dealing with a theoretical maximum?¹⁸ Tarn developed this idea, analyzing Demetrius forces and the truth behind Plutarch's claims in the better part of the two chapters: it remains the longest discussion of this problem by far, as well as the most influential. His main conclusion was that "It is not to be supposed that he could have put anything like the whole into the field as an army".¹⁹ According to Tarn, the figures given by Plutarch were "paper totals", a theoretical maximal levy that was never (and presumably could never) be brought to bear as a single, functional army. Still, they offered a scale of the vast resources that Demetrius supposedly could draw upon.²⁰ This restriction aside, Tarn considered Plutarch's figures to be roughly correct and even made an attempt to verify them and to explore what contingents made up this grand army.

Tarn tested Plutarch's numbers against various military figures given by other ancient sources. The methodology employed in this attempt had numerous flaws: he assumed that Demetrius could (at least theoretically) count on the full manpower of any region occupied by his forces or even those regions merely under his influence. Thus, barely conquered and extremely discontent Boeotia was on the list, as well as the Peloponnesian cities ruled by the pro-Macedonian tyrants, and the various allied Greek cities and islands. The three years Poliorcetes spent in conquering and reconquering Boeotia were explained by his intention to pacify the region in order to mobilize at least 10,000 Boeotian hoplites for his presumed Asian campaign. Furthermore, in order to obtain necessary numbers, Tarn used chronologically dispersed evidence, extending from 5th to 2nd century BC. One of the assumptions was that the Peloponnese and Boeotia in the 3rd century BC had the same population and the military resources as in the 5th century.

The general composition of the army according to Tarn was this:²¹

¹⁸ Cf. B. Niese, *Geschichte der griechischen und makedonischen Staaten seit der Schlacht bei Chaeronea*, Gota, 1893, I, p. 374, n. 5: „Diese ganze Zahl ist nicht als ein stehendes Heer aufzufassen, das Demetrios unterhielt, sondern als die Summe der Truppen, auf die er bei Beginn des Feldzuges rechnete. Ein großer Teil davon, z. B. das makedonische Aufgebot, sollte erst beim Beginne des Feldzuges versammelt werden.“

¹⁹ W. W. Tarn, *Antigonos Gonatas*, Oxford, 1913, p. 70.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 50: "Demetrios had at this time, to outward seeming, the strongest power in the world, or at any rate the world east of the Adriatic." and p. 70–71: "It is not to be supposed that he could have put anything like the whole into the field as an army; but what it does mean is that he disposed of resources which, compared with those of any other single state, were very great indeed... Demetrios had easily the greatest power in the Greek-speaking world."

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 67–71, cf. pp. 424–426.

Region	Approximate max. mil. potential	Mercenaries and pirates
Macedonia and Thessaly	30–35,000	
Boeotia	10–11,000	
The rest of Central Greece	7–9,000	
Peloponnese	16–17,000	
Citizen-soldiers total	63–72,000	
		ca. 40–50,000
Grand total	ca. 110,000	

The proposed numbers of citizen-soldiers reach just above the half of the Plutarch's totals. Even if the highest numbers are accepted there is still a gap of nearly 40,000 men. Tarn's answer was to add Demetrius' "garrisons, his mercenaries, and perhaps even his allies the pirates."²² Obviously, 40 or 50 thousand of mercenaries could only be a conjured-up figure, made up with the purpose to fill an enormous gap. Again, this would be an unprecedented mercenary force, and even if we consign half of that to garrisons, what remains is still the largest mercenary army in the history of the ancient Macedonia.²³ The notion of thousands or tens of thousands of pirates made into foot soldiers doesn't deserve to be considered seriously.²⁴ It is worth noting

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71, n. 92.

²³ However, on p. 64 Tarn recons that ca. 20,000 soldiers was the total mercenary force of Demetrius "locked up in garrisons, especially in Greece and on his western and northern frontiers." A recent archaeological find, in the vicinity of Staro Bonče, near Prilep, provides further proof for the presence of Demetrius' troops (mercenaries?) on the northern frontiers of his kingdom: three shields inscribed with the name of a king Demetrius (βασιλέως Δημητρίου). Presumably this is Poliorcetes, because the ancient settlement at Staro Bonče seems to be permanently abandoned during the Celtic invasion; cf. P. Juhel, D. Temelkoski, *Fragments de « boucliers macédoniens » au nom du roi Démétrios*, *ZPE* 162, 2007, pp. 165–180.

²⁴ Tarn placed significant weight on Diod. 20.110.4 where the composition is given of the Demetrius' army in Greece in the 302 BC campaign, including ψιλικά δὲ τάγματα καὶ πειρατῶν παντοδαπῶν τῶν συντρεχόντων ἐπὶ τοὺς πολέμους καὶ τὰς ἀρπαγὰς οὐκ ἐλάττους τῶν ὀκτακισχιλίων ("...a body of lightly armored troops and pirates of every kind, gathered for war and plunder, no fewer than eight thousand.", my translation). To him, this was a proof that Demetrius used pirates not only as naval allies, but as foot soldiers as well, and that he probably continued to do so during his years in Macedonia; cf. Tarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 86 ("8,000 pirates formed part of the army with which, in 302, he invaded Thessaly"), 88 ("the pirates... furnished Demetrius with ships against Rhodes and troops against Kassandros... For pirates could be capable allies on occasion, and one had not to be too particular as to what percentage of loss fell on them."), 425 ("Demetrius in 302 had 15,000 mercenaries (Diod. 20, 110, 4), besides 'pirates', if the figures are trustworthy.") etc. Too much here is inferred from a single word. These πειραταὶ mentioned by Diodorus should probably be understood as "brigands", or "rogues" i.e. inexpensive and undisciplined irregular troops of some kind, and not as actual pirates.

that in Tarn's calculation, the Macedonians apparently comprise less than one-fifth of the whole force.²⁵

As far as the ships were concerned, Tarn believed that Demetrius preserved the bulk of his father's war fleet, augmented with the Cassander's former fleet and with the Athenian ships, i.e. 300 ships or more in total, *in addition* to the 500 he began to construct.²⁶ This invokes a question of just how much manpower is required to operate a fleet of 500 (let alone 800) ships on its own, taking into account the claim that new ships were of exceptional size? The answer must be in hundreds of thousands. Of course, Tarn was fully aware of these difficulties. His solution to the problem was that the manpower of Demetrius's land and naval forces actually overlapped to a significant degree.²⁷ But this hardly solved anything, given that both numbers (overlapped or not) are each on their own quite impossible.

Tarn stood by his initial conclusions about the forces of Demetrius and kept repeating them in his later publication.²⁸ In spite of the various flaws and some serious contradictions,²⁹ his "solution" was accepted by the majority of modern scholars. His cautionary remark about "paper totals" was often neglected and his discussion was used to support Plutarch's claim of an actual army that was assembled, or at least would have been, if Demetrius had been given more time. And even more than that: Tarn's conclusions were sometimes utilized to determine the size of

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 64: "Macedonia was thinly populated, and had never been able to raise field armies in proportion to its size; still less could it do so now, with provinces shorn away, exhausted by many wars, and terribly in need of time to recuperate." It is reasonable to assume that, if the combined strength of Macedonian and Thessalian levies was between 30 and 35,000, the effective manpower of Macedonia alone could not have been much more than 20,000, i.e. 18–19% of the entire force.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 81–84. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 83: "When to it were added what remained of the fleets of Kassandros and Athens, Demetrios as king of Macedonia may well have again controlled 300 warships, an overwhelming force." Cf. *ibid.*, p. 84: "No other organized state, save Egypt, was ever in position to think of challenging Demetrios at sea, no other state had a fleet of the first class."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 84: "One note of caution, however, must be sounded, in an estimate of Demetrios' strength. His total force cannot be ascertained by adding together the army and the fleet, for they overlap to an unknown extent. To get to see a fleet of 200 large warships, properly equipped with fighting-men, entailed a considerable drain on the land forces; and no power in the third century except Rome was ever able to put out its full strength on land and sea at the same time." But cf. *ibid.*, 83: "Demetrios, in number of vessels, was distinctively more powerful *on paper* than Rome ever was in the third century." (my italics).

²⁸ Cf. W. W. Tarn, *The New Hellenistic Kingdoms*, in: *CAH VII*, Cambridge, 1954, pp. 84–85; *id.*, *Hellenistic Military and Naval Developments*, Cambridge, 1930, p. 143; *id.*, G. T. Griffith, *Hellenistic Civilization*, London, 1952, pp. 11–12.

²⁹ Cf. W. W. Tarn, *Antigonos Gonatas*, p. 65: "Demetrios could put into the field at most about 30,000–35,000 men." On page 64 the effective totals of Demetrios are counted differently reaching only to about 55,000 (35,000 citizen levies + 20,000 mercenaries).

the population of Macedonia in the early 3rd century BC, often with supposition that majority of one hundred thousand soldiers were native Macedonians. Furthermore, they were used as an argument to downplay the effects of Alexander's conquest and the wars of the *diadochi* on the Macedonian population.

In 1986 Albert B. Bosworth published an article in which he claimed that conquest and colonization of Asia by Alexander had disastrous demographic consequences for the Macedonian homeland.³⁰ It initiated a fierce debate in which figures given by Plutarch were occasionally used as hard arguments.³¹ To mention just one contribution to this debate (although the most extravagant by far), in his book on Macedonian imperialism, Richard A. Billows made extremely high assessments of the total demographic potential of the ancient Macedonia, so high in fact that he felt justified to conclude that the wars of Alexander and his generals made no impact on the population of the Macedonian homeland.³² His estimates of the population of 4th and 3rd century Macedonia proper go as high as 1,5 million inhabitants (ca. 47 per sq. km).³³ To reach such a high estimate, Billows utilized the late 19th and early 20th century census figures.³⁴ Using 19th century data to establish ancient population figures is not a new idea, but nowadays is rightly criticized.³⁵ The single ancient proof for this extreme assessment was found in the

³⁰ A. B. Bosworth, *Alexander the Great and the Decline of Macedon*, *JHS* 106 (1986), pp. 1–12.

³¹ N. G. L. Hammond, *Casualties and Reinforcements of Citizen Soldiers in Greece and Macedonia*, *JHS*, 109 (1989), 66–68 (cf. id., F. W. Walbank, *A History of Macedonia III: 336-167 B.C.*, Oxford, 1988, pp. 187–192 and id., *The Macedonian State: Origins, Institutions and History*, Oxford 1989, pp. 134–135); E. Badian, *Agis III: revisions and reflections*, in: I. Worthington (ed.), *Ventures into Greek History*, Oxford 1994, pp. 261–268; R. A. Billows, *Kings & Colonists: Aspects of Macedonian Imperialism*, Leiden – New York – Köln, 1995, 183–212. Bosworth acknowledged some of the criticism but maintained the essence of his original conclusion: A. B. Bosworth, *The Legacy of Alexander: Politics, Warfare, and Propaganda under the Successors*, Oxford 2002, pp. 64–97 (“Macedonian Numbers at the Death of Alexander”).

³² Cf. R. A. Billows, op. cit., p. 196: “It remains to determine how seriously this loss of manpower will have affected Macedonia demographically. The answer, I would guess, is very little.”

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 202–205.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 202: “...I suggest that the conditions of life in the late 19th century Macedonia were not widely different from those in the second half of the 4th century BCE... In one respect, indeed, 4th century Macedonia will have been much better off: Philip has established peace and security in Macedonia by 350, but in the late 19th century Macedonia was convulsed by unsuccessful attempts to overthrow Turkish rule...” (my italics). Two references are given to support these strong claims, one on Macedonian liberation movement of 1890s and one on brigandage in the 19th century Greece.

³⁵ M. H. Hansen, *The Shotgun Method: The Demography of the Ancient Greek City-State Culture*, Columbia MI, 2006, 87–91; cf. 91: “The inevitable conclusion is that population figures of the late nineteenth century cannot be used as a yardstick for the size of the population in the classical period...”

Plutarch's claims about size of Demetrius' army. "*In fact we know that as late as ca. 288 Macedonia was a military power on a level with what it had been in the days of Philip and Alexander: at that time (288) Demetrios Poliorketes... is said to have brought together an army of 98,000 infantry and nearly 12,000 cavalry. Even allowing for possibility of exaggeration by Plutarch or his source... the mobilization of a force on this scale makes it clear in my view that Macedonia was not notably weaker in the 280s than it had been in the 330s.*" (my italics).³⁶

There are several ways in which the claims of Plutarch can be scrutinized, and here I will enlarge on some of them. Two most obvious points are:

1. The claims are made solely by Plutarch and lack any corroboration;³⁷ and
2. The grand land and naval forces of Demetrius disappear from the story almost as soon as they are mentioned. In the struggle that follows Demetrius is inferior to his enemies on land and sea. He is hesitant to engage either Lysimachus or Pyrrhus, and his supposedly larger fleet did nothing to prevent Ptolemaic ships in bringing aid to Athens.³⁸

³⁶ R. A. Billows, op. cit., p. 209. In the footnote n. 55 he adds: "Though the numbers reported by Plutarch seem suspiciously large, it is worth noting three things in their favor: Plutarch himself notes that it was an exceptionally large force; the force was large enough to alarm Seleukos, Lysimachos, Ptolemy, and Pyrrhos into making a common alliance against Demetrios (Plut. *Demet.* 44.1); and a plausible source for passage in Plutarch is Hieronymos of Kardia, a contemporary historian usually regarded as reliable." Clearly, this is a circular argument: Plutarch is used to validate Plutarch, one unlikely claim is supported using another with the addition of some unproven assumptions.

³⁷ It has been suggested by E. T. Newell that Demetrius' Macedonian coinage offers indirect evidence for the great military and naval preparations, and that the Series VI of his coinage (dated by Newell between circa 289 and the autumn of 288) is created to facilitate these preparations (E. T. Newell, *The Coinages of Demetrius Poliorketes*, Chicago 1978, pp. 96–100; originally published in 1927). His arguments for this claim are: 1) the overall quality of these issues fluctuates widely (*Ibid.*, p. 98: "The workmanship appears ordinary and perfunctory, and frequency shows evident signs of haste and carelessness. This might well be expected at a time when preparations were being rushed to raise the enormous army and navy..."); 2) the Series VI is Demetrius' largest Macedonian issue, judging by the number of surviving specimens. Newell's interpretation was generally accepted by the later scholars (cf. N. G. L. Hammond, F. W. Walbank, *A History of Macedonia III: 336–167 B.C.*, Oxford, 1988, pp. 226–227; O. Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage from the Accession of Alexander to the Peace of Apamea (336–188 B.C.)*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 80), although his dating of the individual series and their attribution to the specific mints is disputed. However, the very idea that there is any simple correlation between the output of ancient mints and the military preparations of the state that controls the mints is seriously questioned today. If such correlation existed and the Plutarch's claims were genuine, the issues of Demetrius ought to dwarf the coinage of any other Macedonian king, Philip and Alexander included. This, of course, is not the case. While the Series VI is large *relatively speaking*, i.e. when compared to the individual previous issues of Demetrius, it is not particularly large on its own: only 18 specimens of Series VI tetradrachms were known at the time Newell wrote, against 52 specimens of the previous issues combined (see E. T. Newell, op. cit., p. 100).

³⁸ *IG II*³, 1, ll. 18–23; cf. T. L. Shear, op. cit., pp. 17–19.

3. Demetrius' hesitation and the defeatism of his soldiers are difficult to explain if he was actually military superior to his enemies. According to Plutarch, the attitude of Demetrius' soldiers is what led to his fall. At the critical moment, his army choose to abandon him in favor of Pyrrhus. This is one of more peculiar places in the Plutarch's text. As an explanation for the widening gap between Demetrius and his citizen-army (and Macedonian people in general), we are presented with several anecdotes that emphasize his "Oriental" ways. We read that Demetrius was given to luxury and pomp, that he was extravagant and unpredictable, also harsh to his people and difficult to access,³⁹ while Pyrrhus was admired, in spite of the fact that he killed many Macedonians in battle.⁴⁰ Hate for Demetrius, admiration for Pyrrhus, combined with the news of Epirote's initial success (he took Beroea) is what made the soldiers switch sides.⁴¹ When reading this, we should keep in mind that Macedonian soldiers did follow Demetrius during an eventful period of seven years, regardless of his luxurious life-style and the offensive behavior. While he was successful, there seems to have been no question of the loyalty of his troops. It should also be noted that Plutarch contradicts himself when describing the reasons for subsequent Pyrrhus' withdrawal from Macedonia. Suddenly, Pyrrhus himself is not admired but hated as a foreigner, there is a deep mistrust between him and his Macedonian subjects, which is utilized by Lysimachus.⁴² Essentially, the story of Demetrius' fall is retold with a different protagonist.

A simpler explanation would be that soldiers lost confidence in the king's leadership, that they were aware of the superior strength of the enemy and the military unsullied reputations of Pyrrhus and Lysimachus. Demetrius' reputation, on the other hand, was of late seriously tarnished. A general of his lost his own life and a large part of the army in Aetolia in 289 BC, while Demetrius himself refused to give battle to victorious Pyrrhus and his allies.⁴³ Following that, Pyrrhus invaded Macedonia twice in less than two years.⁴⁴ His soldiers may have simply decided to join the winning side. However, situation like that is hardly compatible with the existence of an army of one hundred thousand men. Even if only partially assembled such army would enable Demetrius to engage either one (or both) of his enemies with confidence, but this obviously was not the case.

4. Exceptionally high military or population figures found in ancient texts warrant suspicion on their own. As a rule, historians are sceptical of such numbers supplied by the ancient authors. And for good reasons: classical writers make frequent mistakes in this regard, exaggerations are quite common, and even direct fabrications are not unknown. Nowadays few scholars would seriously consider hundreds of thousands or even millions of soldiers in the armies of Per-

³⁹ Plut. *Demet.* 41.4–42.3.

⁴⁰ Plut. *Demet.* 41.3.

⁴¹ Plut. *Demet.* 44.2–7.

⁴² Plut. *Pyrrh.* 12.1; 12.6–7.

⁴³ Plut. *Demet.* 41.1–3

⁴⁴ Plut. *Demet.* 43.1; 44.2–3.

sian kings, claimed by Herodotus,⁴⁵ Xenophon⁴⁶ and various Alexander historians.⁴⁷ Similar examples abound. Plutarch's military figures were regularly subjected to the same scrutiny and often found untrustworthy. Persian forces left behind to fight the battle of Plataea, Plutarch sets at 300,000 soldiers.⁴⁸ According to him, Persian army at Issus had half a million soldiers, that at Arbela a full million.⁴⁹ He repeats Xenophon's claim of 900,000 soldiers of Artaxerxes at Cunaxa.⁵⁰ Artaxerxes supposedly led 300,000 footmen and ten thousand horsemen against Cadusians.⁵¹ At the outset of the Gallic wars, Helvetii and their allies are said to confront Caesar with 190,000 warriors.⁵² Six years later, Plutarch tells us, Caesar was besieging a Gallic army of 170,000 men in Alesia, while simultaneously fighting a relief force of another 300,000.⁵³ The hosts of Teutons and Cimbri beaten by Marius purportedly had 300,000 fighting men.⁵⁴ The number of soldiers Mithridates lost in the campaign against Cyzicus is, once again, 300,000.⁵⁵ Apart from such absurdly high numbers, there are many lesser exaggerations. Mago's army that attacked Syracuse in 343 BC is said to have 60,000 infantrymen that disembarked from 150 ships.⁵⁶ They were soon defeated by an army ten times smaller. Carthaginian army engaged in the battle of Crimissus in 339 BC is alleged to have 70,000 men. However, it was routed by a force of only 6,000 soldiers.⁵⁷ The strength of Pelopidas army invading Peloponnesus in 370 BC is given at 70,000 etc.⁵⁸

It should be understood that I am not implying that any of these figures were made up by Plutarch (though mistakes on his part in understanding his sources can never be excluded), but I do think that he was willing to believe any numbers found in his sources, no matter how unreasonable they might seem. Furthermore,

⁴⁵ Hdt. 7.60; 7.87; 7.228.

⁴⁶ Xen. *Anab.* 1.7.12 (900,000 soldiers in the Artaxerxes' army at Cunaxa).

⁴⁷ Cf. Arr. *Anab.* 2.8.8 (six hundred thousand Persian soldiers in the battle of Issus); 3.8.6 (million and forty thousand at Gaugamela); Diod. 18.31.2 (half a million at Issus); 18.39.4 and 18.53.3 (million at Arbela). Justin supplies similar numbers for Persian army at Issus (11.9.1) and Gaugamela (11.12.5) – half a million total. Curt. 4.12.13 gives less incredible but still inflated number (245,000 soldiers at Arbela).

⁴⁸ Plut. *Arist.* 10.1 (cf. 19.4). In this case, his source is Herodotus.

⁴⁹ Plut. *Alex.* 18.4; 31.1. Cf. the previous note.

⁵⁰ Plut. *Artax.* 7.3.

⁵¹ Plut. *Artax.* 24.1.

⁵² Plut. *Caes.* 18.1.

⁵³ Plut. *Caes.* 27.2. Even the numbers supplied by Caesar himself, although completely unrealistic in themselves, are lower than those of Plutarch (*Caes. De Bel. Gal.* 7.76).

⁵⁴ Plut. *Mari.* 11.2.

⁵⁵ Plut. *Luc.* 11.6.

⁵⁶ Plut. *Timol.* 17.2.

⁵⁷ Plut. *Timol.* 25.1–3.

⁵⁸ Plut. *Pelop.* 24.2; *Agesil.* 31.1.

when rounded off slightly, the numbers Plutarch gives for Demetrius' forces are suspiciously typical: roughly one hundred thousand footmen and ten thousand horsemen. Such ideal figures (as well as the perfect ten to one ratio between infantry and cavalry) are commonplace in the ancient literature and also not uncommon in the writings of Plutarch. The army of Mithridates that invaded Greece (supposedly, only one of several the king had) is credited with exactly a hundred thousand footmen and ten thousand horsemen.⁵⁹ The same number (without the cavalry) is reported for an army of the Egyptian usurper in 360 BC.⁶⁰ Curiously, in the companion biography to that of Demetrius, Plutarch credits Marcus Antonius with the army of the same size (100,000 infantry soldiers, 12,000 horsemen) prior to Actium.⁶¹ The importance of this last detail will be discussed later.

5. Plutarch's figures seem impossible when viewed in the context of the Macedonian military history. We do possess some solid, although dispersed information about the forces of Macedonian rulers and regents between 359 and 168 BC. In most cases, we are not informed of the exact composition of these armies. But, after Philip II, the army of any Macedonian ruler would include, apart from a native Macedonian core, a high percentage of Thessalians and other Greek allies and subjects, as well as Greek and non-Greek mercenaries, and often additional troops from various Balkan tribes.

The army of Philip II that engaged Bardylis in 358 BC was under eleven thousand men strong.⁶² This was, however, far from the full military potential of Macedonia: at that point, Philip controlled only a part of the kingdom which did not have time to recover from the heavy losses of the previous year.⁶³ During the next two decades, Philip's military power grew constantly, in spite of continual warfare, and at Chaeronea he led the army of 32,000 men, allies included. Alexander initially led 36,500 men on his Asian campaign, of which at least 13,800 were Macedonians,⁶⁴ but there was also an advance force of roughly 10,000 men, already operating in Asia Minor.⁶⁵ Antipater was left with 13,500 Macedonian troops, but he was raising and sending reinforcements to king each year.⁶⁶ He had

⁵⁹ Plut. *Sull.* 15.1.

⁶⁰ Plut. *Agesil.* 38.1.

⁶¹ Plut. *Anton.* 61.1.

⁶² Diod. 16.4.3.

⁶³ Four thousand men lost in 359 BC, according to Diod. 16.2.5.

⁶⁴ The numbers are found in Diod. 17.17.3–5. Arr. 1.11.3 gives “over 30,000” infantry and 5,000 cavalry. Numbers in Plut. *Alex.* 15.1 are similar, 35,000. Aristobulos (Plut. *De Alex.* 1.3) says 30,000 infantry and 4000 cavalry.

⁶⁵ Polyæn. 5.44.4; the number seems to be rounded upwards. Those writers who give very high totals for the main army (Polib. 12.19.1: 44,500; 48,500 is claimed by Anaxamen, Plut. *De Alex.* 1.3; probably the same person is the unspecified writer mentioned in Plut. *Alex.* 15.1) are likely including the advance force.

⁶⁶ Antipater's army in the battle of Megalopolis is said to be “at least” 40,000 men, against 22,000 Spartans and allies (Diod. 17.53.1.), but these included forces of the Hellenic league and there are reasons to consider both figures exaggerated.

the force of almost exactly the same size in 323 to fight the Lamian war and, once Thessalians switched sides, it proved insufficient to the task. In the meanwhile, for battle at Gaugamela, the decisive conflict of the war that demanded ultimate efforts, Alexander could muster under 50,000 men.⁶⁷ This was the single largest army he ever led into battle. Cassander's army in 302 BC had 31,000 soldiers.⁶⁸ Demetrios' own army in the campaign of 289 BC was roughly the same, ca. 30,000 soldiers in total.⁶⁹ There are reasons to believe that in both cases a large part of the force was made up of mercenaries.⁷⁰ Antigonus Doseon had 29,200 soldiers in 222 BC at Selasia, only 13,300 of which were Macedonians.⁷¹ At Cy-noscephalae Philip V had 25,500 men, 18–20,000 of which were Macedonians, but only after extreme measures at mobilization were taken.⁷² Perseus' army in the beginning of the Third Macedonian war is given at 43,000 (with mercenaries, but without Thessaly, lost in the previous war).⁷³ The relevant numbers are given in the following table, in the chronological order:

General (year):	Army:	Source:
Philip II (358 BC)	10,600 (Macedonians only)	Diod. 16.4.3
Philip (338)	32,000	Diod. 16.85.5
Alexander (334)	35,000–36,500 (+ ca. 10,000 in advance force)	Diod. 17.17.3–5; Plut. <i>Alex.</i> 15.1; Arr. 1.11.3
Alexander (331)	47,000	Arr. 3.12.5
Antipater (322)	13,600 (Macedonians only)	Diod. 18.12.2
Cassander (302)	31,000	Diod. 20.110.4

⁶⁷ Arr. 3.12.5.

⁶⁸ Diod. 20.110.4.

⁶⁹ Plut. *Demet.* 1.2 doesn't give the exact number, but it may be inferred from other information, see n. 84.

⁷⁰ Even after the fiasco of 287, Demetrius could take nearly 11,000 mercenaries on his final campaign, while leaving some garrisons in Greece (Plut. *Dem.* 46.2). This gives a rough indication of the size of his mercenary corps which thus comprised over one-third of total troops before 287, while the rest would necessarily include Thessalians and other non-Macedonian troops. The resources of Cassander fifteen years prior were perhaps slightly larger (Macedonia did lose some important regions to Pyrrhos in the meantime, Plut. *Pyrrh.* 6.2). He could afford to send 12,500 soldiers in Asia Minor in 302/301 (Diod. 20.102.1) but we are not informed of the composition of this force (mercenaries?). It is likely that ethnic Macedonians were less than half of either army, close to numbers Antipater deployed in 323 BC.

⁷¹ Polib. 2.65. However, one should not conclude from this figure that military power of Macedonia remained at the same low level since Lamian war. Campaign against Cleomenes III was not of the greatest priority for Macedonia, the allies were numerous and success could be (and was) achieved with less than maximal resources.

⁷² Liv. 33.4–6; cf. Plut. *Flam.* 7.2.

⁷³ Liv. 42.51.3–11.

Demetrius (289)	ca. 30,000	Plut. <i>Pyrrh.</i> 7.3–5; <i>Demet.</i> 41.1–2
Demetrius (288)	110,000 (“The grand army”)	Plut. <i>Demet.</i> 43.2–3; <i>Pyrrh.</i> 10.3
Antigonus II Doson (222)	29,200 (13,300 Macedonians)	Polyb. 2.65
Philip V (197)	25,500 (at least 18,000 Macedon.)	Liv. 33.4–6
Perseus (170)	43,000 (29,000 Macedonians)	Liv. 42.51.3–11

There is a noticeable pattern here. Most of the numbers are quite in line with the accepted modern calculations of the population of ancient Macedonia in the latter half of the 4th century BC.⁷⁴ Thus, during the peak period of Philip and Alexander, Macedonia *on its own* could assemble a force of over 30,000 men. With Thessalians and other allies, mercenaries and warriors from the Balkan tribes, it could afford to send into Asia an army of well over 40,000 men, with regular reinforcements during a period of ten years or more, while maintaining a modest military force in the homeland. The very high human price of winning and holding an empire was, however, unavoidable. It is difficult to say just how many Macedonians left their country permanently to be king’s soldiers, colonists and administrators, but the answer must be in the tens of thousands.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Assessments for Macedonia *at its peak* vary between 300,000 and ca. 660,000. Beloch’s calculations range between 300,000 (200,000 Lower Macedonia, 100,000 Upper, 12.5 people per sq. km) and 500,000 (15.6 people per sq. km); cf. J. Beloch, *Die Bevölkerung der griechisch-römischen Welt*, Leipzig, 1886, pp. 211–212. J. N. Corvisier, W. Suder, *La population de l’Antiquité classique*, Paris, 2000, p. 32, give a high estimate of 660,000 (probably too high, population density of 21 inhabitants per km² was assumed and applied to the whole of the greater Macedonia, ca. 32,000 km²). M. H. Hansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 26–27 (cf. 117–118) gives ca. 600,000 or more as the combined population of Epirus and Macedonia (of which, presumably, at least 350,000 must be Macedonians?). After Alexander and during the entire 3rd century BC any of these figures would be lower. The extreme claims of C. Billows (1.5 million, *cf. n.* 32–35) cannot be taken seriously.

⁷⁵ There were 13,800 Macedonians in the army assembled in 334 (Diod. 17.17.3–5). We do not know how many Macedonians were included in the 10,000 men of the advance force (Polyaen. 5.44.4), but it is likely that they were a significant part. Early in 333 the army was reinforced with 3000 fresh Macedonian soldiers (Arr. 1.29.4). Further reinforcements of unspecified strength joined them at Ancyra (Curt. 3.1.24). Another host of 5800 men “from Macedonia” (ἐκ Μακεδονίας) arrived later same year in Cilicia (Polib. 12.19.2). Amyntas brought 6500 Macedonians (and 8500 others) in 331, too late to be used at Gaugamela (Diod. 17.65.1; Curt. 4.1.40–42). Combining available evidence, we get 29,100 soldiers without the advance force or the reinforcements that came at Ancyra. Thus, well over 30,000 Macedonian troops were sent in Asia between 334 and 323 BC. There is however no reason to assume that we are informed of every single reinforcement that was sent by Antipater or that no Macedonians were included in one of the other groups that we know of, for example the 36,000 “allies and mercenaries” (σύμμαχοι καὶ μισθοφόροι) brought from Europe in the late stages of the Indian campaign (Diod. 17.95.4). Even a conservative estimate should not go below 40,000.

These were capable men, most of them in the prime of their life. Unsurprisingly, after Alexander we see a sharp fall in the available manpower.⁷⁶ In 323 BC, even in the moment of the greatest urgency, Macedonia could barely assemble 13,000 soldiers. Around 30,000 men is the upper limit for the armies of Cassander and Demetrius, but this was only achieved through inclusion of the substantial numbers of allies and mercenaries. The strength of Macedonia proper was now not significantly higher than that of Philip II in the first years of his rule. This had both military and political consequences. In 338 BC Philip II could confidently and decisively defeat a large coalition of Greek states led by Athens and Thebes. But in 323-322 BC the strength of Macedonia was insufficient to contend with the Greek alliance and the war was only won with the help of the vast reinforcements from Asia. And in 289 BC Epirus and Aetolia combined were simply too much for the ruler of Macedonia and Thessaly. The numbers of soldiers similar to those of Philip and Alexander are not encountered again until well into 2nd century BC. Only Perseus, after a long period of peace and recuperation, could muster the forces comparable to those of the greatest Argead kings.⁷⁷

It is very difficult to reconcile all this with the existence of the Demetrius' grand army. If accepted as true, it would be the largest Macedonian army bar none. Even the claim that it was the greatest army since that of Alexander the Great would appear to be too modest. The largest army of Alexander, the one at Gaugamela, was less than half of that size.

6. In fact, the army of Demetrius would also be the biggest recorded army of the early Hellenistic age. The largest army of Antigonos the One-eyed is the one he led against Egypt in 306 BC: 88,000 soldiers.⁷⁸ Antigonid army at Ipsus is said to be slightly smaller, somewhat over 80,000 men. The combined army of their adversaries was 74,500 men strong.⁷⁹ At the time, Antigonos was the ruler of the large part of the western Asia and could commandeer resources far greater than that of his son fifteen years later. How could Demetrius assemble (or even attempt to assemble) a significantly larger force with resources that were several orders of magnitude smaller? The only logical answer is: he couldn't. The 110,000 men army should be set aside, together with other unrealistic figures of Plutarch. However, another perspective on the problem is possible.

7. Plutarch's account of the last years of Demetrius' reign makes little sense as a historical narrative and it is riddled with difficulties. But as a purely literary narrative it is much more plausible. The story of Demetrius' defeat

⁷⁶ Cf. Diod. 18.12.2: ἐσπάνιζε γὰρ ἡ Μακεδονία στρατιωτῶν πολιτικῶν διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀπεσταλμένων εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐπὶ διαδοχὴν τῆς στρατείας....

⁷⁷ And this is exactly what Livy says; even implying that this was general consensus, cf. Liv. 42.51.11: "Satis constabat, secundum eum exercitum, quem magnus Alexander in Asiam traiecit, numquam ullius Macedonum regis copias tantas fuisse." There is no logical way to square this statement with the one Plutarch made in *Demet.* 44.1. One or the other author must be wrong.

⁷⁸ Diod. 20.53.2.

⁷⁹ Plut. *Demet.* 28.3.

and ejection from Macedonia is presented as a repetition of the defeat and fall of his father. The structure of events is broadly the same: military success and military buildup of Antigonid rulers prompts the creation of a large coalition against them; the coalition attacks, forcing Antigonids to change their plans; Antigonid forces move against the enemy but the campaign turns into a disaster due to the personal faults of Demetrius; the outcome is the division of the Antigonid lands by the victors. Now, during the first series of events, Antigonus is still the most powerful of the Successors and his strength and aggressive behavior are sound reasons for concern of the other kings. Forming a coalition to fight the treat is the logical response. But not so with the events of 287 BC. Demetrius was a ruler of Macedonia and a part of Greece, his resources were a mere fraction of that of his father. His achievements were a mixture of successes and defeats. Only recently he lost the a of his army in an unsuccessful campaign against Aetolia and Epirus, after which the enemy even invaded the core lands of Macedonia. A reader of Plutarch might wonder if the kings of Asia and Egypt had any realistic reason to fear this fickle usurper in Macedonia, whose position didn't seem to be very strong? It is no coincidence that at this very point the grand army is introduced as a necessary *plot device*. The other kings feel threatened because of its creation. It leads directly to the coalition and the war against Demetrius. Once the war actually begins, the grand army becomes redundant (in fact, its existence would hurt the logic and the development of the narrative) and it is silently removed from the story.

8. There is another historical event that significantly influenced the shape of the Plutarch's story: the fall of the Marcus Antony. The life of Antony is the companion biography to that of Demetrius. Plutarch found the two characters largely similar. They were courageous and capable in military matters, but otherwise selfish, impulsive, irrational and prone to excessive drinking and debauchery. He purposely inserted this pair of anti-heroes into his hall of heroes, to provide contrast and examples how not to lead one's life, how a statesman and a military leader ought not to behave. In this case it can be claimed that Plutarch manipulated his material in other to achieve the desired literary effect. The actual historical circumstances of the downfall of two men were vastly different, but they are made to appear similar in many ways by the conscious effort of the writer. While different in their origin and beginnings, their lives in Plutarch's narrative followed increasingly analogous paths, to reach strikingly similar ends. So, just like Demetrius, after a serious setback (the failed Parthian campaign of 37–36 BC), Antony is consumed with ambitions plans and preparations.⁸⁰ The word of the intentions of his enemies reach him while he was engaged in something else. He brings together a grand army and a fleet, and this causes fear on the part of Octavian, forcing the latter to strengthen up his own preparations.⁸¹ Just like Demetrius, Antony assembles an army of 100,000 footmen and 12,000 horsemen. He also builds a grand fleet. Like that of Demetrius, Antony's armada is 500 ships

⁸⁰ Plut. *Ant.* 52.1–2.

⁸¹ Plut. *Ant.* 58.1.

strong and his ships too are built on an imposing scale.⁸² These and other resemblances are by no means coincidental, they are deliberately constructed by the writer in order to emphasize the alleged analogies between the lives of a Macedonian king and a Roman general. The ultimate defeat of these men is not presented as outcome of military or political struggle, but as a natural consequence of their personal flaws. In both biographies the theme of damaging Oriental influence is introduced as an integral factor of the protagonist's downfall.⁸³

Were the military preparations attributed to Demetrius merely a historical fabrication? Yes and no. No doubt, Demetrius built *some new ships* and strove to increase and rebuild his land forces. This was a necessary course of action, especially after the devastating loss of Pantauchus' army in 289 BC.⁸⁴ The fleet of Demetrius' father was at that time a quarter of a century old and, after all the ordeals it went through, it was in need of a serious rejuvenation. He was also engaged in the construction of a large new capital city, Demetrias on the Magnesian peninsula.⁸⁵ These projects *could have* stirred exaggerated rumors about his intentions but hardly something more than that. Furthermore, even the plans for an Eastern campaign are not beyond doubt, though several ancient sources credit Demetrius with such plans.⁸⁶ This was accepted by most of the modern scholars, even those that otherwise consider Demetrius incapable of anything resembling long-term planning.⁸⁷ This is possibly the reflection of the propaganda of his en-

⁸² Plut. *Ant.* 61.1–3.

⁸³ Plut. *Demet.* 52.1–6.

⁸⁴ In his 289 BC campaign Demetrius led what must have been his maximal field army, his aim being to eliminate his two main opponents in Greece – the Aetolian league and the Epirote king – in a single sweep. After overrunning Aetolia, he moved on to attack and plunder Epirus, leaving a large part (μέρος... τῆς δυνάμεως οὐκ ὀλίγον) of his army with Pantauchus (Plut. *Demet.* 41.1) to finish the conquest of the country. On this march Demetrius bypassed the army of Pyrrhus who entered Aetolia via an alternative path. In the ensuing battle Pyrrhus killed Pantauchus, as well as “many of other soldiers, taking five thousand as prisoners.” (τῶν δὲ ἄλλων πολλοὺς μὲν ἀπέκτεινεν, ἐζώγηρσε δὲ πεντακισχιλίους.). If we assume that the numbers of soldier killed or fled are roughly proportional to the number of captives, the combined loses were around 15,000 men. The remaining army could not have been much larger than this, because upon his return Demetrius refused to give battle to the now combined Epirote and Aetolian forces. Instead, he chose to withdraw at the cost of much of his military prestige (Plut. *Demet.* 41, 3). Presumably, the initial army of Demetrius was ca. 30,000 men; he left the half of it with Pantauchus and it got all but annihilated by Pyrrhus.

⁸⁵ Strab. 9.5.15.

⁸⁶ Plut. *Demet.* 63.2; 64.1; Paus. 1.10.1; Just. 16. 2. 1; Oros. 3.23. 53.

⁸⁷ Cf. E. Will, *op. cit.*, 103: “Left to himself, he (sc. Demetrius) naturally retained his military qualities but was to give free rein to his instability and his lack of judgement and political sense.”; N. G. L. Hammond, *op. cit.*, 222: “It would probably be wrong to see any action of Demetrius as part of rational plan conceived in a long perspective.”, and even W. W. Tarn, *CAH VII*, p. 80 : “Macedonia never had a worse king, and many must have regretted Cassander.”

emies. They could have justified their move against Macedonia as a preemptive strike that thwarted an incoming threat. Or, the truth is the other way around, because in fact, after losing his European kingdom, Demetrius did invade Asia. While it was an improvised and rushed campaign with very limited resources that soon ended in disaster, it could have inspired conjectures that it was always his intention to do so.

To sum up: the grand army of Demetrius cannot survive a serious historical scrutiny. It is mentioned solely by Plutarch; it is severely at odds with what know of military and demographic potentials of Macedonia and Greece, and it makes little sense when viewed in its immediate historical and political context. However, it does play a role of some significance in Plutarch's narration, thus justifying its appearance in the biography. Once it played its part, it is removed from the story without explanation. In the future, we should be careful to avoid any assumptions regarding military strength, demography or economic potential of the 3rd century Macedonia or Greece that are based on the alleged size of the army of Demetrius. Whatever their origin may be, the numbers reported by Plutarch are so far out of any reasonable proportion, that they are not even exaggerated – they are completely unreal.

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Немања Вујчић

ВЕЛИКА ВОЈСКА ДЕМЕТРИЈА ПОЛИОРКЕТА

Резиме

Деметрије Полиоркет је провео готово седам година свог бурног живота као краљ Македоније и владар великог дела Грчке. Два текста истог аутора, Плутарха из Херонеје – биографије Полиоркета и његовог штићеника и каснијег непријатеља, краља Пира – приписују Деметрију обимне војне припреме које су, наводно, довеле до стварања једне од највећих копнених и поморских сила у читавој античкој историји. Према Плутарху, у последњим

годинама своје владавине, Полиоркет је заповедао снагама које су биле далеко веће од оних које су имали Филип II и Александар Велики. Зачудо, оног тренутка када је велики сукоб између Деметрија и његових непријатеља најзад избио, ове снаге нестају из повести без икаквог објашњења. Модерни историчари, мада генерално врло скептични према бројкама које дају антички писци, показују изненађујућу склоност да поверују у Плутархове тврдње, чак и да граде шире теорије на тој основи. Тако је голема војска коју је Полиоркет наводно сакупио често коришћена као аргумент у дебати о последицама Александрових освајања на саму Македонију, као и за демографске студије Македоније у III веку п. н. е. Мало је научника који су покушали да оспоре ове бројке, упркос снажним разлозима против њих, и упркос чињеници да више античких извора – укључујући и биографије које је написао Плутарх – пружају друге податке које директно противрече овим тврдњама. У раду се износе аргументи за одбацивање Плутархових навода о Полиоркетовим изузетним војним припремама за поновно освајање царства које је његов отац некада држао у Азији, као и величине војске која је том приликом сакупљена.