

Christopher Weikert: *Von Jerusalem zu Aelia Capitolina. Die römische Politik gegenüber den Juden von Vespasian bis Hadrian*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2016 (Hypomnemata 200). 425 S., 1 Karte. € 100.00. ISBN: 978-3-525-20869-4.

This book is a revised version of the author's dissertation at the Otto-Friedrich-Universität in Bamberg. It discusses the Roman policy regarding Judaea and the Jews in the period from the end of the Jewish War until the Bar Kochba revolt, so the years 70 CE–136 CE. The focus is on the Roman policy toward the Jews as an ethnos rather than as a monotheistic religious group within the polytheistic society of the Roman empire. The period under discussion in this volume is characterized by three Jewish revolts with which the Roman authorities had to deal: the Jewish War (66–70), the revolt under Jews in the diaspora in 116–117 and the Bar Kochba rising in the years 132–136. Although these events have received ample attention from scholars and have been dealt with in numerous publications, this is the first time that these episodes, which were defining for the Jews in and outside Judaea and for Jewish history in general, are discussed in a monograph of this form. There are of course the studies by Smallwood and Goodman,<sup>1</sup> but they deal with much longer periods and do not specifically focus on the years 70–136, although in both works these years receive considerable attention. Goodman sees Roman anti-Jewish feelings increasing since the Flavian suppression of the Jewish War and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 into the second century, an observation that Weikert ventures to doubt. After the Introduction (pp. 13–34) which among other things discusses the available sources, including the Jewish ones, the volume divides into three parts: A. The Flavian dynasty (pp. 35–166); B. Nerva and Trajan (pp. 167–212); C. Hadrian (pp. 213–342).

The first part opens with an elaborate treatment of the Year of the Four Emperors after the death of Nero, the purpose of which is not immediately clear apart from the fact that Vespasian who as commanding general was responsible for the suppression of the Jewish Revolt eventually became emperor and managed to sustain his imperial rule. Weikert argues convincingly

1 E. M. Smallwood: *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian. A Study in Political Relations*. Leiden 1976 (Studies in Judaism in late antiquity from the 1. to the 7. Century 20); M. Goodman: *Rome and Jerusalem. The Clash of Ancient Civilizations*. London 2007.

that the suppression of the revolt provided both the *homo novus* Vespasian and later also his son and successor Titus with the opportunity to establish and legitimize their rule. The Flavian dynasty was therefore a result of the triumph over Judaea and reestablished stable imperial rule after a period of civil wars between competing imperial candidates in 68–69. Also Domitian goes back to the Jewish triumph of his father and brother: by glorifying the deeds of Titus through the construction of a triumphal arch in his honour, he meanwhile legitimized also his own rule. Next, Weikert moves on to Rome's post-war policy in Judaea. A large part is reserved for issues related to the destruction of the Jewish Temple, such as whether it was Rome's purpose to obliterate the Temple, the role of Titus (who in rabbinic literature is depicted as the archetypal 'Judenfeind'), the debated issue of the *evocatio* of the Jewish god during the siege of Jerusalem, and whether the destruction of the Temple ended Jewish sacrifice. In this part Weikert also discusses matters such as Rome's political and administrative measures in Judaea; from now on Judaea would no longer have an exceptional position but would be treated like any other Roman province, although the Jewish patriarch still seems to have had a form of authority and the person to be addressed in matters concerning Jewish affairs. Weikert furthermore discusses the relationship between Rome and the Jews living in the diaspora; the *fiscus Iudaicus* as part of Vespasian's financial reforms and which every Jew now had to pay to Rome; and the connections between the Flavians and the Jewish leading figures such as Agrippa II. This part of the book ends with a treatment about the Roman view on Jews and the Jewish perspective on Rome. In Jewish sources the Flavian period is seen as an era of suppression and as a premonition of the end of times, while the Graeco-Roman writings present the Jews and their religion as culturally different but not as a threat to Rome and its authority.

The second and shortest part deals with reigns of Nerva and Trajan. The brief rule of the first brought few changes in the relationship between Rome and the Jews, although the already aged emperor stopped the abuses, also those against the Jews, of his predecessor Domitian. It has been argued by Goodman that Trajan went back to the anti-Jewish policy of the Flavians. Trajan's father was a Roman general in the Jewish War and would have developed anti-Jewish feelings which he could then have transmitted to his son. This, however, is refuted by Weikert. Until the revolt of diaspora Jews in Cyrenaica, Egypt and Cyprus (116–117), Trajan seems to have left the

Jews alone. Their revolt should be seen within the context of Trajan's war against the Parthians, in particular the events in the year 116 when conquered peoples including the Jews in Mesopotamia revolted against Trajan.

The sources give little insight into the motives and the development of the revolt, but Trajan brutally put it down and had most of the Jews killed in the three subversive regions. Also Judaea was not unaffected by the revolt. Trajan sent his general Lusius Quietus to the province to prevent the revolt from spreading to Judaea and to nip a possible rising of Judaeans in the bud. As a consequence, there only seem to have been small pockets of resistance against Rome in Judaea.

Hadrian continued the policy of his adoptive father and made an end to the last hotbeds of resistance. The sources regarding the Jews and Judaea before 130 offer an ambivalent picture. On the one hand they present Hadrian as hostile to the Jews and their customs while late antique Jewish sources for reasons that are not entirely clear picture him as an emperor who was friendly toward the Jews and even mention that he had the intention to restitute Jerusalem to the Jews and to rebuild the Temple. The stationing of a second legion in Judaea in all likelihood had nothing to do with the situation in Judaea but with the strengthening of the eastern frontier after Trajan's Parthian War. Considering the unclarity of and contradiction between the sources, it is best, as Weikert does, to consider Hadrian's pre-130 policy concerning Judaea and the Jews as fairly neutral. That would change in 130 when the emperor refounded Jerusalem as a Roman colony.

On his second eastern journey, which started in 128, Hadrian also visited Judaea and Jerusalem. In the context of his policy of urbanization he refounded Jerusalem as *Colonia Aelia Capitolina*, named after himself and Jupiter Capitolinus. Jerusalem would not be Jewish anymore but pagan. The Temple would not be rebuilt, as many Jews had hoped for, and instead the cult of Jupiter became central in the city. Weikert discusses elaborately the date of the foundation about which the sources are not unanimous – the *communis opinio* is 130, so before the rise of the Bar Kochba revolt, a date which Weikert deservedly prefers. He also deals with the archaeological sources, the pagan cults of Aelia and the site of the Jupiter temple, which Weikert correctly situates at the new forum of Aelia and not on Temple Mount. Consequently, the foundation of Aelia should not be considered as a deliberate *damnatio memoriae* of Jewish Jerusalem and Jewish life in the city although that was in effect what happened. Weikert also discusses rather

elaborately the alleged prohibition of circumcision by Hadrian for which he sees no convincing evidence in the sources. Subsequently Weikert examines the Bar Kochba revolt (132–136) and argues that Hadrian's policy of romanization in Judaea and his neglect of Jewish religious and cultural life was the central problem behind the revolt. The suppression of the revolt required considerable effort and a very large Roman force – soldiers seem to have been especially recruited to crush the rebellion – and took many lives on both sides. Hadrian himself seems to have been in command, at least for a while, and sent off his best generals to overpower the revolting Jews. Rabbinic sources accuse Hadrian of persecuting the Jews after the revolt, but this is uncertain. It is clear, however, that Jews were no longer allowed to live in Jerusalem/Aelia Capitolina and its direct vicinity, or visit the city.

Weikert's study presents a comprehensive discussion of a pivotal period in Roman-Jewish relations. Its value lies in the detailed examination of the available primary sources and the scholarly literature. Despite the many conflicts and confrontations between Rome and the Jews, Weikert does not perceive Rome's actions against the Jews, at least not on an imperial level, as a deliberate and conscious anti-Jewish policy and an attempt to suppress Jewish religious life and its associated rituals and customs, a view with which some might disagree.

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