

MIGHT ANTIOCHUS' MEASURES IN JUDEA HAVE HAD AN IMPACT
ON THOSE LATER ENACTED BY HADRIAN?

As Gruen points out, the measures carried out by Antiochus Epiphanes against the Judean Jews in the second century BCE carry significance on a broad front, not only because of the long-range religious and cultural influence of Judaism for which this persecution – and the reaction it provoked, the Maccabean revolt – proved to be a pivotal moment in history, but also because the episode presents our best-documented example of the tensions between Hellenism and native traditions in the Near East, and the strains inherent in imperial rule over disparate societies in the Hellenistic age.¹

In the fifties of the last century, the suggestion has been put forward, that the impact of Antiochus' measures against the Jews was felt hundreds of years later, inspiring those carried out by Emperor Hadrian in Judea in the second century CE, and since then, this possibility has been restated several times in contemporary scholarship,² and has not yet been challenged.

Birley points out:

Like Antiochus three hundred years before him, he (Hadrian) sought to hellenise the Jews. This is the only plausible explanation for his prohibition of circumcision and for his conversion of the ruined Jerusalem into a *colonia* under the name of AeliaCa-

pitolina. It was an appalling misjudgment. The uprising thus provoked grew into a major war ... The influence on Hadrian's thinking of ... Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria, had already been seen at Athens. It had, after all, been that king who had revived and gone a long way to completing the construction of the Olympieion. He too, like Hadrian, had promoted the cult of Zeus Olympios. There are various other aspects of the character and policies of the eccentric monarch which find an echo in Hadrian, of whom he seems to be almost a mirror image.³

In fact, common features have often been noticed between the personalities of the two sovereigns and between their dealings. Both of them presented themselves as great benefactors of the Greeks. Antiochus earned a reputation as foremost among Hellenistic kings for his patronage of Greek cities and cults, and his assiduous efforts in this regard carried practical value, lending substantial prestige to the king in the international world of the second century BCE.⁴ The same may be said about Hadrian, who, too, greatly benefitted Greek cities. Numerous cities of the Hellenistic world mention him as their founder, lawgiver and benefactor, several took their names from him and some others began a new era in the local calendar in his honor.⁵

¹ The wording is that of E.S. GRUEN, *Hellenism and Persecution: Antiochus IV and the Jews*, in E.S. GRUEN, *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism: Essays on Early Jewish Literature and History*, in «Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies» 29, De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston 2016, p. 333.

² J. BEAUJEU, *La religion romaine à l'apogée de l'Empire, I. La politique religieuse des Anonines (96-192)*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1955, p. 262; S. PEROWNE, *Hadrian*, Hodder & Stoughton, London 1960, p. 147; L.L. GRABBE, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 1992, pp. 574-575; M. HENGEL, *Judaica et Hellenistica: Kleine Schriften*, vol. 1, Mohr-Siebeck, Tübingen 1996,

pp. 381-384; N. BELAYCHE, *Judaea-Palaestina: the Pagan Cults in Roman Palestine (Second to Fourth Century)*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2001, p. 117; W. HORBURY, *Jewish War under Trajan and Hadrian*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2014, p. 312.

³ BIRLEY, *Hadrian*, cit., p. 228.

⁴ On the benefactions extended to Athens, Delphi, Delos, Argos, Achaia, Arcadia, Beotia, Rhodes, Byzantium, Chalcedon, and Cyzicus, see GRUEN, *Hellenism and Persecution*, cit., p. 344.

⁵ Inscriptions attest to extensive building at Hadrian's initiative and expense at Alexandria, Nicomedia, Cyzicus, Apollonia, Miletropolis and Parium, Hadranutherae (Balikesir), Hadriana

Moreover, both sovereigns fostered Hellenistic culture and cults, especially that of Zeus Olympios,⁶ and both of them promoted the worship of their own persons.⁷

Indeed, in spite of the different historical contexts, several striking similarities are found in the developments which took place in Judea in the time of Antiochus and in that of Hadrian: a military pagan colony was established in Jerusalem, settled by a gentile population, and decrees were issued that outlawed Jewish law.

In Antiochus' day, the military operations waged as a reaction to internal Jewish upheavals which, according to Schwartz, may have had an anti-Seleucid character,⁸ entailed special measures in Jerusalem. The walls of Jerusalem were razed to the ground, a part of the city was walled off from the rest, and in this quarter, called the

Akra, Syrian and foreign soldiers were settled.⁹ The Akra was fortified with high walls and towers, and pagan cults took place on altars probably built in a public marketplace.¹⁰ Besides, decrees were issued, that outlawed the Jewish law. Antiochus forbade Jewish burnt offerings, sacrifices and libations in the Temple; he ordered the erection of altars, shrines, and images, the sacrifice of pigs and other impure animals, the banning of circumcision, the burning of the Torah, and a range of activities that would mean violation of Jewish practices and profanation of religious life.¹¹

Behind these decrees, Birley imagines a religious background, the wish to Hellenize the Jews. Other scholars – Tcherikover was the first¹² – emphasize the political context. In Egypt, Antiochus had been compelled to aban-

(Balat) and Hadriani (Orhaneli) in Mysia, Stratonicea, Smyrne, Megara, Epidaurus and Tegea, Argos, Mantinea, Sparta, Mealopolis and Athens. See BIRLEY, *Hadrian*, cit., pp. 152-184.

⁶ This cult, it has been alleged, may have had a role in the unification of the Empire through Hellenism, but against this claim see GRUEN, *Hellenism and Persecution*, cit., p. 344.

⁷ In the case of Antiochus, see W. TARN, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 2nd ed., E. Arnold & Co, London 1930, pp. 51, 186, 303; J.D. DANCY, *Commentary on I Maccabees*, B. Blackwell, Oxford 1954, p. 47 and E. SCHÜRER, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. – A.D. 135)*, revised and edited by G. VERMES and F. MILLAR, vol. 1, T. & T. Clark LTD, Edinburgh 1973, pp. 147-48. More recently, M. MARCIAK, *Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Jews*, in «Polish Journal of Biblical Research» 5,1 (2006), pp. 63-65 and M. FIRST, *What Motivated Antiochus to Issue his Decrees against the Jews?*, in «Hakirah: the Flatbush Journal of Jewish Law and Thought» 16 (2013), pp. 200-201. On Hadrian, see M.K. THORNTON, *Hadrian and his Reign*, in «ANRW» II,2 (1975), pp. 433-434, 443, 455-456, 459; M.T. BOATWRIGHT, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2000, pp. 138-139 and 138, note 19; BIRLEY, *Hadrian*, cit., pp. 63-64, 183 and 340, note 17. Tameanko (M. TAMEANKO, *Hadrian and the Jews: a Relationship Shown on Ancient Coins*, in «The Shekel» 32,6 (1999), p. 19) considers Hadrian as a Hellenist who adopted the notion of a unified and peaceful Roman empire in which the provinces were components of an integrated commonwealth ruled

by him as a new Greco-Roman civilization. See also BOATWRIGHT, *Hadrian and the Cities*, cit., p. 138.

⁸ On the nature and the interpretation of Jason's deeds, see D. SCHWARTZ, *Antiochus IV Epiphanes in Jerusalem*, in D. GOODBLATT et al. (eds.), *Historical Perspectives: from the Hasmonean to Bar Kokhba in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 37, Brill, Leiden 2001, pp. 53-54 and L. NIESIOŁOWSKI-SPANÒ, *Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Jews: a Reassessment*, in I. HJELM and T.L. THOMPSON (eds.), *History, Archaeology and the Bible Forty Years after 'Historicity'*, Routledge, London and New York 2016, p. 135.

⁹ O. MÖRKHOLM, *Antiochus IV*, in «The Cambridge History of Judaism» 2 (1989), p. 281.

¹⁰ NIESIOŁOWSKI-SPANÒ, *Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Jews*, cit., pp. 137-38.

¹¹ GRUEN, *Hellenism and Persecution*, cit., p. 342. Against the views held by Honigman (S. HONIGMAN, *Tales of High Priest and Taxes: the Books of the Maccabees and the Judean Rebellion against Antiochus IV*, University of California Press, Berkeley, California 2014), see Bar-Kochva's historical assessment of Antiochus' decrees (B. BAR-KOCHVA, *The Religious Persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes as a Historical Reality* (Hebrew), in «Tarbiz» 84 (2016), pp. 295-344).

¹² V.A. TCHERIKOVER, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, Atheneum, New York 1959, p. 188. His insights were then elaborated by others. See for example R. DORAN, *The Persecution of Judeans by Antiochus IV: the Significance of 'Ancestral Laws'*, in D.C. HARLOW et al. (eds.), *The 'Other' in Second Temple Judaism. Essays in Honor of John J. Col-*

don his Egyptian adventure at Popillius Laenas' brusque command and 'infamous swagger stick'.¹³ Not only did the withdrawal terminate Antiochus' long-cherished dream of extending suzerainty over the Ptolemaic realm; it also came under humiliating circumstances that threatened to shatter the king's reputation throughout the lands of the Near-East. The upheaval in Judea offered a suitable target. The introduction of a garrison and the intimidation of the populace would announce Antiochus Epiphanes' resumption of control to the diverse peoples and nations nominally under the Seleucid regime. Eradication of the creed and forcible conversion of the faithful would send a message throughout the ancestral kingdom of the Seleucids – the message that Antiochus had accomplished what no ruler before him had hoped to achieve: the abandonment of Jewish belief at Seleucid command. "The persecution," Gruen points out, "served the ends of the king as a display of might, a sign that he had suffered no setback, indeed had emerged with greater strength".¹⁴ This may have been one of the reasons why, in addition to the violent military action, Antiochus decided to abrogate the Jewish laws – a measure often

adopted by the Greeks in their dealings with rebellious cities. Several examples from the Greek world are provided by Doran, which date back from the Peloponnesian War. The father of Antiochus IV, Antiochus III, had taken away the ancestral polity of Apollonia of Rhyndacos, and changes of laws and polity seem to have had an effect on the sacred precincts and thus on the religious life of the city.¹⁵

In Hadrian's day, too, at the very beginning of his reign, more than a decade before the Bar Kokhba War,¹⁶ a Roman military colony, Aelia Capitolina, was founded in Jerusalem, settled by the veterans of the *legio X Fretensis* and by their families, where pagan shrines and statues of gods and emperors were later to be erected. Jerusalem was turned into a miniature Rome, settled by gentiles and devoted to Roman religious rites. The new Jerusalem, from which the Jews were banned, was meant to be a pagan city like all the other cities of the Empire, with its pagan cults and ceremonies – an integral part of the surrounding world.¹⁷

As with Antiochus, Hadrian, too, issued decrees which outlawed Jewish law. A ban on circumcision is mentioned by the *SHA*,¹⁸ and

lins, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich.- Cambridge, U.K. 2011, p. 432 and FIRST, *What Motivated Antiochus to Issue his Decrees*, cit., p. 209.

¹³ The wording is that of GRUEN, *Hellenism and Persecution*, cit., p. 355.

¹⁴ GRUEN, *Hellenism and Persecution*, cit., pp. 355-357. See also M.G. MORGAN, *Response to Gruen, Hellenism and Persecution: Antiochus IV and the Jews*, in P. GREEN (ed.), *Hellenistic History and Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1993, p. 274. Antiochus' determination to regain prestige can also be seen in his elaborate staging of the games at Daphnae in Antioch in 166 BCE to honor his victory in Egypt. As Doran points out, the psychological effect of the "Day at Eleusis" led to Antiochus wanting to show that he was still a force to be reckoned with (DORAN, *The Persecution of Judeans*, cit., p. 432). But see also R. DORAN, *Resistance and Revolt: the Case of the Maccabees*, in J.J. COLLINS and J.G. MANNING (eds.), *Revolt and Resistance in the Ancient Classical World and the Near East: in the Crucible of Empire*, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 85, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2016, p. 185.

¹⁵ "Given the number of laws that each city would

pass on religious matters within that city, one would suspect that, when ancestral laws were changed, there would also be some effect on sacred laws" (DORAN, *The Persecution of Judeans*, cit., pp. 427-428). On p. 428, several instances are discussed by Doran, where the rituals are said to belong to the ancestral laws.

¹⁶ See S. WEKSLER-BDOLAH, A. ONN, S. KISILEVITZ and B. OUAHNOUNA, *Layers of Ancient Jerusalem*, in «Biblical Archaeology Review» 38,1 (2012), p. 47; S. WEKSLER-BDOLAH and R. ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM, *Two Aspects of the Transformation of Jerusalem into the Roman Colony of Aelia Capitolina*, in G.C. BOTTINI *et al.* (eds.), *Knowledge and Wisdom: Archaeological and Historical Essays in Honor of Leah Di Segni*, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 54, Edizioni Terra Santa, Milano 2014, pp. 48-49, and L. DI SEGNI and S. WEKSLER-BDOLAH, *Three Military Bread Stamps from the Western Wall Plaza Excavations, Jerusalem*, in «Atiqot» 70 (2012), pp. 21*-31*.

¹⁷ See M. BEN ZEEV, *New Insights into Roman Policy in Judea on the Eve of the Bar Kokhba Revolt*, in «Journal for the Study of Judaism» 49 (2018), pp. 96-98.

¹⁸ See the different interpretations given to this passage by A.M. RABELLO, *The Edicts on Circum-*

from the evidence emerging from the rabbinic sources, we learn that the Jews were forbidden to observe the Sabbath, to have public readings of Torah, to gather for Torah studying and for praying in synagogues, to recite the *Shema*, to wear tefillin and tzitzit, to affix a mezuzah to their doors, to observe the Sabbatical Year and the festivals (blowing the Shofar, building a sukkah, kindling Hanukkah lights, having public readings of the Book of Esther and eating matzah). The appointment of Sages was prohibited, as were the maintenance of Jewish courts and the enforcement of court orders.¹⁹

As in the case of Antiochus, the background of Hadrian's proceedings, too, was probably a political one. When he became Emperor, at the beginning of August 117, the Diaspora Jewish rebellions had not yet been quelled everywhere,²⁰ which may well explain the passage of Eusebius' *Chronicon* preserved by Hieronymus which states that in the first year of his reign, *Hadrianus Iudaeos capit secundo contra Romanos rebelantes*,²¹ where Hadrian is taken to be respon-

sible for the final repression of the rebellion. The link between the Jewish Diaspora Revolts and Hadrian's policy in Judea is stressed by Boatwright:²² as far as the Romans were concerned, it appears that disaffection among Jews in one part of the empire necessarily threw under suspicion those in another".²³ After the Jewish Diaspora uprisings were finally repressed, it is no wonder that Hadrian decided to strengthen Roman authority in Judea in order to prevent possible unrest there, by establishing a military pagan Roman colony in Jerusalem.²⁴ Goodman points out that

Aelia Capitolina was envisaged by Rome from the beginning as a means to punish and control what they saw as a stubbornly rebellious nation ... It is self-evident that the Roman state could change its attitude to the Jewish homeland in the light of disturbances in the diaspora. This would not be the first time that Roman policy towards the Jews approached the problem of Diaspora Jews alongside the problem of the Jews in their homeland, and vice versa.²⁵

cision as a Factor in the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, in A. OPPENHEIMER and U. RAPPAPORT (eds.), *The Bar Kokhba Revolt: a New Approach* (Hebrew), Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, Jerusalem 1984, pp. 27-46; B. ISAAC, *Roman Religious Policy and the Bar Kokhba War*, in P. SCHÄFER (ed.), *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2003, pp. 37-54; A. OPPENHEIMER, *The Ban on Circumcision as a Cause of the Revolt: a Reconsideration*, in P. SCHÄFER (ed.), *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2003, pp. 55-69 and M. MOR, *The Second Jewish Revolt: the Bar Kokhba War, 132-136 CE*, Brill, Leiden 2016, pp. 129-135.

¹⁹ See M. HERR, *Persecutions and Martyrdom in Hadrian's Days*, «Scripta Hierosolymitana» 23 (1972), pp. 93-94.

²⁰ Only by September was fighting over everywhere. See M. PUCCI BEN ZEEV, *Diaspora Judaism in Turmoil, 116/117 CE: Ancient Sources and Modern Insights*, Peeters, Leuven-Dudley, MA 2005, pp. 154-155.

²¹ CCXXIII Olymp. 117 CE. HIERONIMUS, *Chronicon*, CCXXIII Olymp., ed. Helm, 197.

²² BOATWRIGHT, *Hadrian and the Cities*, cit., pp. 173, 173, n. 7, 196 and 202.

²³ M. GOODMAN, *Rome and Jerusalem: the Clash of Ancient Civilizations*, A.A. Knopf, New York 2007, pp. 480-481.

²⁴ See M. GOODMAN, *Trajan and the Origins of the Bar-Kokhba War*, in P. SCHÄFER (ed.), *The Bar Kochba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2003, pp. 27-28; ID., *Trajan and the Origins of Roman Hostility to the Jews*, in «Past & Present» 182 (2004), p. 26; W. ECK, *Hadrian, the Bar Kokhba Revolt and the Epigraphic Transmission*, in P. SCHÄFER (ed.), *The Bar Kochba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2003, p. 155. Hadrian's initiative recalls the settlement imposed by L. Mummius after the revolt of the Achaean League had been crushed, which has been aptly described as "in part a reprisal, in part an effort to ensure that there should be no further uprisings" (A. LINTOTT, *The Roman Empire and its Problems in the Late Second Century*, in «CAH», 2nd ed., vol. 9 (1995), p. 32.

²⁵ GOODMAN, *Trajan and the Origins of the Bar-Kokhba War*, cit., pp. 23-27. From a Roman point of view, Bazzana points out, the attempt to create a communal space for different deities and rituals in AeliaCapitolina could offer a great opportunity for implementing, at the very same time, the repre-

Hadrian's policy in Judea may also have stemmed from the particularly problematic situation obtaining at the beginning of his reign. His appointment to Emperor had been issued not from the senate but rather from his troops in Antioch, and rumors circulated in Rome, that his adoption by Trajan had not been lawful.²⁶ Moreover, Hadrian had to cope at one and the same time with precarious internal and external situations. At Rome, the senate appears to have resented Hadrian's foreign policy, which renounced all the new territories conquered by Trajan beyond the Euphrates,²⁷ and, moreover, there was the fear of possible contenders to the throne.²⁸ In the meantime, disorder had broken out in Dacia, in Mauretania and in Britain.²⁹ Birley observes that the empire was in a state of disarray which could easily have turned into a catastrophe.³⁰

It is therefore conceivable that Hadrian's policy in Judea stemmed from the need to strengthen order and authority in the country.

The similarities between the situation in Judea in Antiochus' and in Hadrian's times are certainly striking, but one may wonder whether they may be regarded as compelling enough to support the notion of an influence of Antiochus' measures on those enacted by Hadrian.

A look at Roman foreign policy before Hadrian's time may be instructive.

While the Romans recognized, *de jure* or *de facto*, the local customs and the laws of their subjected peoples,³¹ respect and consideration for their cults, which may have been considerable in times of peace, evaporated in times of war,³² when extremely aggressive policies are attested to have taken over.³³ It actually appears that the destruction of the enemies' sacred sites and cults was an important component of Roman strategy. This would naturally be the case when a sacred site or shrine functioned either as a center of rebellion or armed resistance, and it is in this context that some of the most famous and spectacular episodes of destruction occurred. One of the earliest examples took place in Sicily, where Marcellus waged a notoriously destructive campaign during the Second Punic War. In 211, he sacked and destroyed Morgantina, including its four shrines to Demeter and Kore, all of which were pillaged and demolished.³⁴ Some forty years later, when waging a campaign in Greece, C. Lucretius Gallus was methodical in his destruction of sacred sites and targeted those that had the potential to serve as rallying points when he fought as praetor in the campaign against Perseus in 171-170 BCE. In 171, he attacked Haliartus in Boeotia and the city was razed, including the temple of Athena on the citadel. The site and its environs certainly had some political significance, and such consi-

sentation of power and the power of representation" (G.B. BAZZANA, *The Bar Kokhba Revolt and Hadrian's Religious Policy*, in M. RIZZI (ed.), *Hadrian and the Christians*, De Gruyter, Berlin - New York 2010, pp. 98-99.

²⁶ DIO, 69, 1, 1-4; HA, *Hadr.*, 4,10. See M. MECKLER, *The Beginning of the Historia Augusta*, in «Historia» 45,3 (1996), pp. 369-371.

²⁷ Syme points out that "the surrender of the eastern conquests evoked grief, anger, and calumny" (R. SYME, *Tacitus*, vol. 2, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1958, p. 488). See also BIRLEY, *Hadrian*, cit., p. 78. The withdrawal directly affected senators by reducing the number of high-ranking administrative posts they could aspire to. See J. BENNETT, *Trajan, Optimus Princeps: A Life and Times*, Routledge, London 1997, pp. 202-204 and BIRLEY, *Hadrian*, cit., p. 85.

²⁸ Syme, *Hadrian and the Senate*, in A.R. BIRLEY (ed.), *Roman Papers*, vol. 4, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1988, p. 304.

²⁹ *Hadr.* 5, 2. See BENNETT, *Trajan*, cit., p. 203, notes 104-106.

³⁰ BIRLEY, *Hadrian*, cit., 80. See also K. STROBEL, *Kaiser Traian. Eine Epoche der Weltgeschichte*, Friedrich Pustet, Regensburg 2010, p. 392.

³¹ M. PUCCI BEN ZEEV, *Jewish Rights in the Roman World: The Greek and Roman Documents Quoted by Josephus Flavius*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 74, Mohr-Siebeck, Tübingen 1998, pp. 461-465.

³² On the sack of Syracuse, Tarentum, and Locri, see J. WELLS, *Impiety in the Middle Republic: the Roman Response to Temple Plundering in Southern Italy*, in «The Classical Journal» 105 (2010), pp. 231-233.

³³ Tac. *Ann.* 1, 73. RUTLEDGE, *The Roman Destruction of Sacred Sites*, in «Historia» 56 (2007), p. 195.

³⁴ *Ivi*, p. 188.

derations surely contributed to Lucretius' decision.³⁵ Later, the cases of Carthage, Corinth and Thebes are most famous. The cities, along with their sacred structures, were razed and their temples looted.³⁶ On the destruction of Carthage, Harris points out:

Six days were devoted to burning and destroying the city. ... In spite of the destruction, the city was carefully plundered of portable objects... Shortly afterwards the remains of the city were effectively destroyed, and finally the site was cursed. The latter action was perhaps not only an exaggerated precaution but also the result of an unconscious realization of the awfulness of what had been done. As for the destruction itself, it had precedents in other captured cities, and was soon followed by that of Corinth. What makes the Carthaginian case stand out ... is the fact that this policy, having been decided in advance, was retained in the period after Carthage had made its original surrender. This was, and remained, unusual behavior even in the history of Roman warfare. ... Rome's annihilation of Carthage and most of its inhabitants was a brutal act. But it is important to realize that this brutality differed only in degree from what was normal in Roman warfare.³⁷

In the case of Corinth and Thebes, Routledge observes, one cannot say for certain whether there was a deliberate intent to stamp out specifically the religious life of the city rather than to make an example of them in the wake of the Greek rebellion.³⁸ The phenomenon of destruction of temples appears to have been so common as to be unworthy of comment in literary sources, except perhaps in the context of rhetorical invective.³⁹ After rebellions of subject

peoples, the destruction of a sacred site or shrine which had functioned as a center of rebellion or armed resistance often involved not the mere desecration, but the very annihilation of its sacred space. Both the destruction and the annihilation were premeditated prior to the assault on a given city.⁴⁰ In the course of operations in Greece, Mesopotamion, a site known for its cult of the dead, which had been a local stronghold defense designed specifically against enemy attack, was leveled. After the Roman destruction no cult objects appear on the site.⁴¹ The Isthmian Sanctuary was abandoned during this period, and the archaeological evidence of the disruption of the cult of Poseidon is unambiguous: the altar was removed and a cart road was created across its foundation. Mummius may have carried away to Rome from the Isthmia a statue of Isthmian Poseidon, which could have been the cult statue.⁴² The literary and archaeological record attests to several brutal attacks against a number of sanctuaries in Italy itself. The first and particularly violent example we have is Fragellae, which revolted in 125 BCE: the archaeological record paints a grim picture, attesting to near-complete and thorough devastation of the city's sacred buildings.⁴³ Then, during the war against Mithridates, the Roman commander Fimbria destroyed not only the Roman ancestral home of Ilium, but also the temple of Athena, along with its sacred objects.⁴⁴ Fimbria's harsh treatment was doubtless intended to serve as an example to other cities and to induce in them second thoughts about their loyalties. Then, in the course of punitive expeditions in the wake of the Varrine disaster in 9 CE, more than one sacred site was destroyed when Germanicus

³⁵ *Ivi*, p. 189.

³⁶ See W.V. HARRIS, *Roman Expansion in the West*, in «CAH», 2nd ed., vol. 8 (1989), pp. 160-161; Routledge, *The Roman Destruction*, cit., p. 185, note 22; P.S. DEROW, *Rome, the Fall of Macedon and the Sack of Corinth*, in «CAH», 2nd ed., vol. 8 (1989), p. 323. For the view that the destruction of Corinth was less extensive than is often stated, see J. WISEMAN, *Corinth and Rome: 228 B.C.-A.D. 267*, in «ANRW» II 7,1 (1979), pp. 491-493.

³⁷ HARRIS, *Roman Expansion in the West*, cit., p. 160.

³⁸ RUTLEDGE, *The Roman Destruction*, cit., p. 185.

³⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 183, 185.

⁴⁰ *Ivi*, pp. 183-184.

⁴¹ See *ivi*, p. 182, notes 11-12.

⁴² WISEMAN, *Corinth and Rome*, cit., p. 496.

⁴³ See RUTLEDGE, *The Roman Destruction*, cit., p. 187.

⁴⁴ App. 12,53: "Fimbria... made an indiscriminate slaughter and burned the whole town... He spared neither the sacred objects nor the persons who had fled to the temple of Athena, but burned them with the temple itself". Fimbria's destruction of Troy is also mentioned by Augustine, who quotes Livy (*Civ. Dei* 3,7).

conducted his campaigns against the Germans, including their most famous temple of Tanfana.⁴⁵ Cases are also known, of sites whose archaeological records attest to violent destruction at Roman hands, but go unnoticed by the literary sources. Such silence, Routledge points out, is attributable to how common such destruction was: why take notice of that which was inherent in warfare?⁴⁶

Then, when Britain revolted in 59, Suetonius Paulinus, the Roman commander, invaded Mona, an island containing sacred groves where a number of Britons had taken refuge, along with their Druidic leadership. He cut down the groves and put an end to their rites.⁴⁷ The practice of eradicating cults that functioned as a political or military center of resistance was conceivably longstanding. What happened on the island of Mona in Britain and the suppression of the Druids and the German prophetesses are only, it would appear, the most visible instances of a widespread phenomenon.

The case of Judea in Hadrian's days was different. He could not destroy the Jewish Temple because there was no Temple to destroy, but he could stamp out Jewish practices, as in past times other cults had been abolished all over the Roman world. And he did, or at least he tried to.

It therefore would appear that the measures carried out by Hadrian in Judea before and in the wake of the Bar Kokhba war – the founding of AeliaCapitolina, the anti-Jewish decrees, and the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem and from the surrounding areas – are certainly drastic measures, as Eck aptly observes,⁴⁸ but are not dissimilar from those enacted by other leading Roman figures against rebellious peoples and cities in previous times. One may therefore doubt if Hadrian's policy in Judea was influenced by that implemented by Antiochus.

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SUMMARY

May the impact of Antiochus' measures against Judean Jews have been felt hundreds of years later, inspiring those carried out by Emperor Hadrian? In spite of the similarities, it appears that Hadrian's policy was not dissimilar from that enacted by other leading Roman figures against rebellious peoples and cities in previous times. It is therefore doubtful if Hadrian's policy in Judea was influenced by that implemented by Antiochus.

KEYWORDS: Aelia Capitolina; Hadrian's policy; anti-Jewish decrees.

⁴⁵ "Neither age nor sex inspired pity: places sacred and profane were razed indifferently to the ground; among them, the most noted religious center of these tribes, known as the temple of Tanfana" (Tac. *Ann.* 1, 51).

⁴⁶ See RUTLEDGE, *The Roman Destruction*, cit.,

p. 183.

⁴⁷ "The next step was to install a garrison among the conquered population and to demolish the groves consecrated to their savage cults" (Tac. *Ann.* 14, 30).

⁴⁸ ECK, *The Bar Kokhba Revolt*, cit., pp. 88-89.

