

Hadrian's Second Jewish Revolt: Political or Religious?

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I

No matter how broad the gathering of evidence, there is a certain degree of opinion involved in deciding what to include in Hadrian's Second Jewish revolt. Our knowledge of the reign of Hadrian is problematic due to the lack of evidence. Not only are contemporary documents relatively rare, but our knowledge of specific events of Hadrian's reign is also limited. However, there are certain aspects of Hadrian's reign that have stirred up numerous myths and truths which have been debated throughout history. Foremost amongst these are Hadrian's meticulous Hellenistic program which reorganized certain cities of the Roman Empire particularly the cities of the East, and his major structural and social reforms forced on the Jews leading to the Jewish revolt of AD 132-135 characterized his rule. His rule is characterized as himself being his own man in administration of the Roman Empire. Therefore, was Hadrian's political ideology toward the empire the cause of the Second Jewish revolt, or was it his religious ideology that forced him to believe that the Jews were inferior by enforce major reforms, and policy in Judaea.

The second Jewish uprising against Rome is only comparable in its significance and its far-reaching consequences with the first uprising of A.D. 66, although there is one essential difference to this initial revolt, the source material on which we must rely on in order to reconstruct the events is inferior to that of the earlier Jewish war. ¹ The

¹ Peter Schafer, *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman world* (Routledge: London and New York, 2003), 145- 147

origins of the Second Jewish revolt remains a crucial and widely-disputed issue; moreover, the question as to what led to the revolt is an important one since the relatively peaceful internal development of Judaism in the period following the first Jewish revolt until the outbreak of the second, provides us with no obvious grounds for a renewed outbreak of war against Rome. Hadrian inaugurated a revision of the Roman policy of expansion with a new emphasis on pacification, a policy which certainly took hold in the eastern provinces of the empire. One theory of the start of the revolt states that the revolt developed because Hadrian had forbidden the practice of circumcision. Another theory suggested by Cassius Dio, in the "Roman History" that the reason for the war was Hadrian's intention to re-found the city of Jerusalem as a Roman colony called Aelia Capitolina. Lastly, according to a rabbinic source the war came about following the promise of Hadrian to the Jews to rebuild the Jewish temple, which he later rebuked. Of these three reasons, the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem is the least likely, particularly in the light of the numerous legendary features of the Rabbinic account. Thus, the problem therefore comes down to the prohibition on circumcision and the founding of Aelia Capitolina as the possible reasons for the war.

There may also have been personal motives: it is possible that Hadrian despised the Jews because of their religion and social characteristics. By implementing all his reforms and policies on the Jews, he hoped to assimilate them into the Roman Empire. Moreover, could Hadrian have had some religious quarrel with the Jews scrupulous ideology, such as performing circumcision, and the Sabbath? Another possible explanation was Hadrian's affinity for Greek culture, this affinity could have shaped the ideology behind his policies and reforms on the Jews, with religious significance.

However, he could have also been trying to unify Rome, or perhaps establishing specific border cities in the east for strategic defense purposes. Greek belief is quite different than that of the Christian or Jewish religions, such that the practice of circumcision by the Jews was seen differently by the Romans. The traditional ideology believed the concept that man is made in gods own image, therefore is pure. The Jews in the traditional sense are making man impure by performing circumcsions, and, in turn is seen as a bad omen according to Greek theology.

The Roman Empire was at its peak militarily in the first century AD, and held the world in its grip. Their highly trained army was the greatest at the time and included 29 legions (350,000 soldiers), highly trained.² Cassius Dio asserts that the Diaspora revolt started in Cyrenaica at a time when the Emperor Trajan had stripped other provinces of their garrisons to provide troops for his Parthian war.³ The term Diaspora is the designation for all Jews not residents in Palestine. Furthermore, Fairweather points out that the Diaspora of AD 66 was brought about by the Maccabaeen revolt in the 2nd century B.C., eventually spread to Egypt where the Jews killed an unknown number of people, and to Cyprus, where they are said to have killed 300,000 Jews. In Alexandria, however, the predominantly Greek population gained control of events and are said to have massacred the city. The killings are blamed on the Commanding officer Hadrian, which is due to the fact that Hadrian was at the time the commander of Trajan's eastern army and succeeded Trajan as Emperor in 117 AD, possibly before the final suppression of the revolt.

² Anthony R. Birley, *Hadrian the Restless Emperor* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 260.

³ William Fairweather, "Concerning the Jewish Dispersion," *The Journal of Religion* 9 (1929): 224.

II

Hadrian was elected governor of Syria shortly before his acclamation as emperor on August 11th, A.D. 117, and took up residence in Antioch.⁴ Jewish populations migrated to cities and established settlements which began to emerge across the empire in large numbers, which in turn lead to racial ridicule. These Jews, who migrated to various cities of the Eastern provinces, were possibly displaced by the previous Diaspora's in the beginning of the first century AD.

Right from the start Hadrian made it clear that he was his own man in his administration of the empire; he resumed the policy of the early emperors, dedicating his time to maintaining peace throughout the empire. However, this policy did not last long; one of his very first decisions was the abandonment of the eastern territories which Trajan had just conquered during his last campaign. Such a withdrawal, and the surrender of territory for which the Roman army had just paid for in blood, would hardly have been popular. Hadrian may be sharply contrasted with his predecessor Trajan, who owed his elevation to his successful wars in the Rhine region. After Trajan's death, Hadrian called upon the eastern armies; however, the troops were demoralized by Trajan's death, which in turn acted as a signal to Rome's enemies in every province.⁵

Hadrian spent the better part of his reign away from the capital exploring every province of the empire.⁶ On his travels he grew deeply devoted to Greek studies, so much so that some Romans called him the little Greekling.⁷ Throughout his twenty-one

⁴ Benard W. Henderson, *The Life and Principate of the Emperor Hadrian AD 76-138* (New York: Brentano's, 1916), 18-20.

⁵ Birley, 77.

⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁷ *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, eds. T.E. Page <et al.>, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), I 16-18.

year reign, Hadrian's affinity for Greek culture are seen throughout his administration as well as religious ideology. He had been so fascinated by the culture of Greece that he introduced Greek customs and even grew a beard which was traditionally Greek.⁸ Furthermore, his court assumed more and more a Hellenic characteristic. He was constantly surrounded by Greek playwrights and sophists; his favorite was Antinous⁹ with whom he had become acquainted with in Asia Minor and brought to Rome. He seemed to have viewed himself as a new Pericles; thus, most of his attention of the empire was exclusively focused on the east, particularly Athens.

The emperor, regardless of the particular merits or faults, became "Pater Patriae" or the "Father of the Fatherland" and ultimately deemed personally responsible for the welfare of each inhabitant, which he received in August of A.D. 128.¹⁰ This role had to be demonstrated daily in many different appearances. Usually coins carried the imperial image encircled by legends broadcasting the imperial virtues.¹¹ The imperial coinage acted as an official document and as such represented an official expression of the emperor and his regime.¹² Even statues, myths, and paintings of the emperor and the imperial family embellished temples and other public buildings showing the generosity of the emperor. Furthermore, the role of the emperor within the empire as a whole was an important link to the function and organization of the empire. Even though the religious role of the emperor has evolved from the time of Caesar Augustus, divinity is still a cultural link to authority in the empire.

⁸ Ferdinand Gregorovius, *The Emperor Hadrian*, trans. Mary E. Robinson (New York: Macmillan Company, 1898), 87.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

¹⁰ Mary T. Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² Carlos F. Norena, "The Communication of the Emperor's Virtues," *Journal of Roman Studies* 91 (2001): 147.

III

Prior to Hadrian, the religious ideology of the emperor changed during Trajan's reign when he spent most of his time as emperor on campaigns against the barbarian west. The role of the emperor at this time was intermixed with religion, and mysticism. The Panegyricus written in 100 AD embraces what is expected of the emperor.¹³ This speech proclaimed that a just ruler shall be successful while bad rulers shall suffer the fate of his rule.¹⁴ It is difficult to interpret the Panegyricus because according to Wolff and Syme it is much too long, and some of its topics are labored to the point of obscurity.¹⁵ This philosophy formed the basis of the whole character of the government under Trajan. In a general sense, the Roman population was theoretically supposed to see the emperor in a higher level than themselves; however, Trajan refused these honors. According to the Panegyricus, Trajan's rejection to be worshiped and could be seen by the gods as a form of virtue, which in turn preserved him to the highest position of divinity.

Hadrian like Trajan before him adopted this philosophy and attempted to show the people of Rome that his kindness was not from his genius but from the gods who honored him. In another word, the emperor, therefore, must seek not everlasting character which is already awaiting him but a good reputation which was brought about not by likeness and status but by virtue and merits.¹⁶ It is Roman tradition to offer public prayers for the

¹³ Betty Radice, "Pliny and the 'Panegyricus,'" *Greece and Rome* 15 (1968): 168.

¹⁴ Kenneth Scott, "The Elder and Younger Pliny on Emperor Worship," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 63 (1932): 160.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁶ Mason Hammond, "Pliny the Younger's Views on Government," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 49 (1938): 127.

preservation of the empire; however, the emperor will reap the benefits for the good of the empire.¹⁷ The emperor's authority to rule and power of divinity has to be genuine; if the emperor abuses his rule, the gods will look down on him and Rome. The Romans traditionally believe that for peace and prosperity in Rome, the emperor must achieve the grace of the gods; thus Emperors Trajan and Hadrian both assumed that they were gaining virtue by strengthening Rome and expanding it for the better of the people of the empire. The emperor served numerous functions within the Roman state. The emperor's public image reflected this diversity.¹⁸ Triumphal processions and imposing state monuments celebrated the military exploits and martial glory of the emperor. Furthermore, grain and coin distribution, entertainment advertised the emperor's patronage. Coins with the allocation of the emperor's portrait on one side along with a personification of a virtue on the reverse, regularly shown with the label "AUG" encouraged the coin's user to associate the personified virtue with the emperor. Moreover, the connection of traditional Roman virtues with the figure of the emperor is a prime example of how they successfully appropriated and monopolized different forms of symbolic capital. In an age where communication is limited, these imposing virtues were seen through the works of the emperor.

It was during Trajan's reign that this religious theory was officially developed. According to the *Panegyricus*, the emperor was a descendent of the gods of Apollo, Zeus, and Augustus, therefore the emperor was the representative and their image on earth.¹⁹ Just as Jupiter was ruler of the heavens, the emperor was the ruler of mankind.

¹⁷ Birley, 22.

¹⁸ Carlos F. Norena, "The Communication of the Emperor's Virtues," *Journal of Roman Studies* 91 (2001): 145-146.

¹⁹ Y. Shochat, "The Change in the Roman Religion at the Time of the Emperor Trajan," *Latomus* 44 (1985): 318.

Furthermore, numerous historians fail to recognize that Roman religion which was based on religious ritual during Trajan's reign became a religion whose fundamental principle was moral conduct.²⁰ Thus, the essential nature of the relationship between the deity and mankind, the relationship of the emperor and the state was changed. Therefore, the choice of a ruler should depend not upon simple inheritance but upon the selection of the most deserving.²¹ The good will of the gods toward the population and empire of Rome was now conceived as being judged on the behavior of the people, specifically the emperor. Traditionally the purpose of religion in the Roman state was to ensure that the state should prosper under the protection of the gods or to achieve the "pax deorum". Thus, what pleases the people is innocence and purity rather than involvement in prayer. The gods prefer individuals who approach their altars pure of heart and free from sin.²²

The basic philosophy of the Panegyricus is similar to Jewish and Christian belief at the time, as well as the concept of stoic ideology. The basic idea was that the human and superhuman are linked together by a bond. The human side, whose most prominent representative is the state, pleases the gods in order to gain their good will or the "pax deorum". In any case, the state enters into a compromise with the gods so that they should protect the emperor, and because he and the state are represented in the Panegyricus, the gods are in fact protecting the state. Contemporary writers such as Seneca introduce into Roman thinking the idea of the personal divine providence of god who rewards and punishes good and bad emperors. Furthermore, Tacitus, another contemporary, records the influence of the ideas of the Panegyricus, thus showing that it

²⁰ Radice, 318-320.

²¹ Hammond, 120.

²² Radice, 325-330

had become a common topic even after Trajan.²³ Therefore, Hadrian's ascension as emperor also came with preserving traditional ideology and religious responsibilities. Therefore, he adopted the same religious ideology with which he will receive the protection and favor of the gods if he is worthy of these. Like Trajan, neither Hadrian's position nor rituals make him the recipient for the favor of the gods, but his conduct as ruler did. Although Hadrian expressed his love for Greek mythology and culture, he knew that to have divine authority he had to gain virtue in which case he had to be thinking for the good of the empire. He attempts to justify his rule by implementing his public works programs, such as the building and reorganizing of the cities across the empire.

Hadrian expresses his good will in the form of the Panhellenion of the Roman Empire. This idea, developed through his influence and infinity for Greek culture, and was to assimilate the eastern half of the empire and her cities imperial ideology by launching new building programs, and social behavior based on the same administrative principles as Greek culture.²⁴ This surge upon restructuring cities of the empire was more prominent during the reign of Hadrian, than any other emperor. Moreover, Hadrian's ideology of this new endeavor would be strictly for the fiscal and economic well-being of the empire as well as making the emperor better linked to local affairs. In both the Latin west and Greek east of the Roman Empire, Hadrian devoted his time and energy to Eastern Greek cities. Hadrian's Panhellenion programs within the cities increased the status of urban life as well as helped gain loyalty and virtue from the population. Hadrian's law affecting the cities in-essence promoted peace. He forced

²³ Hammond, 123-125

²⁴ Boatwright, 8.

onto the cities laws that stressed that no one could destroy buildings, which he assumed affected the physical appearance of the cities.²⁵ The laws increased the prestige of many cities accordingly.

Hadrian, in much the same way as previous emperor's tried to gain the people's affection with gifts and beneficence such as buildings, grain, money and social and administrative reforms. The Hellenistic program was a major attraction to the people and cities of Rome, which have been burdened by decline, and neglect. Hadrian treated cities as the life blood of the empire. In a general sense, cities were left to administer themselves; thus they oversaw their own public buildings and cults, law and order, and embassies to Roman officials, including the emperor.²⁶ Furthermore, these cities were free to have commerce with other cities; however, Rome extracted from cities what it needed to provide for the armies, to maintain the government, to sustain games, grain, and construction at Rome and elsewhere. Hadrian's attention to detail was so strong for each individual city, especially in the east that he attempted to preserve its national history and assimilate the population without causing problems.

IV

The whole process of erecting public buildings was a central part of civic beneficence and imposed a tradition of behavior and a pattern of expectation from which not even the Roman emperor could distance himself from.²⁷ In the empire there were two concepts on imperial construction. On one end there was building concerned with the administration, security, and defense of the empire. In contrast, there was building

²⁵ Boatwright, 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁷ Stephen Mitchell, "Imperial Building in the eastern Provinces," *Harvard studies in Classical Philology* 91 (1987): 335.

sponsored or encouraged by the emperors in provincial cities such as temples, bath houses, games and theatres, which showed the generosity of the emperor. Hadrian, like Augustus before him used the labor of army personnel for large scale provincial construction work with military overtones, such as the erection of aqueducts; however, civilian labor was also used.²⁸ The Roman concept of imperial building in Rome and across the empire had many characteristics such as the number of work force, defenses of the city, establishment of funds, the empires response to crisis's, and economic revival. Of these concepts that Stephen Mitchell points out are the ideology emperors and contractors have to implement in founding or rebuilding cities across the empire.

The defensive needs of a city are a high priority among most cities, whose purpose was precisely the security and defense of the empire, as is true with the construction of city walls. In many cases it is clear that an emperor took direct responsibility for the fortification of provincial cities.²⁹ Each new emperor would contribute to the public works projects of important strategic cities. As mentioned before, the responsibility and finance of such buildings and reconstruction of cities across the empire was astonishing; however, the emperor used taxes of the population, various contributions by numerous nobles who sought to make a name for them, and also the contribution from the emperor's own pocket. Moreover, once the public works had been established, the empire would need to protect its assets. In time of crisis or petition of the cities' population, the empire would need to quickly respond to natural disasters, revolts, public works and even famine. If the emperor neglected to fulfill these obligations, the cities could either revolt or fall into shambles and not be effective for defense and

²⁸ Mitchell, 337.

²⁹ Ibid., 339.

economic growth. Once the cities had established their building projects and had turned loyal to the emperor, the city usually will achieve an economic revival and/or expand in culture and influence.³⁰

Hadrian had a strong understanding of the Roman economy, so much so that he strengthened the foundations of the empire by lowering taxation, improving administration, and passing reforms concerning the imperial estates, mining, and agriculture.³¹ It can be said that Hadrian was the first emperor of Rome to defend the lower classes from the nobility. Moreover, it was characteristic of him to always have time for everyone. For instance, as Fritz Pringsheim illustrates, as Hadrian was walking in the street with his escorts, he was approached by a woman trying to present a petition; he refused, saying that he had no time, but the woman remarked, if you have no time, you should not be emperor. He immediately stopped and listened to her case. Hadrian also showed special care to mothers, children and slaves. Still, Hadrian reorganized the government of the empire by creating a new body of officials who were required to be trained and educated on new lines, thereby bringing to completion the work of Augustus who had learned from the Hellenistic kingdoms that the old republican magistracies required to be supplemented by a class of imperial officials functioning as assistants of the Princeps and full of Greek ideology. For Hadrian to build up and achieve a peaceful world, he needed a solidly-founded administration. Hadrian believed administration served two roles, one as an intermediary between Hadrian and the people of Rome, and as a loyal government, which was at his authority upon his travels among the empire.³²

³⁰. Boatwright, 16.

³¹ Fritz Pringsheim, "The Legal Policy and Reforms of Hadrian," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 24 (1934): 143-144.

³² Boatwright, 146-149.

The Panhellenion was a league of Greek cities with intertwined religious, cultural, and political purposes, had as members a total of eleven cities in Achaea, ten in Asia, five in Crete and Cyrene, one in Thrace, and one in Macedonia. The league brought together cultures and cities otherwise isolated from one another; it also may have encouraged local official holding. The league guided by Hadrian elevated and rewarded cities that showed civic pride, and were keeping with Greek traditions. The most important criteria for admission in to the league consisted of Greek ancestry, its history of good relations with Rome, and the benefactions it had received from Hadrian.

During the rapid buildup and reorganization of the Hellenistic Campaign, Hadrian in A.D. 131 or 132 created a new safe haven in Athens. Here he built the Panhellenion, which he was worshiped in conjunction with Zeus Panhellenios.³³ The sanctuary was administered by members of the Panhellenion called the Panhellenes. They came from many different parts of the Greek world as representatives to different cities.³⁴ Held together by a league of Hellenistic reformers, Hadrian's Panhellenic program was his attempt to achieve economic enterprise for the empire as well as forge a stronger bond among the provinces. Dio expresses Hadrian's establishment of the Panhellenion, and emphasizes Hadrian's generosity to Athens. He states that he gave money to the Athenians, a yearly supply of grain, and all of the island of Cephallenia to Greece.³⁵ Furthermore, the Panhellenion expanded with certain established Hellenized cities who would be representatives to various other provincial cities.

³³ C.P. Jones, "The Panhellenion" *Chiron* v26 (1996), 29.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁵ *Dio's Roman History*, trans. Earnest Cary, 9 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), VII, 453.

In Athens, Pausanias describes that Hadrian constructed numerous building for the Athenians, such as a temple of Hera and Zeus, a sanctuary common to all the gods, an arch dedicated to Hadrian, and Library of Hadrian.³⁶ Furthermore, if the history of Spartianus is correct, Hadrian's presence was required in Athens for the dedication of the buildings begun by him, and now completed; but that the dedication of the temple of Zeus took place then, or that so many of Hadrian's buildings in Athens could have been finished simultaneously, admits to reasonable doubt.³⁷ In general, it seems that only a small fraction of the Greek-speaking world was included in Hadrian's Hellenistic program. However, the influence of the program on cities had a profound effect on the loyalty and virtue of Hadrian. It is possible that the Panhellenion and various other temples were built to worship Hadrian; however, it could also be probable that both Zeus and Hadrian were worshiped in tandem. Moreover, with Hadrian and the influence of the Roman Empire, Hellenized cities would receive help from Rome in times of need as well as military protection.

Hadrian's Athens acted as a model for his Hellenistic program which in turn was also closely associated with the emperor himself. Athens became the focus for the rest of the cities of the empire as the capital of the Hellenistic program. Not only did the physical transformation bring growth and stability to the city, it also attracted numerous scholars to the area. Hadrian first went to Athens in A.D. 124/125, however, many of Hadrian's gifts to Athens have been dated to his third visit in A.D. 131-132. Inscriptions on Athens's Arch of Hadrian emphasize the emperor's role as the city's reviver, and

³⁶ Boatwright, 145-148.

³⁷ Gregorovius, 93.

states that Athens is inseparable from what came before.³⁸ This connection with Athens Hellenistic past is emphasized by Hadrian's completion of the temple of Olympia Zeus that began in the 6 century B.C. Athens's temple was plainly associated with Hadrian and imperial ideology, although the emperor himself was not worshiped there with Zeus Olympios.³⁹

A similar structure of Hadrian's supremacy in Athenian life, however geared to Athens's cultural control can be seen in the "Library of Hadrian". Pausanias's describes the library as including over 100 marble columns, and decorative art, and inscriptions honoring Hadrian moral conduct, and imperial cult. One of the larger monuments of Athens, the library measures 87 by 125 meter within its large walls. Its design, which combines Roman and Hellenistic Greek elements, is very unusual in the city. The design of Athens Library of Hadrian was closely related with religious festivals and imperial cult. Moreover, Hadrian saw Athens as the center of Greek culture, moreover, Athens numerous scholars who migrated from afar, study, and learn through Greek education, and structures. Furthermore, Greek gymnasium was erected as a center of civic education as well, and functioned as a cultural and social center and in some instances as the seat of ruler worship.

Hadrian's generosity to his home town of Italica was quite substantial as well, and the city was also the closest west of the Roman Empire that had been bestowed with marks of favor from Hadrian.⁴⁰ Italica, like most Hellenistic cities, was transformed with numerous buildings as well as Greek influence. Dio remarks that Hadrian showed his native city great generosity and gave many gifts to the population although he never

³⁸ Boatwright, 147.

³⁹ Ibid., 153-156.

⁴⁰ Boatwright, 162.

visited there as emperor.⁴¹ Not only did Hadrian improve the traditional city, he also established a new part of the city which displayed wealthy estates and numerous buildings. These public works included an amphitheater, baths, gymnasium, and a monument called the Traianeum. The Traianeum represented the corporation between Hadrian and the elite of the city; it also embodies the balance in Hadrian's era between imperial commonalities and local pride.⁴² The funding of such monumental public works and attention to the provinces was derived from the funds that were to go to orderly administration. Thus, the money devoted to the military and senate was put to use in his reforms and programs. The fact that the army had opposed Hadrian's elevation to the throne can probably be made responsible for some of his reforms such as money.

Hadrian's Hellenistic program also consumed another eastern city of Smyrna, which was populated by Christians and Jews alike such as Apostle Paul and John who helped educated the masses with the Christian gospel. Smyrna appeared to have been the most attractive city to Hadrian. Like other Hellenistic city's Hadrian favored, he loaded the city with gifts. According to Boatwright, Hadrian in Smyrna gave the city ten million drachmae, with which they built a corn-market, a gymnasium which was the most magnificence in Asia, and a temple. The evidence for Hadrian's beneficence to Smyrna is important for three reasons. First, the dominance of religious buildings and personnel in the lists of Hadrian's donations underscores the importance of religion for Hadrian. Second, the inscription furnishes details about the logistics of imperial building programs. Third, the evidence overall substantiates the emperor's interaction with a

⁴¹ Jones, 30.

⁴² Boatwright, 165.

city's notables, a key element in the bond of power and obligation holding the Roman Empire together.⁴³

Antinoopolis a city founded 130 AD by Hadrian in honor of Antinoes and was a model for the Hellenistic way of life.⁴⁴ The Greeks in Antinoopolis were in abundance, however, they were scattered amongst the Egyptian population. By being a Greek, they were model citizens for Hellenistic institutions, such as their gymnasia, educational system, and social life. The design of the city resembled most Hellenistic cities of the empire. The city itself consumed three and a half miles of land, and was surrounded on three sides by a brick wall.⁴⁵ To Hadrian the city was to be a fortification of Hellenism in Egypt; thus it was important to choose for its population native Greek populations for the city. Furthermore, the population of Antinoopolis and Alexandria were exempt from payment of taxes, and were eligible for service in the legions. Even more, the city quickly attained considerable importance and prosperity and became a corner stone for the Hellenistic period along with Athens. Furthermore, both Antinoopolis and Alexandria have traditional Jewish populations. To contend with these large Jewish populations Hadrian saw fit to populate the city like all no traditional Greek cities, with Greek hegemony. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in his founding of these two cities. Moreover, due to the migration of Greek individuals into the cities along with their religious views caused the Jews much bitterness, which in turn developed into animosity and rivalry.⁴⁶ However, it is clear that Hadrian did not despise the Jews, because if he did he would have not been so generous to cities with a highly Jewish

⁴³ Boatwright, 159.

⁴⁴ H.I. Bell, "Anti-Semitism in Alexandria," *Journal of Roman Studies* 31 (1941) 133-135.

⁴⁵ Bell, 136.

⁴⁶ Fairweather, 232.

population such as in Antinoopolis and Alexandria. Moreover, since Egypt was the primary theatre for Jewish uprisings, both Antinoopolis and Alexandria could have been cities established to help protect from revolt and secure the borders.

V

Hadrian became emperor at a time when not only Jewish animosity became prevalent but also the influence of Christianity. Hadrian at this time began to implement his own policies and reforms that would bring new light to Rome. He did this by returning to old traditions and beliefs in both religious and administrative affairs. He wanted the empire to adopt one religion which was pagan; he also aimed to intertwine the status of the emperor within the formal and informal beliefs and myths of the Roman populace to perfection.⁴⁷ The coins issued as currency to the empire, made their way to various provinces, thus spreading the story of Hadrian. With this knowledge of Hadrian, the Jews must have known the intentions of Hadrian. Furthermore, the Jews had to understand that since Jerusalem had been lying in ruins for some fifty years, if Hadrian strongly influenced the city with numerous reforms, it could continue to influence conformity, help gain economic sway and protect Rome's Eastern borders.

Not much is known of the second Jewish revolt, the "Historiae Augustae" and the "Roman History" of Cassius Dio is the only contemporary sources that touch on the topic. The consequences of the revolt were perhaps even more catastrophic and far-reaching than those of the first revolt.⁴⁸ In A.D. 117 when Hadrian assumed the role of emperor of Rome, he seemed sympathetic to the Jews. During the first Jewish revolt in A.D. 66, Trajan and his armies forced numerous reforms on the Jews banning them from

⁴⁷ D. Golan, "Hadrian's decision to supplant Jerusalem by Aelia Capitolina," *Historia* 35 (1986), 231.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

entering Jerusalem.⁴⁹ Hadrian during the beginning of his reign allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and granted permission for the rebuilding of their temple. Unfortunately, Hadrian went back on his word or possibly never stated it.⁵⁰ What is certain is that Hadrian used numerous decrees either before or after the revolt that could be seen as punishment or continued pacification of the Jews. This included the prohibition of circumcision, but the issue is whether this ban was likely to have been in existence prior to the war and so could be taken as its cause. A reason why Hadrian could have developed an anti-Jewish decree on the Jews, specifically circumcision, could be a result of his infinity of Greek culture which believed circumcision was un-pure and a barbaric custom which ought to be abolished. Moreover, the issue of circumcision would have had little response under the tense situation before the revolt, because it would be hard to pay close attention to which children were uncircumcised before the declaration of the prohibition. Furthermore, Hadrian's decree of circumcision was likely used by the Romans to frighten the Jews and to assimilate to Roman culture.⁵¹ Moreover, fathers during this period had their children circumcised either before or after the law was enforced, but then they changed their minds because of Hadrian's decree and concealed the circumcision by performing the *epispasmos*.⁵² Moreover, Mary Smallwood emphasizes that prohibition of circumcision was part of the Jews punishment for the revolt, however, was the punishment a cause of the revolt as the "Historiae Augustae" has stated." In any case, Hadrian must have been well aware that such a policy would inevitably provoke discontent on the part of the Jews, and this does not sit well with

⁴⁹ Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 380.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 378-381

⁵¹ H. Mantel, "The Causes of the Bar Kochba Revolt," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 58 (1967), 286.

⁵² Schafer, 294.

Hadrian's systematic pursuit of promoting peace as well as continuing his gradual build up of eastern provinces.

The foundation of the colony of Aelia Capitolina would seem most likely to have ignited the conflict between Rome and Judaea. During this time Hadrian assumed the role of restitutor and the founding of Aelia Capitolina could have fallen into his Hellenistic program. Furthermore, the creation of a Roman city to replace the Jewish capital can be seen as part of Hadrian's general policy of Hellenization. Evidence of this Hellenization in Palestine did not just focus on Jerusalem, but elsewhere such as Sepphoris and Tiberias.⁵³ He founded many pagan temples in Tiberius and even Sepphoris, however, there is no record of any resistance by the native population.⁵⁴ Moreover, the city of Sepphoris, predominantly Jewish, was even renamed Diocaesarea in the emperor's honor, thus becoming the first element in the name recalling Hadrian's adoption of the title of Zeus Olympius, in A.D. 129.⁵⁵ Even the city of Tiberius, had a long history of Hellenistic ideology and therefore the Jewish population did not become excluded from the administration of the city. Therefore, Hadrian's purpose is likely to have been to benefit not only the Jews, but the city as well by reversing the outcome of the first revolt in A.D. 66, by restoring their destroyed city.

Hadrian continued to force conformity among the populations of the empire by means of incorporation. He used such means as populating the city by foreigners; and would also build numerous monuments that pushed Greek and Roman culture on the Jews of the empire. The Romans in Palestine as well as across the empire did not want Jerusalem to be rebuilt because of the risk of a rebirth of the Jewish national pride.

⁵³ Smallwood, 433.

⁵⁴ Smallwood, 447.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 432.

Countless Jews from Palestine disliked Hadrian and referred to him as the “Wicked” and remarked that “his bones rot”.⁵⁶ Moreover, it can be said that the Roman influence on the Jews had little effect towards the rebellion compared to the Jews wanting freedom and salvation. Even the inscriptions and symbols of Hasmonean coinage suggests that the revolt was motivated by the same desire for freedom, politically and spiritually.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the images expressed by the Jewish leader Bar Kockhba added the inscription of a harp and two trumpets which likely expressed hope for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. It can also be said that the past revolts such as the revolt in Egypt and even before served as motivation for the revolt lead by Bar Kockhba. Having seen that it was not just the decrees of Hadrian that caused the rebellion, we must reverse the process and say that the decrees of Hadrian were a reaction to the rebellion of the Jews.⁵⁸ With this in mind, the building of Aelia Capitolina and prohibition of circumcision could be considered a punishment to the Jews, which in turned served as a warning to Jew in other provinces not to rebel.

On his travels to Judaea Hadrian ordered the building of the temple of Zeus to replace the Jewish temple, he then begin exiling some Jews from Judaea in a attempt to stifle any local unrest. On the other hand, the fact that Hadrian built a new temple upon the old Jewish temple could have been the cause of the war, since the Jews objected to gentiles settling in their city and foreign cults established there.⁵⁹ According to Gregorovius, the temple had already begun before the war. Even in the forth century, when the temple no longer existed, numerous contemporaries saw on the site of the temple

⁵⁶ Mantel, 277.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 280.

⁵⁸ Mantel, 282.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 283-84.

Hadrian's statue and the perforated stone, which the Jews were accustomed to rub. Coins of the time also portray a small round building with the figure of Zeus in the center, standing between Pallas and Hera.⁶⁰ Moreover, other coins portray images of deities such as Apollo, Dionysus, and the Dioscuri, thus proving that the Capitoline Jupiter was not the only Roman temple worshiped in Jerusalem.⁶¹ Furthermore, the Jews were aware that the building of a pagan temple on the site of the Jewish temple would make a permanent change in the character of the city, ending Jewish hopes of the eventual restoration of the cult of Yahweh.⁶²

In A.D. 117-132, the status of the province of Judaea was changed and was raised to the rank of consular province.⁶³ This change must have taken place before A.D. 127, because evidence implies that Tineius Rufus was the consular at the time of the revolt. Since the area of Judaea received a higher rank to consular province, two legions must have been occupying the territory during this time. Gregorovius remarks that the Xth legion was in Judaea during the reign of Trajan, which it took part in the Parthian war. Also, with the road construction accruing during this time by Hadrian, he must have clearly directed his attention to the province of Judaea. Even the milestone identified that Caparcotna in the Jezreel Valley as having been an important military base which had then connected with Sepphoris and further with Akko in A.D. 120 AD.⁶⁴ Hence, it follows that Caparcotna was the headquarters of the new legion which controlled movement between Judaea and Galilee.⁶⁵ The possibility of increased Roman activity

⁶⁰ Gregorovius, 162.

⁶¹ Ibid., 162.

⁶² Smallwood, 433.

⁶³ Ibid., 436.

⁶⁴ Schafer, 281.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 283.

following the death of Trajan, and in A.D. 129-130 may reflect a response to local unrest and/or preparation to suppress anticipated revolts. In any case, it could have been Hadrian's purpose to secure some type of peace in the eastern provinces following the abandonment of claims to Trajan's conquest in Mesopotamia and Assyria. The cities not willing to adapt to Roman culture would be replaced by someone that would.

It is also possible that not the organization of Jerusalem as a colony provoked Jewish resistance, but the decision to make it a pagan city and the plans for the site of the temple did.⁶⁶ However, the establishment of Judaea into a consular province together with the assignment of a second legion and the road construction undertaken in Judaea cannot be seen as having been the cause of Jewish unrest. This action may not have been directed towards the repression of the Jewish population but towards the establishment of peace and of secure borders in the east of the empire.⁶⁷ Evidence also suggests that the Pagan coins and the statue of Hadrian in the cities with both Roman and Jewish citizens do not provide evidence of patronizing of the Jews. However, they do suggest an increasing adoption of the Hellenization and numerous loyal Jewish populations. Still, the number of Jewish and Christian inhabitants had also gradually increased. Moreover, Smallwood remarks that no matter the political aspirations of the Jews during the reign of Hadrian, he himself had no quarrel with their religion beyond his objection to circumcision; and the assumption stated in the "Historiae Augustae" that he was hostile to foreign cults in general.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Schafer, 288.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 294.

⁶⁸ *Scriptoes Historea Augustae*, I, 16-18.

VI

The establishment of the colony Aelia Capitolina was the most likely result of Hadrian's policies and was welcomed by Hellenistic and pro-Roman people within the Jewish community. However, it was its foundation on the site of Jerusalem which Cassius Dio tells us led to the war.⁶⁹ It can be said that Hadrian's visit to Judaea took place in A.D. 130-131 AD during his last great journey to the East.⁷⁰ Thus, the founding of the colony must be established to about this date, and the war must have begun soon after it. Even Gregorovius remarks that the emperor had most likely given orders, before his visit for the foundation of the colony, but the colony was not finished in the year A.D. 130, as other sources suggest. Moreover, the colony could have been planned and begun before the Jewish war, and immediately after the war was ended the building was taken up again, suggesting that the re-founding of the city was part of his Hellenistic program not oppression to the Jews. The new city was supposed to be Pagan in character, specifically dedicated to the worship of the emperor as the earthly manifestation of Jupiter Capitolinus.⁷¹ Founding the city as a consequence of the war could be plausible as well, while Hadrian was still in charge of Syria in A.D. 117 immediately after his accession, he had given permission to the Jews to restore the temple. However, Hadrian's founding of Aelia Capitolina signified that he planned to destroy Jewish nationalistic uprisings at their source. The natural period for the formation of this plan would have been in A.D. 117, the idea of founding a colony in Jerusalem could even

⁶⁹ *Dio's Roman History*, VII, 447.

⁷⁰ William D. Gray, "The Founding of Aelia Capitolina and the Chronology of the Jewish revolt under Hadrian," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* 39 (1923), 249.

⁷¹ Henderson, 112-113.

have been a project of Trajan when there was still unrest against the Jews in Egypt.⁷² Furthermore, not only was Egypt a stronghold of Judaism and the head of Jewish sedition it was also a very wealthy province, and Jerusalem would have acted as a great defense to revolts and strengthening the border.

When looking at these considerations the fact that it was absolutely necessary for Hadrian, is to control the provinces which supplied the capital with food, manpower, and materials. However, if the war did occur in A.D. 131-132, and the work on Aelia Capitolina began as early as A.D. 117, the founding of the colony was, as Dio asserts, the cause of the war, but why did the Jews wait so long to revolt? It is then plausible that the Jews did not remain quiet between A.D. 117 and 132. Some cause of discontent, other than their continued hatred with Roman rule, was active among them at least as early as A.D. 128. Thus, the Jewish wrath eventually took the form of sporadic revolts. Hadrian most likely annoyed by revolts and by the persistent uprisings, adopted further measures of repression against them. He excluded them altogether from the colony and finally forbade them to practice the rite of circumcision.⁷³

It must also be considered in connection with the last revolt of the Jews in the East, in which Jerusalem had been the strongest of all the cities of Syria. As soon as Hadrian had withdrawn the boundaries of the empire to the east of the Euphrates retaining only Arabia, he must have thought of building strong places between the Euphrates and the Red Sea to serve as a support to the Roman army, and protect Rome.⁷⁴ While most of the eastern cities of Hadrian Hellenistic program had become Hellenized peacefully, Palestine itself was the only province that was opposed to the power of Rome

⁷² Gray, 253.

⁷³ Ibid., 256.

⁷⁴ Gregorovius, 28.

and its reforms forced upon them. To overcome this opposition and to Hellenize the Jews was the aim of the imperial government, particularly after the continued rebellion. The colony had been planned and begun before the Jewish war, and immediately after the war ended, the new building most likely was taken up again and vigorously carried on.⁷⁵ Even coins with the legends Colonia, Aelia Capitolina, and Conditia commemorated this foundation.

The Jews were furious that men of a strange race were to settle in their city, and that foreign sanctuaries should be erected there. Thus according to this statement, the conversion of Jerusalem into a colony was the cause of the war, while according to the view of Eusebius, it was the result. According to Eusebius view, had this Roman colony been founded in the beginning of Hadrian's reign, it would either have been completed at the time of the rebellion or strong walls and towers would have made the new city the object of the struggle. Therefore, the Jews did not wait until Aelia became totally fortified, but they took up arms to prevent the building of the colony; and Jerusalem, devastated as it was, could have for them no strategic importance.⁷⁶

The causes of the revolt are clouded by controversy, in which case the only logical understanding of the revolt was that it had to have derived from the administrative reforms and policies such as Hadrian implementation of his Hellenistic program. Much of the east was consumed by the influence of Greek cities established in the league, Athens, Italica, and Smyrna served as model for the unity of the empire, which in turn promoted economic growth and stability. Hadrian's ideology of the empire

⁷⁵ Gregorovius, 116.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 144.

derived from his influence of Greek culture, therefore, characterizing his rule in the light of Greek studies, religion, and building structures.

The Jews, especially in Palestine, were not as easy to model to Roman rule, as the other cities of the empire. This could have been due to past sentiment of past emperors, or could be that the Jews did not like foreign individuals settling in Jerusalem. To assume that Hadrian despised the Jews due to their religious and social characteristics would be completely uncalled for in understanding his philology towards the empire as a whole. What can be argued is that Hadrian became annoyed that the Jews were in constant revolt towards the empire which caused his Hellenistic program as well as stability of the empire to be deterred.

His three major reforms of prohibiting circumcision, building a temple of Zeus on the site of the Jewish temple, as well as the re-founding of the colony Aelia Capitolina could be steps taken to suppress Jewish unrest. However, the most likely explanation of his decrees as pointed out by Cassius Dio, Gregorovius, and others is that these decrees were issued before the revolt even took place, thus instead of being a punishment to the Jews for their lack to conform, the reforms were instituted as a part to control the structure of the Hellenistic program in Jerusalem. However, Hadrian Hellenistic program in Antinoopolis and Alexandria was similar to all the Greek building erected in Jerusalem, as well as laws towards the population, but the cities did not revolt. Even the city of Sepphoris which was dominantly Jewish had there city renamed in honor of Hadrian. Furthermore, as pointed out by the Panegyricus, Hadrian would have been gaining virtue, along with moral conduct which would justify his policies and reforms of the empire. Thus, to gain virtue he believed that rebuilding new and old cities was

providing for the good of the empire as a whole. Moreover, Hadrian's successful suppression of the Jewish revolts could make the gods preserve him which in turn was looked upon as protecting the empire. In any case, it seems Hadrian's reforms and policies concerning the Jews and Jerusalem were strictly political.

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