

## The New World Order of the Augustan Age and Pompeius Trogus' Approach to the Roman and Parthian Rivalry

In the aftermath of the failed invasion of Mesopotamia by Crassus in 53 BCE, for the first time in history, the geopolitical developments of Western Europe, the Mediterranean, the Near East, and the Middle East became interconnected, and our sources reflect this new reality of the international environment, especially in the Age of Augustus. Strabo underscores that Augustus and the Parthian king Phraates IV began a close correspondence that continued under their successors. Suetonius relates that for the first time Parthian envoys travelled to Italy and Germany during Augustus' reign. Additionally, Augustus became the first Roman to receive envoys from India and from the nomads of the Central Asian steppe. Meanwhile, it is clear that the Romans knew very little about the Middle East at this time, which encouraged Augustus to send geographers to gather information and made Pompeius Trogus' and Strabo's Augustan Age works on the eastern world popular and timely. In fact, Strabo blames the failures of Crassus and Antony against the Parthians in part on a prior Roman lack of emphasis on "the utility of geography... in great undertakings" in the east (1.1.17). By the reign of Augustus, the Parthian Empire and its place in the world of the Romans was of significant interest. Over the next few centuries, numerous Graeco-Roman authors recognized and accepted the new world order that had emerged between the Romans and Parthians by the end of the first century BCE.

In particular, the Roman historian Pompeius Trogus offers an important perspective from the Augustan Age on the rise of the Parthians in the east. Trogus viewed the Parthians as a powerful people, who had benefitted from great leadership, and he considered the Parthians the new imperial rivals of the Romans. This paper will examine Trogus' role in portraying the new world order of the Augustan Age as a rivalry between the last two greatest powers in the world,

discussing also important passages from Strabo. In this effort, it challenges the tradition that Trogus, following Augustan propaganda, meant to portray the Parthians as belonging to a realm outside of the inhabited world or *oikoumene*. Instead, Trogus helped create a Roman attitude toward the Parthians that was respectful but clever. He accepted the rivalry of the Romans and Parthians, but he portrayed the Romans as the superior power.