The Jewish Revolt against Rome

Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Edited by Mladen Popović
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This volume contains a collection of papers which were originally presented at a conference organized by the Qumran Institute held on 21–22 October 2010 at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Groningen. This was the second conference in a biennial series at the Groningen Qumran Institute. The theme of the conference was “The Jewish War against Rome (66–70/74): Interdisciplinary Perspectives.” One paper that could not be delivered at the conference has been added.

It is with great pleasure that I would like to thank my co-organizers Professors Piet van der Horst and Ed Noort for their efforts and support, as well as the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Groningen and the Groningen Research School for the Study of the Humanities for the financial support that made the conference possible. I would also like to thank Alison D. Sauer for her editorial assistance. Finally, I am most grateful to the editor and associate editors of the Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, Professors Benjamin Wright, Florentino García Martínez and Hindy Najman, for accepting this volume in their series, as well as to the staff at Brill, especially Mattie Kuiper and Tessel Jonquière, for taking such great care of the volume’s production.

Mladen Popović, Groningen, June 2011
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Donald T. Ariel is Head of the Coin Department of the Israel Antiquities Authority in Jerusalem.

Andrea M. Berlin is James R. Wiseman Chair in Classical Archaeology at Boston University.

Robert Deutsch is a Ph.D. candidate at Tel Aviv University.

Werner Eck is Professor of Ancient History at the University of Cologne.

Jan Willem van Henten is Professor of New Testament at the University of Amsterdam.

Pieter W. van der Horst is Professor Emeritus of New Testament, Ancient Judaism and Hellenism at Utrecht University.

George H. van Kooten is Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of Groningen.

Jodi Magness is Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Steve Mason submitted his contribution while Professor in the Department of History at York University, Toronto. He is now Professor and Kirby Laing Chair in New Testament Exegesis at the University of Aberdeen.

James S. McLaren is Associate Professor and Reader at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at Australian Catholic University.

Mladen Popović is Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Early Judaism and Director of the Qumran Institute at the University of Groningen.
Jonathan J. Price is Professor in the Departments of Classics and History at Tel Aviv University.

Uriel Rappaport is Professor Emeritus in the Department of History of the Jewish People at the University of Haifa.

Brian Schultz is Assistant Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies at Fresno Pacific University.

Daniel R. Schwartz is Professor in the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Julia Wilker is Assistant Professor in the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Greg Woolf is Professor of Ancient History at the University of St Andrews.
THE JEWISH REVOLT AGAINST ROME:
HISTORY, SOURCES AND PERSPECTIVES

Mladen Popović

The pursuit of history involves asking questions about the past, which is obviously no longer directly accessible. New data thus generates new questions; however, old data may also attract new questions and new perspectives. Thinking about history is to an important extent determined by contemporary interests and circumstances. As these interests and circumstances change, perspectives and the questions asked change. Setting aside traditions and historical memories, what remains of the ancient past are the contemporary sources that are available to us: literary, documentary, numismatic, epigraphic, iconographic and archaeological. However, these sources are not always simply or directly available to us. Some have been handed down by tradition, which is the case for most of the literary texts, while others have been actively retrieved by modern exploration. What the extant sources share is that they represent only a small part of all source material that was once in existence. Nevertheless, the available sources are the building blocks for scholarly study of the past. The study of each of these sources entails its own methodological requirements, difficulties and possibilities.

The challenge for ancient historians is to understand these sources as distinct and separate but at the same time as part of a shared historical context. Acknowledging the distinct nature of each kind of source and an appropriate method and hermeneutics to approach each one, the integral use of different sources is important because these reveal different aspects of an ancient society. This does not mean that all forms of evidence available to us should be related to each other in order to achieve a single coherent reconstruction. To aim at such a reconstruction would mean to ignore the fact that we have only fragments of the whole. Nonetheless, ancient historians should not focus

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1 This article and edited volume are part of my VENI research project The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Jewish War against Rome, for which I received a grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).
on only one body of evidence but take all of it into account and assess whether a particular piece provides an answer to the historical questions asked.

This volume brings together different disciplines, some for the first time, and combines fields of research that should not be pursued in isolation from each other should we wish to further our understanding of the broader historical context of the first Jewish revolt against Rome. Several issues with regard to the literary, archaeological, numismatic and epigraphic sources and the historical reconstruction of this conflict warrant further reflection. True to the pursuit of history briefly outlined here, this volume presents new data that generate new questions, as well as new perspectives that shed new light on already familiar data. The perspectives offered by the various contributors are often interdisciplinary, engaging different sources and approaches.

Whether or not the war of the Jews against the Romans was the greatest war that had ever occurred to that point, as Josephus claims (B.J. 1.1), for ancient historians the Jewish revolt against Rome in the first century C.E. provides the opportunity to study one of the best-documented provincial revolts in the early Roman Empire.

Firstly, there is the archaeological evidence. Sites that were destroyed in the suppression of the revolt have been excavated. The well-known examples are Jotapata, Gamla, Jerusalem and, of course, Masada. These excavations dramatically illustrate the preparations, tactics and effects of Roman sieges. Recently, evidence of subterranean hideouts has also been unearthed, illustrating some of the preparations that were undertaken by Jewish villagers.

Secondly, there is unique numismatic evidence. The Jewish rebels asserted their independence from Rome by issuing their own coinage. The epigraphy and iconography of these coins express the inauguration of a new era under a Jewish authority.

Thirdly, there is documentary evidence. A reassessment of some of the manuscripts from Murabba'at suggests these belong to the period of the revolt. These documents also use dating formulas and phrases similar to those on the revolt coins. The documentary evidence illustrates that the independent government guaranteed the legal framework of everyday transactions and that daily life went on during the revolt.

Finally, there is also the literary evidence. The accounts of the Jewish aristocrat Flavius Josephus in particular provide a wealth of material that stands out in comparison with the dearth of evidence available about other revolts in the empire. For many if not most of the events,
Josephus is our only source of evidence. Recent discussion has again focused on the advantages and disadvantages, possibilities and limitations of Josephus as a source for modern historical enquiry into the revolt. One of the fundamental issues is whether Josephus' accounts are proper historical sources for understanding pre-70 C.E. Judaea or whether they are instead historical sources for understanding the historical context of Josephus in Flavian Rome. Is it possible to reach beyond Josephus' narrative by distinguishing the different sources he used, to obtain different perspectives on the events he reflects upon and thus to move closer to "what really happened"? Or is Josephus' narrative all we have and must we accept that we cannot discover what really happened, as various historical scenarios may explain why Josephus wrote what he wrote?

Taking into account all of these sources and being mindful of their diverse nature we must ask: Which historical questions do they allow us to answer and which not? It is up to us to think through the relationships between the different sources, perspectives and historical reconstructions. For example, in what respect do literary texts, considered as "categories of thought," and material remains, considered as "categories of behaviour," relate to each other? Are these categories part of a shared context, remaining distinct yet possibly related elements? This volume offers fascinating insights into some aspects of the "prehistory" of the revolt. In this volume Andrea Berlin argues that during the first century B.C.E. a shift in material culture can be observed in certain villages in Galilee and Gaulanitis. She suggests that this shift reflects a new emphatic expression of Jewish ethnic identity and solidarity. Berlin argues that this was due to the impact of Rome on the region from the middle of the first century B.C.E. onward. Brian Schultz argues here that Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E. decisively determined the interpretation of the so-called Kittim in the War Scroll from Qumran. The Romans were perceived as the

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3 For the time being I will ignore questions concerning how to exactly delineate the conflict, such as: How is it defined, in terms of time, space, actors and factors? How far back should we go? My point at present is to confront different types of evidence and ask whether they reflect a similar set of historical circumstances (see below on the conflict's "prehistory").
eschatological enemy, the defeat of which would inaugurate the messianic age.

We should not simply conflate these two bodies of evidence; one being material and revealing behaviour, the other being literary and revealing thought. The literary texts cannot be used to reconstruct what Jewish villagers in Galilee and Gaulanitis thought during a period in which the patterns of material culture changed. However, when considering the impact of Rome on ancient Palestine and the different responses it generated, these different sources do provide us with evidence about how some behaved and what others thought in light of the Roman presence. As such, they reveal the diverse range of responses to the presence of Rome in the area. In this regard they are distinct, yet all represent parts of a shared historical context.

1. The Roman Context

As several authors in this volume emphasize, the Jewish revolt against Rome should be understood within a broader Roman context. Greg Woolf and Werner Eck provide a Roman perspective on the occurrence of provincial revolts and their perception and on the role played by Roman representatives in Judaea.¹

In his article, Greg Woolf is concerned to map the difference between normative explanations of revolt employed today and those used by the ancients. Modern explanations are frequently schematic and leave little space for ancient motivations.² Ancient accounts by contrast focus on the morality, motivations and agency of individuals.

Structural analysis, Woolf argues, may account quite well for the social, geographical and chronological location of dissent, at least at a very general level. However, such a perspective has more difficulty explaining apparent anomalies such as the participation of the highly integrated local elite, Jewish and Gallic aristocrats, former Roman

¹ In addition, Steve Mason invokes the imperial context to enquire, for example, into various aspects of Cestius Gallus’ campaign: the different actors involved, their relationship to each other and the different stakes and intentions at play. George van Kooten argues that the context of Rome’s civil war and the year of the four emperors determined the perspective of Roman, Jewish and Christian sources on the Jewish revolt. Christian fear of Nero’s return in particular was a crucial factor in early Christian sources.

² On the motivations of those who revolted, see the contributions by Schultz and McLaren in this volume.
soldiers and client kings. Moreover, such structural analysis provides little insight into how participants understood events at the time, as we have almost no rebel voices.\footnote{In this regard the contribution by James McLaren in this volume is highly significant as it carefully argues for the rebels' voice and reconstructs their motivation on the basis of numismatic and documentary evidence. The new numismatic data and perspectives offered by Robert Deutsch and Donald Ariel also significantly contribute to our understanding (see further below).}

As to a Roman understanding of provincial revolts, it is impossible to know how Roman emperors perceived their causes, but we do have access to what members of the Roman elite thought. However, this does not involve accepting naïve realist accounts of ancient authors. Taking the example of Tacitus, Woolf makes an important observation as to what kind of historical information Roman literary sources may reveal: “Tacitus’ own reconstructions of revolts and their causes can be taken to reflect the kind of explanation formed by members of the imperial ruling classes when they considered individual revolts.” However, this understanding will also have influenced how Roman elites behaved and acted in the provinces: second-century governors did not go out to their provinces with scrolls by Tacitus, Livy and Sallust in their bags, but discussions of revolts by ancient historians must have reflected and shaped their own actions in the provinces, as well as the experience of their peers and readers: “Tacitus’ provinces did not exist in an intertextual bubble, but needed to be constantly related to the empire known by experience.”

Susan Mattern has drawn attention to the value of the testimony of literary sources for understanding the reasoning and motivations behind the type of decisions taken by emperors and the ruling elite.\footnote{S. P. Mattern, Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).} Woolf’s position reflects a similar understanding of ancient literary texts that acknowledges the formation of the ideas of the ruling elites as being determined for the most part by literature and rhetoric, and that therefore literary texts reflect the concerns and understandings of these elites and, crucially, may also help us to understand their actions.

I highlight this approach, since Steve Mason does not take this view into account in his contribution to this volume when he argues that even if we had the confidence to declare Josephus’ account of Titus’ war council about the Jerusalem temple a word-perfect transcript, it
would tell us little about Titus' general views or those of his commanders. This stretches the argument too far. Mason makes a valid point that the real-life situation would have been much too complex and evolving too rapidly for a literary representation to mirror that reality. Different historical scenarios may explain why Josephus' account is as it is. There is no direct relationship between his story and real events, such that it mirrors real events. However, to acknowledge that we cannot know what really occurred, in a von Rankean sense as it were, does not entail that we cannot know about anything other than the particular context of the narrator. As Mattern and Woolf suggest, it is precisely this context that may inform us not only about how Roman elites perceived and imagined certain events but also how they acted according to that perception. In this case, the "manufacturing of consent" may be assumed to have conditioned the thoughts and behaviour of the Roman elites formed by that knowledge.

Woolf's contribution is important to the study of the Jewish revolt against Rome as it demonstrates that at least for other parts of the Roman Empire we are able to enquire after the understanding of Roman elites with regard to provincial revolts. Actually, insofar as he is writing for a Roman audience, Josephus may provide us with similar access to Roman elite perspectives. As to the account of Titus' war council, I agree that it does not literally mirror reality, but similar to Mattern's argument concerning Herodian's report of Commodus' war council, I suggest that Josephus' report, in a more general sense, may reveal patterns of thought among Titus and his commanders. Whether they changed their minds, revealed their real thoughts or were not in complete control of everything that happened does not a priori render Josephus' report meaningless for that historical context. The "historicity" of such a war council can be understood in different ways. How Josephus imagined the conversation between Titus and his commanders might reveal significant elements that indicate Roman concerns.

* To be sure, Mason does refer to the shared education of Roman elite men in rhetoric, but he does not seem to share Mattern’s and Woolf’s perspective on what that may entail for the use of ancient literary sources by modern historians to infer ancient motivations and actions.

and in turn might suggest Roman actions. However, this would need to be explored further.

Werner Eck reflects on Josephus' position within the Roman context and what that means for the various perspectives taken in his accounts; Josephus was not an impartial observer of and writer about the revolt, not only with regard to the Jewish groups involved but also with regard to the perspectives he provides on the Roman prefects and governors. He could not be overly critical of Rome, as the emperor and his family represented Rome. Therefore, Josephus targeted his criticism at the Roman representatives in Judaea, and not at all of them, but the prefects specifically. Surprisingly, Eck notes, Josephus never criticizes the legates he mentions, except for the senator Vibius Marsus. However, based on our knowledge of how the Roman Empire functioned administratively, Eck points out that it was not the prefects criticized by Josephus who were responsible for what went on in Judaea until 66 C.E. but rather the legates/governors of the province of Syria.10 Furthermore, there was a significant difference in social status between these two types of functionaries, something readily understood by Josephus' Roman audience. The legates of senatorial status would have been people on whom Josephus would still have been dependent after 70 C.E. This would explain why he did not aim his criticism at them.

Rather than assessing certain actions taken by the prefects as provocations, Eck explains these as perfectly in line with normal Roman customs, and he stresses that the Roman response to unrest caused by these actions was in general sensitive and balanced: "Das konnte aus jüdischer Sicht durchaus provozierend sein, doch ist damit noch nicht einfachhin in allen Fällen auch das Motiv der Präfekten identifiziert." Eck thus also argues for a perspective that understands the behaviour and actions that Josephus ascribed to Roman representatives in Judaea within the context of how Romans would have understood and expected their prefects, procurators and governors to behave in the provinces.11

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10 This is a point that is also made by Steve Mason in this volume when he thinks through the different historical scenarios with regard to Cestius Gallus' campaign.
11 Rather than highlighting Josephus' different treatment of prefects/procurators and legates/senators, in his contribution to this volume Daniel Schwartz adds another perspective to Josephus' accounts of Rome's representatives in Judaea, suggesting that the importance for Josephus of presenting an argument concerning the procurators'
2. The Revolt's "Prehistory" and the Motivation of Jewish Rebels

The notion of a prehistory to the revolt may conjure up the idea of a longue durée perspective taking into account a multiplicity of long-term, rather than immediate causes that contributed to the revolt, including social, economic, demographic and political events.

From such a structural mode of analysis, Jewish responses to "Romanization" may present themselves as an interesting element that warrants further study. This does not imply that we should see the Jewish revolt against Rome in essentialist terms as a monolithic conflict between Roman and Jewish culture, as if there was something intrinsic in Jewish and Roman society that made coexistence between the two impossible. Nor should we assume without further qualification that responses from the first century B.C.E. to some of the actions of Rome's representatives in the area were simply transmitted in unaltered form

responsibility diminished between writing the War and the Antiquities, which was written about two decades later (see further below).


for decades and that we can ascribe these to those who revolted against Rome. Bearing these caveats in mind, some fascinating responses to the impact of Rome are revealed in the contributions by Andrea Berlin and Brian Schultz.

As noted above, Andrea Berlin detects a shift in material culture in Galilee and Gaulanitis that indicates a development from a gradual to a complete division between Jews and non-Jews as far as aspects of daily life are concerned (pottery, *migva‘ot* and synagogues). In the early first century B.C.E., differences in shopping and dining habits and some indicators of ethnic identity can be observed, but they are not yet wholly divided spheres: "Market routes still connect areas where different peoples live, and the places where they gather to petition or honor their deities remain the old, now somewhat out-of-the-way sites." However, a few generations later, around 10 C.E., in the early years of Herod Antipas and Herod Philip, all this had changed: "Those few commonalities and connections no longer exist. Galilean Jews...now shop exclusively in their local markets. They stock their pantry shelves only with saucers, bowls, and kitchen vessels made nearby. They no longer buy red-slipped dishes from Phoenician suppliers nor do they light their homes with mold-made lamps."

Why does this happen? Berlin suggests that a new development gave rise to this new assertion of Jewish identity: the impact of Rome on the region, specifically in the form of shrines that honoured Roman deities. The Jewish response was to close ranks, further developing their separate and distinct lifestyle. Berlin suggests that cultural differences hardened into cultural divisions that caused Galilean and Gaulanite Jews to perceive the world around them as different from their now sharply delineated milieu. Such a perception may have contributed several decades later to tensions between Jews and non-Jews leading up to the revolt, although it is difficult to prove such a causal, long-term development.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are virtually the only contemporary documents we possess from pre-revolt Judaea. These manuscripts put us in an exceptional position to assess the ideas, expectations and self-understanding that were conceived, articulated and disseminated among a specific Jewish group involved in the conflict. In what way

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were ideas about an anticipated eschatological war, as in the War Texts from Qumran, related to Rome's impact on Judaea and can we determine whether such ideas had any bearing on the events of 66 C.E. and afterwards?

Brian Schultz focuses on the War Texts from Qumran, most notably the War Scroll from Cave 1. He presents his thesis on the composition history of the War Scroll and on the shifting interpretations of the Kittim as the eschatological enemy. As noted above, Schultz argues that the final identification of the Kittim, from the Seleucids to the Romans, was determined by Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E. The belief that the defeat of the Kittim would inaugurate the messianic age suffered a mortal blow with Pompey's conquest, as independence from the Seleucids had not heralded the messianic age. Schultz suggests that "both the ones spurring on the revolt as well as the authors of the various War Texts had as a goal Judea's political and religious independence from foreign interference. Just this commonality alone highlights the possibility that eschatological factors may have motivated at least some who joined in the conflict."

Although James McLaren argues against using distinctive factors such as religious ideas or extremist ideologies to explain why Jews revolted against Rome, his analysis highlights an aspect that is also noted by Schultz: the claim that the land was to be purged of foreigners and free of foreign rule. One should be careful not to lump this evidence presented by McLaren and Schultz together based on a presumed similarity of ideas. Nonetheless, here too Josephus' framework must not predetermine the manner in which we understand evidence from pre-revolt documents such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Qualifications such as extremist or sectarian are less valuable to an understanding of what is at stake in literary texts such as the Qumran manuscripts.

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13 On the basis of modern war studies, McLaren argues that we need not invoke distinctive factors such as extremist ideologies, radical aspirations or hopes of divine assistance to explain the decision to go to war in 66 C.E. He argues that like many other people who have started a war, the Jews were simply optimistic that they would succeed. The advantage of hindsight should not lead us to attribute foreknowledge to historical participants. As Greg Woolf argues with respect to Tacitus and the Batavian revolt, both Josephus' readers and we know that the Jewish revolt failed, but contemporaries need not have taken the same view: "[L]ooking back to the successful Maccabean revolt against a collapsing Macedonian empire, perhaps resistance to Rome seemed less obviously futile?" McLaren also emphasizes the different assessment of the situation made by Jews in 66 C.E.

16 See also below on Pieter van der Horst and Uriel Rappaport.
More interesting is that a text such as the War Scroll also reveals the same view on the purpose of war: to be free of foreign rule. Whether this is significant remains to be seen. In terms of the long-term development of ideas that may have motivated those who revolted, it is at least suggestive enough to warrant further investigation.

McLaren focuses on two sources of information: Josephus, writing soon after the revolt, and material remains in the form of revolt coins and manuscripts from Murabba'at with dating formulas, both dating to the time of the revolt. What do these sources reveal about the motivation of those who revolted? McLaren’s methodological point of departure with regard to Josephus is to read Josephus against himself: “Where Josephus makes accusations about the rebels, especially in terms of what they proclaimed to be doing, it is highly likely that the rebels were using that issue as a motive for the war.” He argues that Josephus’ “extensive use of ‘freedom’ in relation to why the war was being fought warrants recognition as the primary motive.” Together with a review of the actions Josephus ascribes to those who revolted against Rome, McLaren infers an active engagement with the Romans in Judaea aimed at getting rid of them, as well as the rebels’ aim of a new state: “This was not a protest that had got out of control; it had been a choice to undertake a war of liberation.”

As to the documentary evidence from Murabba'at, McLaren argues that the dating formula and the Hebrew language in which some of the documents were written signals the existence of a new state. He also argues that the documents are clear evidence that life went on even once the war had commenced: “Irrespective of what the owners of the documents believed, the existence of the new formula is extremely significant. If part of an official formula it means the people charged with its operation were concerned to put in place procedures that clearly declared a new era had commenced. If done because it was simply common practice then it indicates a widespread acceptance of the new era.”

As to the numismatic evidence, McLaren emphasizes that the people who minted the revolt coins must have been supporters of the war. Moreover, if more people were responsible for different issues of revolt coins, then the greater the number of Jews in Jerusalem who were openly committed to the revolt. Unlike Robert Deutsch and Donald Ariel (see below), McLaren aims to understand this material independent from the framework of Josephus’ narrative. He, therefore, does not suggest specific identifications of those responsible for minting
the revolt coins. Nonetheless, in a general sense, the documentary and numismatic evidence independently corroborates an aspect of Josephus' account when "read against Josephus."

Viewing the material evidence together with Josephus, McLaren notes the coherence regarding the purpose of the war: once again, to be free of foreign rule. However, there are also important differences. In Josephus, "[t]here is little sense of an independent state being established and certainly no mention of its name, 'Israel,' let alone reference to 'Zion.'" As such, the documents from Murabba'at and the revolt coins constitute independent evidence that sheds important light on the motivation of the Jews who revolted against Rome and the message that they wished to convey.

3. FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS

Of necessity, modern enquiries into the history of the Jewish revolt are for the most part dependent on Josephus. Of course, there are other sources that corroborate that the Romans suppressed a revolt in Judaea sometime in the second half of the first century C.E. Archaeological excavations have unearthed sites, towns and villages that were besieged and destroyed, as was the city of Jerusalem. 17 Roman imperial propaganda such as the Judaea Capta coins and the arch of Titus display a message of Jewish submission and Roman victory. In addition to Josephus, other literary sources also make clear that the Jerusalem temple was destroyed, and also that different Jewish factions fought each other before they united against the Roman legions which appeared before the walls of Jerusalem. Tacitus provides a breakdown of the different forces within the city and the different areas they controlled (Hist. 5.12.2–4). He, or his source, thus corroborate in a general sense part of Josephus' account. 18 However, when it comes to specific events, causes and developments, and people and their thoughts and actions, Josephus is our only source.

In this volume the various contributors take different positions with regard to the use of Josephus as an historical source for pre-revolt and revolt Judaea, with some contributors being more pronounced than others in their methodological considerations. Put simply, the parameters of the discussion revolve around the question of whether Josephus is a source of evidence at all for the matters that he narrates or rather a source for the contemporary context in Flavian Rome. Some contributors to this volume remain suspicious of Josephus, arguing that Josephus can be read against himself as well as in light of other non-literary sources (James McLaren), critically as well as in light of other literary sources (Julia Wilker), or between the lines along with a comparison of parallel accounts to determine Josephus’ own voice (Jan Willem van Henten). Others focus on a literary comparison of Josephus’ parallel accounts to consider what sources Josephus had available and how his views changed between his writing of the War and the Antiquities (Daniel Schwartz).

In his contribution to this volume, Steve Mason’s general thesis is “that the different views of history held by those of us who study Roman Judaea is a sizable but mostly neglected problem.” Mason’s point is not so much that Josephus does not potentially reflect events of the revolt and before," but that in the absence of other evidence, literary or otherwise, there is no opportunity for the historian to corroborate or falsify the specifics of the events that Josephus narrates. Especially difficult is Josephus being the sole source of evidence for people’s thoughts and motives, as Mason’s view of history is based on Robin G. Collingwood’s philosophy of history, which perhaps most controversially states that thoughts and intentions behind actions in the past are the core interest of historical inquiry. Mason, therefore, emphasizes imagining the motives of those who acted in the past in his view of history. However, he also asks how any one source can be taken as a truthful reflection of people’s motives, especially since real-life situations affect people’s motives and actions. In addition, the many people and factors involved makes it difficult to draw a simple causal line from intentions to actions and results, especially for ancient history when we do not have the wealth of evidence of modern history.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Mason, however, also problematizes this when he points out, more than once, that a literary account cannot mirror reality as it is much too complex.
⁹⁷ For a modern illustration of the complexity involved in thinking out policy on the one hand and executing that policy on the other see, e.g., B. Woodward, State
Therefore, the methodological point of departure cannot be dependent on any one source. Rather, Mason argues that a defensible historical method begins by asking historical questions, thinking through different scenarios and assessing the different sources on their own merits, and then determines whether they can or cannot help answer our questions. If they cannot, it does not render a source unreliable or implausible, qualifications that according to Mason are meaningless in terms of historical method. Mason therefore takes an agnostic point of view\textsuperscript{21} when it comes to much of the history of the revolt: “[A] wide range of possible underlying events might have happened that would still allow us to understand how Josephus produced his story.” Mason illustrates his approach by considering two important episodes in the revolt: the campaign of Cestius Gallus in 66 C.E. and the role of Titus in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. In both cases Mason is clear about his aim: to understand the motives of Cestius Gallus and Titus. In this respect Josephus as a source is not considered unreliable but rather unhelpful, for which, however, he is not to be faulted.\textsuperscript{22} “[H]istorical method cannot change because we have the extraordinarily elaborate accounts of Josephus for first-century Judaea. We are in the same logical predicament as those who study the Josephusless provinces.”

Other scholars take a different approach, not so explicitly concerned with their views on the aim of history, but more with their approach to Josephus. This reveals a fundamental difference in their point of view; focusing primarily on one literary source, Josephus, the contention is that historical information can be drawn from it primarily by means of literary analysis—historical information, that is, which predates Josephus’ Flavian context. The three following contributions focus on Josephus’ portrayal of various figures: the Herodians, Herod the Great and Archelaus (van Henten); Agrippa II and Berenice (Wilker); and the Roman procurator Lucceius Albinus (Schwartz). How and what kind of historical information is taken from Josephus?

\textsuperscript{21} Of Denial: Bush at War, Part III (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006); D. Rumsfeld, Known and Unknown: A Memoir (New York: Sentinel, 2011). Steve Mason makes this point by discussing the bombing of Monte Cassino during the Second World War.

\textsuperscript{22} At one point in his argument Mason contends that this is not historical agnosticism but critical historical method. At another point he makes clear that the historian’s default position is not knowing.

\textsuperscript{22} Daniel Schwartz takes a similar position in this regard.
Jan Willem van Henten suggests that a literary analysis of three themes helps to articulate Josephus’ own voice in his interpretation of the events in the *War* and the *Antiquities*: (1) conflicts (*stasis*) within the royal family under Herod and Archelaus, (2) the references to rebellion during both reigns, and (3) Josephus’ characterization of both rulers. Such an analysis may help determine the plausibility of Josephus’ presentation of rebellion under Herod and Archelaus. Comparing the accounts in the *War* and the *Antiquities*, van Henten argues that Josephus is tendentious in his presentation of certain events, especially with regard to Herod. As Josephus’ depiction of Archelaus in both works is basically the same and consistent, van Henten suggests that Josephus’ criticism of him seems much more justified than in the case of Herod. With Herod things are different. Van Henten argues that there is not much evidence for large-scale rebellion or internal family strife under Herod, or of Herod being a tyrant. Rather, “Josephus may have re-crafted Herod’s picture in a few passages in the *War*, but much more extensively in the *Antiquities*, to adjust it better to his basic message about the prehistory of the war against Rome. If this conclusion is justified, it may mean that he has projected the negative image of Archelaus and the bandit leaders Menahem and Simon bar Giora as tyrants retroactively onto Herod.”

Julia Wilker argues that Agrippa II more or less deliberately decided to join the Roman side in this conflict and fought alongside the imperial troops until the end of the war. She reads Josephus critically and in light of other literary sources and suggests that in the *War* his portrayal of King Agrippa’s participation in the Jewish war, in terms of his actions and responsibilities, differs significantly from what we can reconstruct as being his real role during the conflict and the succeeding campaign: a pious Jew sympathetic towards his fellow countrymen, although his loyalty to Rome was never in doubt, who acted as a mediator, attempting to persuade the rebels to surrender. Wilker argues that this portrayal of Agrippa II in Josephus’ *War* was not so much determined by Josephus being dependent on Agrippa in Rome after the revolt, but rather that it was influenced by Josephus’ self-portrayal regarding the time after his surrender at Jotapata.

Josephus’ portrayal of Agrippa II and his actions drive home the point that “[t]he Herodians as depicted in the *War* could therefore neither be blamed nor criticized for what happened in the province.” Wilker suggests that from a Roman perspective this would make Agrippa suitable to be included in the reorganization of the province.
She argues that Josephus had Herodian interest and self-perception in mind while writing his work. From this she concludes that Agrippa II aimed to gain power and influence in post-revolt Judaea, but this effort obviously failed. Josephus' portrayal of Agrippa II and Berenice in the *Antiquities* is rather different and much more critical than in the *War*.23

In his contribution to this volume, Daniel Schwartz sets out to compare Josephus' parallel accounts of Albinus, considering what sources Josephus had available and how his views changed between his writing of the *War* and the *Antiquities*. Schwartz argues that Josephus is quite consistent in his positive approach to Albinus in the *Antiquities* (20.197–215), using him as a foil for Jewish villains: they are the ones responsible for the revolt that is about to break out. However, there is one negative passage about Albinus in the section concerned—A.J. 20.215. Schwartz suggests two possible explanations: that Albinus' actions should actually be understood from a positive perspective, as he was doing what a responsible procurator should do, or that Albinus accepted bribes to release prisoners. Schwartz notes that this latter perspective, out of tune ("remarkably self-contradictory in tone") with the narrative in the *Antiquities*, is also found in the parallel narrative in B.J. 2.272–276.

The negative perspective on Albinus in the *War*, argues Schwartz, fits Josephus' message very well. The situation was similar to a rollercoaster out of control. At the same time, there is a contradiction in Josephus' views on the matter. In the *War* he suggests that had Rome sent better procurators and Jewish leaders kept their own hotheads in check the ensuing revolt would not have been inevitable. About twenty years later, in the *Antiquities*, Josephus' message has changed: "[I]t was no longer important for him to urge the Romans to send better governors."

More importantly, in the *Antiquities* Josephus lays full blame on Jewish actors, notably members of the elite.24 What had happened between the account in the *War* and that in the *Antiquities* was that Josephus brought his explanation in line with Jewish historiography and theodicy: What had beset the Jews was due to their own sins. As to Josephus' manner of writing, Schwartz notes that the negative

23 See also Daniel Schwartz on this reversal of perspective on Agrippa II.
24 These observations by Schwartz parallel those of van Henten in that the *Antiquities* reveals a more negative perspective on different Jewish actors.
perspective on Albinus was unintentionally retained in the *Antiquities* as a rhetorical mouthpiece, in this case betraying both the influence of the parallel account in the *War* and a common source.

Actually, Schwartz's approach seems here in accord with Mason's methodological requirement that Josephus' accounts are first studied on their own merits. The historical information drawn from a comparative-literary analysis pertains to Josephus' context between his writing of the *War* and the *Antiquities*, not to the revolt or its prehistory as such. The contributions by van Henten and Wilker likewise demonstrate similar shifts in Josephus' perspective on figures and affairs in pre-revolt and revolt Judaea, but in addition they make claims concerning those historical contexts and not only that of Josephus in Flavian Rome.

4. JOSEPHUS ON THE FOURTH PHILOSOPHY, THE SICARII AND MASADA

The following three contributions are also largely concerned with Josephus, but from different disciplinary perspectives. Pieter van der Horst takes a philological approach to Josephus' characterization of the fourth philosophy as a *philosophia epeisaktos*. Uriel Rappaport, understanding the fourth philosophy and the Sicarii to have been the same movement, takes a historical approach and reviews the movement's history and several of its features on the basis of Josephus' accounts. Jodi Magness takes an archaeological approach to the Roman siege of Masada, arguing that the material evidence supports Josephus' account of the siege.

Pieter van der Horst argues that Josephus used the characterization *philosophia epeisaktos* for the fourth philosophy in A.J. 18.9 to emphasize that, unlike the three other philosophies (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes), this one had characteristics that were intrinsically un-Jewish and alien to the Jewish tradition. Using this phrase, Josephus refers to the movement's innovation and reform in ancestral traditions: freedom from foreign domination. Van der Horst argues that the innovative element was not paying taxes to the Romans, whereas in previous centuries Jews had done so to the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians and the Greeks: "The zeal for independence that the adherents of the fourth philosophy conceived as a duty to God was seen by Josephus and others as rebellion against God." However, in light of Schultz's
discussion of the *War Scroll* and McLaren's discussion of Josephus, the Murabba'at documents and the revolt coins, one wonders whether Josephus' perspective was more informed by hindsight and his own context than by knowledge of the historical circumstances. The zeal for independence may have been more widespread and not only confined to one particular group.

In his contribution to this volume, Uriel Rappaport understands the fourth philosophy to be the same as that later referred to as the Sicarii ("fourth philosophy" was the name given by Josephus, "Sicarii" that given either by the Romans or Josephus). When reviewing the group's history, being of exceptionally long duration (approximately 63 B.C.E.–117 C.E., or perhaps even to 135 C.E.), Rappaport makes his view on Josephus' relationship to this group and how it influenced his portrayal of the Sicarii very clear. First, Josephus would have been antagonistic to the Sicarii, but not in the same personal way he was in relation to John of Gischala. Second, when Rappaport mentions the Sicarii's capacity for enduring torture, he admits this may simply be a stereotype, but he adds that on the other hand that would not imply that it was not true: "[t]he may point to one of the personal deficiencies and an inferiority complex of Josephus concerning personal courage."

In an additional note appended to his contribution, Rappaport responds to van der Horst's suggestion that the zeal for liberty of the fourth philosophy, which resulted in opposition to paying taxes, was un-Jewish. Rappaport understands this characterization by Josephus as a criticism of the Maccabees, who exemplified several of the features also exhibited by the fourth philosophy.

In her contribution to this volume, Jodi Magness re-evaluates Josephus' narrative about Masada in light of the archaeological evidence, focusing on his account of the Roman siege and concluding that the material evidence supports Josephus' account of the siege. Magness looks at the logistics of the siege and evidence for the siege itself. She argues that Josephus' description is consistent with the remains at Masada, where eight camps (A–H) and a circumvallation wall with watchtowers still encircle the base of the mountain. Also, Josephus accurately describes the location of Flavius Silva's camp (F). As to the pottery remains, what the Roman soldiers ate and how provisions were supplied, Josephus makes no reference to these matters. Here, archaeology provides important new insights into the different aspects of the Roman siege of Masada. Magness argues that the predominance
of locally produced bag-shaped storage jars in Camp F can be understood in light of the supply logistics. Fresh water had to be brought to Masada from Ein Aneva but mostly from places farther away such as Ein Gedi, Jericho and Ein Boqeq. Unlike pottery from the legionary kiln works in Jerusalem, which are characteristic Roman types apparently manufactured by military potters, the bag-shaped storage jars and local cooking pots from Camp F at Masada are Judaean types. Magness suggests that these were manufactured by Jewish potters at Ein Gedi, Jericho and perhaps Ein Boqeq and transported by boat to Masada.

Discussing the evidence for the siege itself, Magness considers the existence of an iron arrowhead workshop, catapults and ballistae, and the siege ramp. According to Magness, Josephus’ report that Eleazar and the Sicarii found raw metals that had been stockpiled by Herod is supported indirectly by archaeological evidence. She argues that the material evidence in loci 442 and 456 suggests that these rooms served as workshops (fabricae) for the forging of iron arrowheads during the time of the revolt. In light of the absence of iron projectile points at Masada, Magness, together with Guy Stiebel, had previously proposed that catapults were not employed during the siege, which contradicts Josephus’ account. In this contribution, however, Magness argues that the archaeological evidence can be reconciled with Josephus’ narrative. Following Gwyn Davies, Magness believes they must have been used but the Romans afterwards collected and recycled them. Finally, Magness rejects the claim by Benny Arubas and Haim Goldfus that the siege of Masada was not seen through to the end and that the siege ramp was not operational.

5. The Jewish Revolt Coins

Considering the sources available for historical enquiry into the Jewish revolt, the coins minted by the rebels are first-hand evidence as to the commitment of those supporting the revolt. This volume contains two contributions from a numismatic perspective that shed important new light on various features of the revolt coins.

In his contribution to this volume, Robert Deutsch considers the iconography, the minting authority and the metallurgy of the revolt coins. Discussing the cultic iconography of the silver revolt coins, he identifies the staff with three pomegranate buds as that of the high
priest. Following Ya'akov Meshorer, Deutsch identifies the chalice as one of the two golden chalices depicted with other cultic vessels from the temple on the arch of Titus.

The iconography provides important clues as to the minting authority. The only straightforward symbol seems to be the staff, signifying high-priestly authority. This may symbolize the minting authority: either the priesthood or the temple institution. The consistent iconography, epigraphy and denominations and the metallurgical similarity of the silver coins throughout the five years demonstrate that the same minting authority produced them. Deutsch agrees with others that the source of the silver was the temple treasury and that the priesthood was the minting authority. On the basis of a single “year one” prutah, Deutsch also considers that the bronze prutot were minted by the same minting authority. However, he agrees that the “year four” bronze coins exhibit such significant changes (in epigraphy, the terms of the inscriptions and new denominations) that these must point to a different minting authority. Here, like Ariel, Deutsch relies on Josephus’ account of the different factions in Jerusalem to suggest that the “year four” coins were issued by Simon bar Giora, as first suggested by Baruch Kanael and supported by others. Deutsch also points to another minting authority that was briefly active during the revolt, that of Gamla, which produced a limited number of bronze copies of the Jerusalem silver coins.

The final part of Deutsch’s paper is devoted to the results of a metallurgical analysis of the silver coins, a neglected element thus far. The high content of 98 percent silver, without any significant deviation

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23 See also the contribution of Donald Ariel in this volume.
24 J. S. McLaren, “The Coinage of the First Year as a Point of Reference for the Jewish Revolt (66–70 CE),” ScI 22 (2003): 135–52; I. Goldstein and J. P. Fontanille, “A New Study of the Coins of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome, 66–70 C.E.: Minting Authorities, Processes and Output,” American Numismatic Association Journal 1/2 (2006): 9–52; U. Rappaport, “Who Minted the Jewish War’s Coins?” Israel Numismatic Research 2 (2007): 103–16. In his contribution to this volume Donald Ariel takes a similar stance as to the source of the silver for the revolt coins. However, Ariel seems to have a somewhat different perspective on the minting authority insofar as he considers that the ultimate minting authority behind the priesthood would have been the rebel government (see below).
25 In his contribution, Ariel argues that this unique prutah, as the missing link between silver coins and the prutot, is insufficient evidence.
26 In this volume Ariel disagrees with Deutsch (”The Jewish Coinage during the First Revolt against Rome, 66–73 C.E.”, Ph.D. diss. (as submitted before acceptance), Tel Aviv University, 2009), 67 [Hebrew]) who suggests that Tyrian coins were melted
during the five years of the revolt, may indicate that internal and external pressures did not affect the high standards of the minting and the quality of the coins, despite the decrease in the number of coins minted in the last two years of the revolt. 30

Donald Ariel begins his contribution with a consideration of six numismatic categories: iconography, the terms used in the inscriptions, dating conventions, epigraphy, denominations and technology. From this survey he concludes that the revolt coins (silver coins dated year one to five, “year two” and “year three” bronze coins called prutot and the “year four” bronze coins in three larger denominations) exhibit a significant degree of heterogeneity in their numismatic features: “This hints that the three groups were minted in different places and/or by different people.” 30

Considering who minted the revolt coins and where, Ariel distinguishes between the silver and the bronze coins. As to the place of the minting of the silver coins, Ariel suggests that the most logical place was within the temple precinct: the monumental stoa at its southern edge, where economic and judicial functions were concentrated. As to who was responsible, Ariel is more circumspect than Deutsch in identifying the priesthood as the ultimate minting authority, arguing that the minting authority may have been the priesthood, but that it operated under or at least in coordination with those rebels who were in command of the temple at the time: “Probably the same priests were responsible for the minting even though the ‘minting authority’ had changed three times. This is the reason for the stability of the silver issues of the first Jewish revolt. The changing rebel leaderships did not intervene.”

With regard to the bronze revolt coins, Ariel argues against Rappaport’s thesis that both “year two” and “year three” prutot and the “year four” bronzes were minted by Simon bar Giora. The prutot, for

and restruck: “Rather, the higher purity is consistent with a reconstruction by which silver in the temple treasury was melted down and struck as shekels.”

30 This inference may apply to the silver coins only. Taking into account all revolt coins, Ariel observes in this volume, over against Rappaport ("Who Minted," 103), that “at a time when it is becoming increasingly clear that coin minting throughout the revolt was not altogether stable, this ‘well-known incongruity’ is actually less incongruent.”

30 This numismatic conclusion supports McLaren’s suggestion (above) that the more people involved in the production of these coins the more widespread support they attest.
example, date to a time when, according to Josephus, Simon bar Giora was not in control of the city. Rappaport’s solution, that Simon minted these coins outside the city of Jerusalem, is forced. Travelling mints were mostly used for precious metal issues and, based on Deutsch’s research, the distribution of the “year two” and “year three” coins does not support their having been struck outside Jerusalem. Rather than agreeing that Simon bar Giora was responsible for all bronze issues, Ariel argues that the changes in iconography and denomination on the coins from year three to year four suggest different minting authorities for the two groups. Ariel suggests that the minting of Jerusalem’s coins during the first revolt took place in separate locations and that the bronze coins were struck in the area of today’s citadel in Jerusalem.

With regard to the exact identification of minting authorities for the three revolt coin types, Ariel and Deutsch agree on “year four” bronze coins having been issued by Simon bar Giora. They disagree on the prutot, which Deutsch understands to have been minted by the same minting authority as the silver coins, namely the temple priesthood, whereas Ariel distinguishes two minting authorities, the silver coins having been minted at the stoa in the temple precincts under the authority of the priesthood (but with the ultimate authority of one of the rebel factions during the five years) and the bronze coins having been minted at another location—the citadel. Ariel ascribes these bronze prutot to John of Gischala and the Zealots.

Deutsch and Ariel rely on Josephus’ accounts of who was in control at various times and over which parts of the city of Jerusalem for the exact identification of the minting authorities (cf. also, in more general terms, Tacitus, Hist. 5.12.2–4). Whether or not one agrees with the specific identifications, the numismatic analyses by Deutsch and Ariel add important data to McLaren’s suggestions, as they differentiate between different minting authorities and different locations. This demonstrates, independently from Josephus, broadly based support for the revolt against Rome. How broad the public support was for this revolt cannot be exactly determined, but it is clear that important members of the Jerusalem elite were involved. Nonetheless, the Murabba’at documents may, as McLaren suggests, signify a more widespread acceptance among the public of the new era inaugurated by the revolt. In terms of method then, the numismatic perspectives

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A A distinction that Deutsch also makes (see above).
of McLaren, Deutsch and Ariel demonstrate what kind of historical data can be inferred from the Jewish revolt coins, independently of Josephus' accounts.


The final two contributions to this volume offer perspectives from sources that are not used very often by historians of the first revolt. Jonathan Price presents Jewish epigraphic evidence from Jerusalem to enquire into aspects of Jewish life before and immediately after the revolt. George van Kooten presents a case for the dating of three Christian texts contemporary to the revolt and considers how these texts perceive the revolt in the broader Roman context, especially focusing on the figure of Nero.

Jonathan Price focuses primarily on one particular source: inscriptions by Jews from first-century C.E. Jerusalem. Most of these texts come from funerary contexts; however, some of the non-funerary Jewish inscriptions have caused the most controversy. These are the inscribed texts of various kinds, found near the walls of the Temple Mount, many of which were thrown there during the systematic destruction by the Romans in 70 C.E. Price points out that most of them are intelligible only by reference to literary sources. However, the Greek donation text and the Theodotos inscription add information (about the financing of the temple through smaller contributions by private citizens) and invalidate historical conclusions based on literary sources alone (the first-century date of a synagogue in Jerusalem for foreign Jews visiting the city). The donation and the Theodotos inscriptions supplement the evidence, both literary and epigraphic, for large numbers of visitors and established communities of foreign Jews in Jerusalem before the destruction.

Jewish funerary inscriptions and practices in Jerusalem reveal the impact of the Roman destruction on the Jewish population, with secondary burial coming to an abrupt, almost complete halt. Price admits that "in no instance can the unfinished state of a cave or ossuary, or the presence of unburied bones, be definitely attributed to the war, but surely the signs of haste and incompletion in so many of the caves are the product of both the high mortality rate and the disruption in routine caused by the Roman siege." Nonetheless, in a few instances, families were able to lay out their dead in caves after 70 C.E. and return
to put the bones in ossuaries. Price doubts whether these families lived in Jerusalem: "The presence of the Tenth Legion in the ruins of the city would have been a deterrent to Jews returning to live there."

Finally, Price points to recent archaeological, rather than epigraphic evidence that sheds important new light on the Jewish population of Jerusalem between the two revolts. Salvage excavations in Shu'afat, about 4 km north of the Old City of Jerusalem revealed the remains of a settlement that was founded after 70 C.E. and abandoned and partly destroyed, at the latest, in the first or second year of the Bar Kokhba revolt. The excavators interpreted the site as a prosperous Jewish settlement just 4 km north of Jerusalem, established in the last year or two of the revolt or immediately afterwards, which must have had the approval of the Roman authorities. Price refers to Josephus' account of Titus treating Jewish prisoners of higher social standing with special consideration and argues that this settlement fits the description of Giv'at Shaul, mentioned by Josephus.

In his contribution to this volume George van Kooten argues that Christian sources such as 2 Thessalonians, Revelation and Mark are contemporary to the events of the year of the four emperors and that these Christian texts perceive the Jewish revolt within the larger context of Roman politics at the time. More specifically, these Christian sources exhibit a fear of Nero's imminent return from the east. This fear was due to the events regarding the great fire in Rome in 64 C.E., when Nero blamed the Christians, leading to their persecution. Van Kooten argues that Jews were not similarly fearful of Nero because they did not experience anything like this under his rule. Nonetheless, he adduces Jewish sources such as book 4 of the Sybilline Oracles and Josephus, as well as Roman sources such as Tacitus and the Templum Pacis in Rome, to argue that these also perceive of the Jewish revolt in its contemporary setting of Rome's civil war and Nero's death. Thus, the New Testament texts that van Kooten adduces demonstrate the earliest Christian reflections, contemporary to Josephus, upon the Jewish revolt against Rome.

7. Concluding Remarks

What unites the contributions in this volume is obviously not one view of the revolt's history. In fact, the contributions reveal different views even concerning what history is. Nevertheless, while there are
differences with regard to historical approaches and explanations, various contributions also exhibit consensus on various issues. The focus of this collection is on historiographical and methodological reflections on our sources, their nature and the sort of historical questions they allow us to answer. All of these issues are fraught with conceptual and methodological difficulties and are not self-evident. Some contributors reflect more consciously on the historical method, while others illustrate their historical method through a concrete engagement with the different sources. Some contributors put historical questions at the forefront, while others provide a closer analysis of their sources, from which they infer historical knowledge. What then unites the articles in this collection is the sustained effort made to study the Jewish revolt, using various perspectives and approaches that may inform as well as challenge one another. In this regard, this volume aims to open up and stimulate new avenues of interdisciplinary study of the revolt against Rome in first-century C.E. Judaea. It might not be the greatest war ever fought, but it certainly warrants sustained investigation, if only because of its afterlife.31

PROVINCIAL REVOLTS IN THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE

Greg Woolf

INTRODUCTION

Every act of collective armed resistance to Roman rule had its peculiarities. In the case of the Jewish war we are better able than in any other case to chart these in detail. The risk, of course, is that more detailed information will simply lead to an explanation in terms of Jewish exceptionalism. Conditions in Judaea were unique, certainly, but so were conditions in the lower Rhine or in Britain. The aim of this paper is to reflect on the generalised phenomenon of what, for convenience, I will term provincial revolts. The drawbacks of the term are obvious. "Revolt" like "rebellion" denies legitimacy to an insurrection by implicitly treating the prior order as normal, and represents it as secondary in importance to wars between states. Roman accounts in fact use a range of terms (including bellum) but their distinctions are no more innocent. Emperors played down the significance of some conflicts (as Tiberius did with the rising led by Florus and Sacrovir) and played up that of others (as Vespasian and Titus did with the Jewish war) to suit their immediate purposes.¹ Historians chose to share or dissent from these assessments. This paper considers that category of organised armed opposition that emerged from groups that the Romans regarded as their subjects.

My particular concern in this chapter is to map the difference between normative explanations of revolt employed today, and those used by ancients. Neither, I shall argue, are really sufficient. Our dominant modes of investigating the early Roman Empire seek to explain its stability and longevity: explanations often entail a teleological view of revolts as both anomalous and doomed to failure. They are frequently schematic and leave little space for ancient motivations. Ancient accounts by contrast do focus on the morality, motivations

¹ For more on this see G. Woolf, "Roman Peace," in War and Society in the Roman World (ed. J. Rich and G. Shipley; London: Routledge, 1993), 171–94. I am grateful to the organisers of this conference for the chance to revisit this theme.
and agency of individuals: that mode of explanation turns out to be pragmatic and well thought through, but was also poor at predicting revolts or understanding their underlying causes. The third and final section of this paper explores the relationship between ancient understandings of revolts and their actual incidence.

I. The Roman Order and its Limits

It is completely reasonable that Roman historians have devoted more attention to its durability than to occasional threats to that order. The empire’s longevity and geographical reach is impressive enough, and much research has been devoted to explaining it. A growing awareness of the limitations imposed on the exercise of force, and also on communications, by pre-industrial conditions have directed attention to other means by which consensus, or at least passive acquiescence in empire, was achieved. Among the answers are an appreciation of the role of religion, especially the multiple cults of the emperors, in communication between rulers and ruled; a growing awareness of the formation of imperial and provincial cultures and of their integrative effects, and the search for ideologies of empire, variously understood.

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6 J. Metzler et al., eds., The Integration of the Early Roman Empire: The Role of Culture and Ideology (Luxembourg: Musée National d’Histoire et d’Art, 1995).
Underpinning these studies is a broad consensus that the empire depended on a harmony of interests established between imperial and local elites. Roman emperors are now considered to have had extremely limited goals, essentially to ensure their security and the revenue with which to maintain it. Imperial and provincial elites divided between them the work of enforcing security and extracting revenue, and in return their social eminence was secured and they were allowed to enrich themselves. Local taxes operated in most instances to the benefit of the local elites. The other main beneficiaries of empire were the army, maintained at a standard of living superior to most Roman subjects, and a vast crowd of Roman citizens engaged in public contracts to secure the logistical needs of the imperial state. Emperors were largely unconcerned with how provincial subjects were treated, so long as the behaviour of local aristocracies, client kings and public contractors did not imperil security or diminish the productive base. Most of what was raised in imperial taxation—partly in cash and partly in kind—was spent on the military, which was in the last resort used to impose order within the provinces. Perhaps a quarter of the total was left for the civil administration, the court and the capital. Institutional history has mapped in detail the working of this system.

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Perhaps the most important recent development has been a recognition that in terms of its political economy Rome was fairly typical of pre-industrial empires.  

More unusual was Rome's progressive recruitment of eventually most of the subject population to its citizen body. Citizen status was in the process transformed from a privileged status that conferred certain political and legal rights (and some economic opportunities) to a sign of membership in what was in some respects a gigantic nation-state. Contemporary witnesses recognised how extraordinary this was. Roman generosity was lauded in panegyrics like that delivered by the second-century sophist Aelius Aristides, but these in effect reflected back to Roman rulers an ideology of (selective) inclusiveness that had been propagated by the emperors since at least the early first century C.E. For modern analysts, however, the spread of citizenship beyond the aristocracies of Italy and the provinces constitutes an important qualification to the notion that the Roman Empire rested mainly on a conspiracy of elites.

Together these studies have contributed many elements of an answer to the question "Why did the empire last so long?" The key issues for discussion now concern how the different parts of the system fitted together, and how it arose. The first faces the usual danger of functionalist analysis, viz.: that we may miss areas of conflict, tension and contradiction. The question of origins is more difficult. Should we follow ancient sources in emphasizing the genius and foresight of Augustus? Should we look for an historical trajectory propelled by some external or structural logic of which participants were not aware? Or should


For discussion of this theme C. Ando, Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
we simply conclude that the only early empires we can study are those which did stumble—perhaps in an entirely fortuitous manner—on some way of shifting gear from conquest state to tributary empire? But as far as revolts are concerned, it matters very little how the Roman imperial order was created. More important is the nature of that order, and its limits.

Because scholarly energy has been devoted to looking harder at order than at disorder, revolts present themselves to us as anomalous, and their failures seem easy to explain, even to the extent that we may be puzzled at the motivations for acts of resistance that seem doomed to failure from the start. Histories of opposition can seem like little more than diverting eddies in a grand-narrative of imperial triumph. Yet any adequate account of stability must contain within it an explanation for occasional failures. Provincial revolts offer in principle an opportunity to assess the limits of Roman order, and especially of functionalist accounts of its success. If, for example, empire is considered to rest mainly on collusion between central and local elites, then revolts should indicate a disruption of the normal coalitions of interest on which the empire relies. Yet no single fatal flaw emerges from a survey of provincial revolts in the early empire. There were many kinds of disorder, with little in common except the ideals from which they departed. This should not surprise. Order and disorder are not symmetrical opposites. It is the essence of opposition to empire that it is more fragmented and less coherent than what it stands against. Military coups, assassination attempts, urban riots, philosophical protests, magic and banditry were all threats to the Roman order. But they drew strength from diverse sources.

Perhaps the most productive studies of imperial disorder have been inspired by this approach to concentrate direct attention at the

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14 The best survey remains S. L. Dyson, "Native Revolt Patterns in the Roman Empire," ANRW, 2.3:138–75.
16 The theme of MacMullen, Enemies of the Roman Order.
margins of the system, the places where normative order was thinnest. We should expect dissent in the countryside not the cities, then, and in mountainous areas like Isauria rather than the rich river valleys and coastal plains where urban civilization flourished. Rebels might be expected to emerge from those who subscribed least to the ideologies formed at the centre of empire, and among those peoples who participated least in civic and imperial culture and cult. Regions at the geographical margins of empire—the client kingdom of the Iceni, the Batavian territory, Free Germany, Pannonia, the African interior and Judaea—offer more examples of revolt than interior provinces such as Spain or Achaea. Temporally we should expect stress at moments when the relation between ideology and reality was most attenuated, at moments of transition between reigns and especially more between dynasties. It has also been suggested that many of the early revolts occurred at moments when provincial societies were undergoing intense internal transformation as a result of their incorporation into the empire. It is in circumstances like these that some members of local elites seem to have sided with rebels against the empire, despite their apparent interest in siding with the empire. The leaders of revolts in the west were often former auxiliary commanders (such as Civilis and Arminius, Tacfarinas and Classicus). Many were drawn from those sections of the local aristocracy who had been enfranchised and adopted Roman names. Josephus too, is hardly marginal in Jewish society, Hellenistic culture or Roman politics.

Structural analysis of this kind does account quite well for the social, geographical and chronological location of dissent, at least at a very general level. But note how it has been necessary to elaborate the schema to explain oddities like the participation of highly integrated local elite members, Jewish and Gallic aristocrats, former Roman soldiers and client kings. A fuller account would have to find a way to

18 As argued on the basis of modern colonial analogies by S. L. Dyson, “Native Revolts in the Roman Empire,” Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte 20 (1971): 239–74. This paper remains the most sophisticated study of the phenomenon to date, with its argument that some revolts were tensions generated by the transformation of local societies in the process of incorporation into a wider world. For the limits of analogy between modern and ancient imperialisms see P. A. Brunt, “Reflections on British and Roman Imperialism,” Comparative Studies in Society and History 7 (1965): 267–88.
explain occasional civic revolts and riots, the Athenians under Augustus or the Alexandrines on repeated occasions, despite their far from marginal position. Further complications are posed by the gradual erosion of the difference between military and provincial uprisings as legions became more and more rooted in local society. But there is a different kind of objection—if a familiar one—that schematic and structural analyses provide little insight into how participants understood events at the time. We have, in fact, almost no rebel voices. Josephus is not the exception we might wish him to be since he speaks with the knowledge of hindsight and from his own rather perilous political situation. At points—for example Herod Agrippa’s speech which seeks to dissuade the Jews from rebellion by offering a panorama of the empire as whole—he transparently deploys tropes drawn from classical understandings of revolt. These subalterns at least cannot speak.

2. Roman Understandings of Revolt

How Roman emperors understood the causes of revolt is unknowable. Revolts in general come as surprises to imperial power, steeped as so many are in their own ideological productions. Ancient emperors had, in any case, much less reliable and up-to-date information than their twentieth-century analogues. Many anecdotes do indeed suggest revolts caught emperors unprepared. It also seems clear that Roman emperors often played down the seriousness of provincial revolts, both to deter imitators, and because provincial unrest reflected poorly on their own claims to be the guarantors of the Roman order. Fortunately, this tactic gave the recording of revolts a potentially oppositional character, and the historical accounts that do survive give us access to some of the ways that the causes of revolts were more generally understood by the ruling classes of the empire.

One historian in particular provides rich testimony about provincial revolts and this is Tacitus. The fact that Tacitus and his presumed

29 The classic statement of the proposition that empire robs its subjects of the capacity to articulate their grievances except in terms dictated by empire is G. C. Spiwak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 271–313.
intended readers were members of those classes most involved in ruling the empire is, for these purposes, a real advantage. The various modes of explanation he chose must have borne some relation to ways of talking about revolts common among the ruling classes, even if his treatment of the subject served particular ends within his various works. The revolt of Tacfarinas in Africa, of Florus and Sacrovir in Gaul and of the Frissii (all during the reign of Tiberius) are documented, if briefly, in the *Annales* as is the Boudiccan war under Nero, which is also mentioned in the *Agricola*. The *Histories* include accounts of the revolt of Civillis the Batavian and his Gallic confederates led by Julius Classicus, and of course the Jewish war. More general comments on the treatment of the provincials appear at several points in Tacitus' work. Some historians have suspected Tacitus had a particular interest in the provinces, and perhaps especially the north-west provinces, perhaps deriving from his supposed provincial origins and/or a period of service in the Rhineland. It is also true that the period his works treat, the first century C.E., had its fair share of revolts which he could hardly have ignored.

Historians have taken different views about the reliability of accounts such as these. No one would today accept naive realist interpretations of accounts like his of the Boudiccan revolt. Speeches, by convention, were devised by historians as a mode of commentary on narrative and themes, and they were understood as such by ancient readers. Tacitus was also well able to use rhetorical inventio to equip a narrative with vivid details and atmosphere: this might involve deliberate allusion to earlier accounts, more general intertextualities or simply the deployment of conventional tropes. Where information was scarce—and where more scarce than in accounts of conversations conducted among rebels, especially during the Julio-Claudian period—these tools were all the more useful. I take it for granted that we cannot expect rebel viewpoints to be accurately reported, nor detailed analysis of

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23 The potential bibliography is immense. The view presented in this paragraph is particularly indebted to work of Tony Woodman, whose papers are conveniently collected in A. J. Woodman, *Tacitus Revisited* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998). Also relevant are several of the contributions to A. J. Woodman, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Tacitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
events at the margins of empire. Yet Tacitus’ revolt narratives are not completely stereotyped, and the aetiology of individual revolts does differ in detail. Most important for present purposes, Tacitus’ own reconstructions of revolts and their causes can be taken to reflect the kind of explanation formed by members of the imperial ruling classes when they considered individual revolts.

Revolts are given different significances in each of Tacitus’ works. Within the narrative of the Histories they track the progressive unravelling of the Imperium Romanum during civil war, and the speeches he gives to rebels and their Roman opponents reflect on alternative orders that threaten to replace that of Rome. Revolts in the Annales are more often expanded on to throw light on the competence of emperors and their senatorial agents. We might compare the treatment of earthquakes and economic crises: how emperors respond to them is of more significance than why they arise. Within the Agricola a series of revolts and wars in a single Roman province are brought together into a narrative of stop-start conquest, the alternation reflecting the varying effectiveness of particular emperors and governors as they strive, or fail, to drive forwards a version of Rome’s historical destiny. Both in the Annales and the Agricola the desires of provincials for freedom convict the slavish subservience of the Romans to the worst of their emperors, especially Nero and Domitian.24

That said, many features of Tacitus’ treatments of revolts are also highly conventional. The prominence given to the personality of the leader—Tacfarinas, Sacrovir, Boudicca and the rest—had been a staple of Republican accounts of wars, and in fact Civilis is explicitly compared to Hannibal and Sertorius.25 The generals who suppress revolts—among them Suetonius Paulinus, Petilius Cerealis and Titus—also receive special treatment. The parts played by victors and defeated leaders in triumphal processions reassure us that this attention to the individuals is not merely a literary trope.26 Nor are these figures simply metonymic devices: on both sides the leaders animate the narrative. Livy gives a key role to Hannibal and his various Roman protagonists,

25 Tacitus, Hist. 4.13.
and in Sallust's *Jugurtha* it is the Numidian king's deliberate pursuit of his interest that generates the war, while it is the indolence of the Metelli and then the energy of Marius that first delay and then hasten its suppression. Nor do individuals drive the narrative through their skills, abilities, knowledge or expertise. The analysis of action is thoroughly moralistic.

It does not follow that Tacitus has no wider explanation of revolts than as the product of the *animus* of Boudicca or a *Civilis* limited by the *virtus* of a Paulinus or a Cerealis. The qualities of individuals arise from and shape the nature of the societies of which they are leading members. Sallust had presented Rome in the late second century B.C.E. as a place where certain kinds of individual vices were endemic. Scipio Aemilianus advises the young Jugurtha to seek the friendship of Rome rather than of individual Romans,27 yet Jugurtha does cultivate individual supporters, and the willingness of individual *nobiles* to accept his bribes nearly brings Rome to ruin. The Thucydidean models are well known: the Athenian *demos* allowed itself to be dominated by a Cleon or an Alcibiades, yet these characters were also dynamic active forces. Moral society was, in some sense, the sum of its parts, with the ethical behaviour of leaders of proportionally greater significance. Moralizing analysis of this kind is not fashionable today, but for ancients it had the advantage of reconciling the behaviour of leaders to evaluations of the societies they led. Arguably we have more difficulty today in assessing the relative contribution made by the structural causes of revolts—such as poverty, repression or ideology—and the agency and motivation of individuals. So Tacitus can write that the provinces had no problem with autocracy because "the rule of the Senate and People was suspect owing to the rivalry of the powerful and the greed of magistrates, while the law was of no help since it was overcome by violence, favouritism and bribery."28 That verdict is both systemic, and grounded on cumulative failures of personal morality.

Tacitus' accounts of the proximate causes of revolts often cite outrages. The Frisian revolt is attributed straightforwardly to Roman greed

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28 Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.2: *neque provinciae illum rerum statum absumebant, suspecto senatus populique imperio ob certamina potentium et avaritiam magistratum, invalido legum auxilio quae vi ambitu postrema pecunia turbabantur.*
The Frisians were already subject to a heavy tax burden, levied in kind, which was increased by the senior centurion put in charge of them who changed the method of assessment. Forced to sell or surrender their cattle, land and relatives and with their complaints ignored they eventually resorted to violence directed first against those soldiers used as tax collectors. The origins of the Iceni revolt are presented in similar terms in the Annales. The last king had made the emperor coheir with his daughters to both the kingdom and his personal wealth, but on his death it was treated more like the spoils of war. The centurions plundered the kingdom, imperial slaves stripped the household, the queen was beaten, the daughters raped, and the estates of the aristocracy were confiscated. The Iceni were supported by the Trinobantes, a tribe already incorporated within the province—Tacitus uses the metaphor of enslavement—who had been antagonised by the behaviour of the colonists at Colchester, supported by the soldiers, and by the crippling cost of funding the provincial cult of Claudius. Tacitus had already touched on this revolt in the Agricola which characterised the Britons in similar terms to the Frisii, as willing to submit to the burdens of taxation and conscription but not to abuse. The picture is filled out in Tacitus’ imaginative reconstruction of the discussions that preceded the Boudicaan revolt. The Britons complain of the twin burdens of the governor with his soldiers and the procurator with his imperial slaves assaulting their persons and property respectively. They too refer to their position as slavery (servitudo) and complain of outrages (iniuriae). Nothing escapes their greed (cupiditas) and lust (libido) and the provincials suffer whether governor and procurator collude or feud. The causes of war are greed (avaritia) and luxury (luxuria). Similar language occurs in the discussion of the revolt of Florus and Sacrovir. Tacitus states the cause was debt, then goes on to describe how the Gauls in secret meetings complained about the relentless tribute, the burden of interest, and the savagery and pride of the governors.

29 Tacitus, Ann. 4.72: codem anno Frisii, transrhenanum populum, pacem exuere, nostra magis avaritia quam obsexit impatientes.
31 Tacitus, Agr. 13: (ipsi Britannis) dilectum ac tributa et inuncta imperii mania impi- gre obeunt, si iniuriae absint: has aegre tolerant, iam damiti ut pareant, nondum ut serviant.
32 Tacitus, Ann. 3.40: igitur per conciliabula et coetus seditionem disserebant de conti- nuatione tributorum, gravitate saecrorum, avaritia ac superbia praesidentium, et discordare militem audito Germanici exitio.
It would be easy to provide other examples of accusations of this kind put into the mouths of Calagacus and Civilis and other leading figures, or to trace the themes back to Sallust or indeed Cicero in the *Verrines*. But the general pattern is clear.

Revolt among provincials is generally presented as the result of vicious behaviour by Rome’s representatives in the provinces. Vice is displayed by both the senatorial and equestrian commanders and senior administrators, and also by those who implement their orders, especially centurions and freedmen, but also ordinary soldiers, colonists and tax collectors. The common vices they exhibit are a selection from conventional kinds of immorality, now formulated in terms of Stoic ideas widespread among Tacitus’ class. Greed, lust and cruelty were all the products of ill-disciplined passions. Provincials are like slaves, but the problems emerge when individual Romans behave as bad masters, and Romans behave in this way because they are bad masters of their own baser natures.\(^33\) For Tacitus in the *Annales* and the *Agricola* slavery is a broader theme, and there are connections in both texts with the way emperors treat other Romans. But this does not mean that Tacitus’ understanding of provincial revolts and their causation was idiosyncratic. It was fundamental to Roman thought that vicious behaviour by the representatives of the state brought trouble to the collectivity.\(^34\) Provincial government was merely a special case of this general belief.

Provincial rebels were not always presented as innocent victims. Tacfarinas and Civilis are both presented as opportunists, with no grievances to justify their actions. As in the case of Florus and Sacrovir and Classicus, Tacitus draws attention to the fact that all these leaders had served in the Roman army and many had been rewarded with Roman citizenship. The lack of *fides* and *obsequium* is clearly important. The accounts in the *Agricola* and especially in the *Annales* of the Boudicaan revolt stresses the savagery with which Colchester, London and St Albans were sacked, the lack of restraint of the Britons, their eagerness to plunder, kill and torture non-combatants and

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33 My argument here owes a good deal to the unpublished research of my colleague Dr Myles Lavan.

their refusal to take or exchange prisoners. Here too there are echoes of earlier treatments, such as the massacres Sallust describes at Cirta during the Jugurthine war, or the behaviour of the besieged at Alesia according to Caesar’s account.35

The emphasis on individual viciousness, whether on the part of Romans or their rebellious subjects, did not serve to exculpate Roman imperial rule from the charge of systemic failures. A familiar modern rhetorical response to a perceived disaster is to oppose structural failings to the responsibility of individuals. But it is difficult to find Roman sources telling us that provincial government worked well as a system and that particular revolts were the result of the misbehaviour of a few individuals ("a few bad apples" as the cliché has it). Nor was the opposite tactic applied, to exculpate all individuals involved and point to "failures of process." Individuals and the state were, as I argued above, related in different ways in antiquity. Emperors were perfectly capable of blaming a revolt on the incompetence of their subordinates, as Augustus did with Quinctilius Varus, but the aim was not to justify the system so much as to diverting personal blame from the person of the emperor to someone else. There is a fundamental difference in perspective here between us and them.36 Modern observers see how emperors claimed the credit for military successes and deflected the blame for failures. Ancient historians might challenge these public positions, as Tacitus does in implicitly linking provincial disasters to the moral inadequacy of particular emperors. But they reified the imperial system to a much lesser degree than we do.37 The nearest we get to a general analysis in Tacitus is in a few speeches characterising the nature of Roman rule. Calgacus’ famous set-piece denunciation just prior to the battle of Mons Graupius that is the climax of the Agricola is often quoted.38 It is directed not against the Roman state, or Rome (as modern protests against imperialism are directed at particular nations or powers) but at "the Romans" conceived of as a mass of individuals subject to vices such as superbia and avaritia.

35 Sallust, Bell. jug. 26; Caesar, Bell. gall. 7.77–78.
36 For discussion of this see J. E. Lendon, Empire of Honour (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
38 Tacitus, Agr. 30–32.
Even more revealing is the speech put into the mouth of Cerealis in the *Histories* trying to dissuade the Gauls from joining with Civilis and the Germans in a general uprising against Roman rule. The speech does begin with a justification of Roman rule as based on virtue not vice. Romans had occupied Gaul at the invitation of the Gauls, to defend them against the Germans. This reuse of a Caesarian justification suited the present circumstances very well of course, and allowed Cerealis to suggest Civilis has longer-term ambitions in Gaul. But the following chapter is more interesting as it becomes more general. Gaul has always experienced dominion of one kind or the other, and what the Romans have imposed is relatively light. Taxation is justified by the need of armies for pay and of armies to keep the peace. The empire is a relatively open system, and some Gauls had risen to high positions in the military and political order. The best emperors treat the Gauls well even if they live far away, the worst are most savage to those near them.

Just as you put up with crop failures and storms and other natural disasters, you must bear the extravagance (luxus) and greed (avaritia) of those who rule you. There will be vices as long as there are humans. But they are not continuous, and there will be periods of relief. You surely do not imagine that, if Tutor and Classicus were to rule you, their dominion would be more moderate or that less tax than you pay at the moment would be needed to fund an army to defend you against Romans and Germans?

Provincial revolts are, in this rather fatalistic view, an inevitable corollary of empire. Because *vitia erunt donec homines*—there will be vices as long as there are humans—it is unrealistic to expect peace to endure. This is not the language of a panegyrist like Aelius Aristides, but perhaps it is a better fit to the experience of those members of an aristocracy of service who wrote and read such accounts. But there is a more positive and pragmatic side too. If particular instances arose from instances of vicious behaviour, whether on the part of rulers or ruled or both, each one might in principle be avoided.

3. **Roman Understandings and Roman Action**

Modern studies of revolts rarely impact on public policy. Most are historical and many have been antagonistic to the interests of ruling
groups within colonial states. But Roman intellectual understandings were closer to the beliefs of the ruling classes, emanating as they did from the same narrow elites that governed the empire, led its armies and oversaw the collection of revenue. My claim is not that second century governors went out to their provinces with scrolls of Tacitus, Livy and Sallust in their baggage (although that is by no means impossible, and some governors would certainly have read some of these texts). My more modest claim is that discussions of revolts by historians like Sallust, Tacitus, Arrian and Dio must have reflected and shaped their own service in the provinces, and the experience of their peers and readers.

Tacitus has had to bear a heavy weight in the last section as spokesman for the elite of the early empire. His testimony is far fuller than that of other historians, and the fact it is spread across three very different works allows us to assess what the constants are in his presentation and what features reflect the local aims of those narratives. Constants did emerge, however, and they are not very different from those that characterise comments on revolts by other classical writers. Dense webs of allusion certainly existed, especially directed at the relevant portions of Caesar and Sallust (and if we had Livy’s later books we might find more connections there too). Yet Tacitus’ provinces did not exist in an intertextual bubble, but needed to be constantly related to the empire known by experience. Tropes fashioned by earlier historians continued to be useful for his own exploration of the Roman order.

The understanding of revolts I sketched above—one that explained them as products of vicious behaviour, that was fatalistic about their

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42 Dio’s account of most of these revolts survives only in the epitome provided by the eleventh-century Byzantine John Xiphilinus. His very brief account of Civilis’ rebellion in book 66 explicitly states that the uprisings are only worth mention for the anecdote of Sabinus’ nine-year concealment by his wife. But the account of the Boudicaan revolt in book 62 cites debt and the harsh behaviour of the procurator as contributory factors along with the savage character of the queen. The account of British atrocities in the captured cities is even more horrifying than that provided by Tacitus.
occasional occurrence, but was optimistic about the capacity of virtuous conduct to head off potential cases—arguably did serve valuable functions for the imperial elite. First, the idea that revolts were bound to happen from time to time must have made them less terrifying when they did occur. Romans too would have to bear resistance the way provincials put up with famines, bad weather and corrupt officials. Revolts need not signify a general collapse of the Roman order, except perhaps in the millenarian atmosphere of 68–70 C.E. Nor did they reveal deep-seated flaws in the imperial project, as independence movements in the mid-twentieth century certainly did. We might compare modern attitudes to road safety: accidents will happen, but if we are careful they will not happen to us, so the general situation is satisfactory.

Second, the emphasis on individual conduct provided an incentive to avoid behaviour that might incite resistance. The displeasure of the emperors and the presumption of vice were powerful disincentives to indulge one’s baser instincts, even in the relative freedom from scrutiny allowed by a provincial command. The virtuous governor, as we read about him in Ulpian’s On the Office of the Proconsul, in Pliny’s tenth book of letters and of course in the Agricola, was exhibiting enlightened self-interest. These models of conduct were simply the latest version of ideals that we can see already being developed in Cicero’s Letter to Quintus, in his prosecutions and defences of various governors accused of corruption and in his own self-exemplification. Caesar’s self-portrait in the Gallic War is another variant on the theme. The development of this ethic of empire is most visible in the last generation of the Republic, but it certainly had second-century B.C.E. roots to judge from the Gracchan and the Calpurnian laws on corruption (de repetundis) and from the language of diplomacy attested epigraphically from the Greek East. All this cohered well with the largely positive images of empire presented to emperors and governors in panegyric, and by them to the people of Rome and other subjects through monuments and ceremonial.


But there were disadvantages too, to this attitude to rebellion. For a start, because this aetiology of revolt included none of the structural features outlined in section 1, it was a poor predictor of future revolts. So revolts continued to catch governors unawares as Arminius had Varus and Boudicca Paulinus. Deciding when an area was pacified was clearly not easy. Equally what look to us like points of geographical weakness—upland areas where imperial power was necessarily reduced, or locations on the periphery of empire where Rome was more vulnerable—seem to have been rationalised as areas inhabited by peoples prone to violence, Isaurian bandits, shiftless Germans and the like. Ethnic stereotyping like that applied to Jews in Tacitus' Histories and also Dio's History thus plugged large gaps in Rome's systematic understanding of revolt patterns.

More generally, Romans did not formulate well-constructed theories either of revolt or good governance, except at the level of ethics. The conduct of centurions given administrative and fiscal responsibility seems to us to be a recurrent feature of revolts in the west, and Tacitus does seem to recognise this. But that common understanding does not seem to have led to a reconsideration of how to govern at the margins, let alone the development of corrective measures or institutions. The stability of the Augustan administrative system for nearly three centuries is a testament to Roman analytical weakness and institutional sclerosis as well as to political strength. Slower processes of change, such as the spread of citizenship and the extension of urban economies over their hinterlands may well have reduced the risk of revolt in the second century. But if so this was a happy accident, not a product of Roman design.

It is possible that Romans (like moderns) tended to think of provincial revolts as doomed to failure. If so, then at worst they were expensive distractions. It would not be surprising if Romans of Tacitus' generation were confident in the empire's resilience against internal dissent. Nothing like the Hannibalic or Mithradatic wars had so far threatened the Principate, unless it was the short chaos of 68–70 C.E., and this generation had survived all that. Emperors increasingly presented themselves as warrior leaders, defenders of the provinces and guarantors of order, favourites of the gods and themselves gods in waiting. Were the governing classes convinced? It is difficult to be certain either way. The same applies to provincial elites.

Alternative narratives were, however, available to some provincial populations, especially those located on the margins of the empire,
Civilis and his kind were presumably well versed in both Roman and German traditions. Caesar's wars and legacy hang heavily over Tacitus' narrative of these events in the *Histories*. But alongside the Roman myth of expansion powered by virtue and dominion invited by subjects and guaranteed by the gods, Rome's German allies would remember the retreat from Free Germany after the disaster of 9 C.E. and other Roman reverses too from Lollius to Germanicus and the abortive campaigns of Caius. Like Tacitus' readers we know that the Batavian uprising would ultimately fail, but would contemporaries necessarily have taken the same view once the last of the Caesars was dead? Judaea offers a similar case. Hindsight marks the Jewish war as one terrifying episode in a long history of foreign oppression. Yet looking back to the successful Maccabean revolt against a collapsing Macedonian empire, perhaps resistance to Rome seemed less obviously futile? Roman power did, in the end, impose their attitudes to revolt as the dominant explanation. But it is difficult for us to understand the incidence of provincial uprisings, unless at least some of the rebels had a very different assessment of the situation.
DIE RÖMISCHEN REPRÄSENTANTEN IN JUDEA:
PROVOKATEURE ODER VERTRETER DER RÖMISCHEN MACHT?

Werner Eck


