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TIBERIUS, TACFARINAS, AND THE JEWS

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Why did the emperor Tiberius expel the Jews from Rome in AD 19? Three ancient sources preserve relatively detailed accounts of this event. Writing c. AD 93, Josephus preserves the earliest. He first describes how Tiberius crucified some priests of Isis in Rome, had their temple razed, and the statue of Isis thrown into the Tiber, because of the role that they had played in dishonouring a Roman noblewoman. He then proceeds to describe the expulsion of the Jews from Rome at about the same time:

> There was a certain Jew, a complete scoundrel, who had fled his own country because he was accused of transgressing certain laws and feared punishment on this account. Just at this time he was resident in Rome and played the part of an interpreter of the Mosaic Law and its wisdom. He enlisted three confederates not a whit better in character than himself; and when Fulvia, a woman of high rank who had become a Jewish proselyte, began to meet with them regularly, they urged her to send purple and gold to the temple in Jerusalem. They, however, took the gifts and used them for their own personal expenses, for it was this that had been their intention in asking for gifts from the start. Saturninus, the husband of Fulvia, at the instigation of his wife, duly reported this to Tiberius, whose friend he was, whereupon the latter ordered the whole Jewish community to leave Rome. The consuls drafted four thousand of these Jews for military service and sent them to the island of Sardinia; but they penalized a good many of them, who refused to serve for fear of breaking the Jewish law. And so because of the wickedness of four men the Jews were banished from the city.[1]

[1] Jos. *AJ* 18,81–84: Ἦν ἀνὴρ Ἰουδαῖος, φυγὰς μὲν τῆς αὐτοῦ κατηγορίᾳ τε παραβάσεων νόμων τινῶν καὶ δέει τιμωρίας τῆς ἐπ' αὐτοῖς, πονηρὸς δὲ εἰς τὰ πάντα. καὶ δὴ τότε ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ διαιτώμενος προσεποιεῖτο μὲν ἐξηγεῖσθαι σοφίαν νόμων τῶν Μωυσέως, προσποιησάμενος δὲ τρεῖς ἄνδρας εἰς τὰ πάντα ὁμοιοτρόπους τούτοις ἐπιφοιτήσασαν Φουλβίαν τῶν ἐν ἀξιώματι γυναικῶν καὶ νομίμοις προσεληλυθυῖαν τοῖς Ἰουδαϊκοῖς πείθουσι πορφύραν καὶ χρυσὸν εἰς τὸ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἱερὸν διαπέμψασθαι, καὶ λαβόντες ἐπὶ χρείας τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀναλώμασιν αὐτὰ ποιοῦνται, ἐφ' ὅπερ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἡ αἴτησις ἐπράσσετο. καὶ ὁ Τιβέριος, ἀποσημαίνει γὰρ πρὸς αὐτὸν φίλος ὢν Σατορνῖνος τῆς Φουλβίας ἀνὴρ ἐπισκήψει τῆς γυναικός, κελεύει πᾶν τὸ Ἰουδαϊκὸν τῆς Ῥώμης

Writing perhaps c. AD 120, Tacitus preserves a much briefer account of the same event:

> Another debate dealt with the proscription of the Egyptian and Jewish rites, and a senatorial edict directed that four thousand descendants of enfranchised slaves, tainted with that superstition and suitable in point of age, were to be shipped to Sardinia and there employed in suppressing brigandage: "if they succumbed to the pestilential climate, it was a cheap loss." The rest had orders to leave Italy, unless they had renounced their impious ceremonial by a given date. [2]

Finally, Suetonius preserves a third account similar to that of his contemporary Tacitus:

> He [Tiberius] abolished foreign cults, especially the Egyptian and Jewish rites, compelling all who were addicted to such superstitions to burn their religious vestments and all their paraphernalia. Those of the Jews who were of military age he assigned to provinces of less healthy climate, ostensibly to serve in the army; the others of that same race or of similar beliefs he banished from the city, on pain of slavery for life if they did not obey. He banished the astrologers as well, but pardoned such as begged for indulgence and promised to give up their art.[3]

ἀπελθεῖν. οἱ δὲ ὕπατοι τετρακισχιλίους ἀνθρώπους ἐξ αὐτῶν στρατολογήσαντες ἔπεμψαν εἰς Σαρδὼ τὴν νῆσον, πλείστους δὲ ἐκόλασαν μὴ θέλοντας στρατεύεσθαι διὰ φυλακὴν τῶν πατρίων νόμων. καὶ οἱ μὲν δὴ διὰ κακίαν τεσσάρων ἀνδρῶν ἠλαύνοντο τῆς πόλεως. Text and translation from L. H. Feldman, *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Books XVIII–XIX* (Loeb Classical Library 433), Cambridge MA 1965, 58–61.

[2] Tac. *ann*. 2,85,4: *Actum et de sacris Aegyptiis Iudaicisque pellendis patrum consultum ut quattuor milia libertini generis ea superstitione infecta quis idonea aetas in insulam Sardiniam veherentur, coercendis illic latrociniis et, si ob gravitatem caeli interissent, vile damnum; ceteri cederent Italia nisi certam ante diem profanos ritus exuissent*. Text and translation from J. Jackson, *Tacitus III* (Loeb Classical Library 249), Cambridge MA 1931, 516–17.

[3] Suet. *Tib*. 36: *Externas caerimonias, Aegyptios Iudaicosque ritus compescuit, coactis qui superstitione ea tenebantur religiosas vestes cum instrumento omni comburere. Iudaeorum iuuentutem per speciem sacramenti in prouincias gravioris caeli distribuit, reliquos gentis eiusdem vel similia sectantes urbe summouit, sub poena perpetuae servitutis nisi obtemperassent. Expulit et mathematicos, sed deprecantibus ac se artem desituros promittentibus veniam dedit*. Text and translation from J. C. Rolfe, *Suetonius I* (Loeb Classical Library 31), Cambridge MA 1913, 344–47.

Despite this relative wealth of sources, their combined evidence does not allow of a clear explanation as to why exactly Tiberius expelled the Jews from Rome in AD 19. Although they preserve broadly similar accounts of the circumstances surrounding this expulsion, they differ among themselves in several points of detail and interpretation. They are in broad agreement that the emperor acted against the adherents of Egyptian cults at Rome at this time as well as against the Jews, and that he did so on religious or moral grounds. They are in broad agreement also that, in addition to his expulsion of the Jews from Rome, he conscripted 4,000 of those affected by his new religious measures and sent them to Sardinia. Nevertheless, there is little insight otherwise as to what motivated him to take these particular actions at this particular time.

Josephus interprets the measures against both Egyptians and Jews as a response to two separate scandals involving two different Roman noblewomen, one of whom had been taken advantage of by some priests of Isis, the other by a group of Jews, but few modern commentators have been prepared to accept this account of events in full, not least because of the repetitive nature of the alleged scandals and their obvious polemical intent.[4] Several scholars have accepted

[4] Most recently, S. Matthews, *First Converts*: *Rich Pagan Women and the Rhetoric of Mission in Early Christianity*, Palo Alto 2001, 10–25, reads the account of these scandals as 'a play on common Roman tropes and stereotypes concerning the prominence of notable women in foreign religions'. R. S. Rogers, "Fulvia Paulina C. Sentii Saturnini", *AJPh* 53 (1932) 252–56, expressed amazement at 'the coincidence that two women of the same rank were involved with two Eastern cults in the same year, were the wives of men of the same name, who both had entrée to the Emperor and sufficient prestige to set governmental investigations in motion'. He concluded, therefore, that both stories relate to separate incidents in the life of the one woman who was 'somewhat catholic in her religious tastes and beliefs'. I am inclined towards the alternative view, that Josephus' source had gathered together two very different accounts of the one incident from two distinct sources where the authors of these accounts had exaggerated and elaborated upon the original scandal in accordance with their particular religious prejudices. It is no coincidence that the one group of religious villains were Egyptians and the others Jews, since these two peoples seem to have come to symbolise foreign superstition in the eyes of many ordinary Greeks and Romans. Hence Diogenes of Oenoanda associated them together as the two most superstitious and disgusting of all peoples. See e.g. P. W. van der Horst, "The Most Superstitious and Disgusting of All Nations: Diogenes of Oenoanda on the Jews", in A. P. M. H. Lardinois – M. G. M. van der Poel – V. J. C. Hunink (eds.), *Land of Dreams: Greek and Latin Studies in Honour of A.H.M. Kessels*, Leiden 2006, 291–98.

what one might best describe as a weak version of the basic Josephan argument when they argue that Tiberius was reacting to the increasingly successful efforts by foreign cults, including Judaism, to proselytise among the Roman elite, even if they do not accept that his anecdotes concerning the duping of the two Roman noblewomen have much, if any, basis in fact.[5] These scholars have tended to place great weight upon a fragment attributed to Dio which claims that Tiberius expelled the Jews from Rome because they were converting many people to their religion:

> As the Jews had flocked to Rome in great numbers and were converting many of the natives to their ways, he banished most of them. [6]

Unfortunately, this probably tells us less about what Dio actually wrote than about how the seventh-century author John of Antioch who transmitted this fragment thought that he should best summarize his account. It may in fact be a brutally short summary of an account similar to that preserved by Josephus, if not of the same account even. Alternatively, it has also been argued that Tiberius expelled the Jews and others from Rome because of their participation, real or alleged, in public protests at the grain shortage in Rome that year.[7] The most recent explanation is that he expelled the Jews and the members of other alien cults from Rome as a public demonstration of his commitment to the ancestral divinities and did so in response to the popular outcry at the apparent

[5] See e.g. E. M. Smallwood, "Some Notes on the Jews under Tiberius", *Latomus* 15 (1956) 314–29; H. Solin, "Juden und Syrer im westlichen Teil der römischen Welt. Eine ethnisch-demographische Studie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der sprachlichen Zustände", *ANRW* II.29.2, 587–789, at 686–88; L. H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, Princeton 1993, 302–03. The extent to which Jews proselytised during the first century AD has been severely questioned, however. See M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*, Oxford 1994, 60–90.

[6] Dio 57,18,5a. Τῶν τε Ἰουδαίων πολλῶν ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην συνελθόντων καὶ συχνοὺς τῶν ἐπιχωρίων ἐς τὰ σφέτερα ἔθη μεθιστάντων, τοὺς πλείονας ἐξήλασεν. Text and translation from E. Cary, *Dio Cassius VII* (Loeb Classical Library 175), Cambridge MA 1924, 162–63.

[7] See M. H. Williams, "The Expulsion of the Jews from Rome in AD 19", *Latomus* 48 (1989) 765–84. L. V. Rutgers, "Roman Policy Towards the Jews: Expulsions from the City of Rome during the First Century C.E.", *ClAnt* 13 (1994) 56–74, argues that Tiberius expelled the Jews in order to maintain 'law and order', but refuses to speculate as to how exactly they had disturbed these.

murder of his adopted son and nephew Germanicus at Antioch in Syria and the rumours that black magic had played an important role in his last illness before his death.[8]

It is noteworthy that none of the above explanations for Tiberius' expulsion of the Jews and others from Rome explains why he also conscripted 4,000 of their number into the army. Nor do any of them explain why he then sent these men to Sardinia in particular. No other religious or social dissidents had been subjected to conscription in this way previously. For example, no attempt seems to have been made to conscript the Jews expelled from Rome in 139 BC.[9] Nor did anyone suggest it as a solution to the persistence of the followers of Isis in rebuilding their shrines within the city of Rome itself, despite their apparent destruction in 59, 58, 53, 50, 48, 28 and 21 BC.[10] No group was treated in a similar way subsequently either. For example, there is no hint that the emperor Claudius sought to conscript any of the Jews when he expelled them from Rome also, whether one dates this event c. AD 41 or 49.[11] Nor did any of the persecuting emperors ever try to conscript Christians en masse in order to punish them for their faith. On the contrary, they eventually prohibited them from military service.[12] As for the despatch of these conscripts to Sardinia in particular, Tacitus maintains that they were sent there to suppress banditry. Unfortunately, he does not attempt to substantiate his claim by describing any particular incident, nor by naming any of the bandits or of the localities allegedly affected. More importantly, no independent evidence confirms that Sardinia was suffering a problem in this respect at that particular

[8] See E. Gruen, "The Emperor Tiberius and the Jews", in T. Hantos (ed.), *Laurea Internationalis: Festschrift für Jochen Bleicken zum 75 Geburstag*, Stuttgart 2003, 298–312.

[9] Val. Max. 1,3,3. See e.g. E. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*, Cambridge 2002, 15–19; E. N. Lane, "Sabazius and the Jews in Valerius Maximus: A Re-examination", *JRS* 69 (1979) 35–38.

[10] Tert. *nat*. 1,10,17–18; Dio 40,47,3; 42,26,2; 53,2,4; 54,6,6.

[11] Suet. *Claud*. 25,4; Dio 60,6,6; *Acts* 18,2; Oros. *hist.* 7,6,15. In general, see H. Dixon Slingerland, *Claudian Policymaking and the Early Imperial Repression of Judaism at Rome* (South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 160), Atlanta 1997.

[12] See Lact. *mort. pers*. 10,1–5; Eus. *hist. eccl.* 8,4,3; Hier. *chron*. 227d (ed. Helm). The extent of pacifism within the pre-Constantinian church tends to be exaggerated by modern commentators, partly for polemical reasons, partly because of a failure to understand the anachronistic nature of the hagiographical sources in particular.

time. On the contrary, since Augustus had assumed direct control of the province for several years c. AD 6 in response to a growing bandit problem then, it is natural to assume that he would have already resolved any problems in this respect several years before AD 19.[13] Indeed, Tacitus and Suetonius both hint that the real reason that Tiberius sent the conscripts to Sardinia in particular was so that the oppressive climate there would kill them, but there are two obvious problems with this explanation of his motivation. First, the climate on Sardinia was not significantly different from that at Rome itself, if it makes any sense at all to generalise in this way about a large island where local conditions varied considerably between mountains and lowland. All things considered, the oppressiveness of its climate was more of a literary topos than an objective description of the situation, and one doubts that Tiberius made important policy decisions on the basis of literary topoi.[14] Second, if it really had been Tiberius' intention to punish the conscripts by exposing them to an unusually harsh or dangerous environment, whether as a result of climatic extremes or of hostile

[13] Dio 55,28,1. Sardinia had a history of banditry. See e.g. Varro *rust*. 1,16,2; Liv. 40,34,13. G. Marasco, "Tiberio e l'esilio degli Ebrei in Sardegna nel 19 d.C.", *L'Africa Romana* 8 (1990) 649–59, at 656, argues that banditry was a severe problem on Sardinia again by AD 19. He argument rests on the fact that Strabo (5,2,7) writes as if the bandits were still a severe problem, and that his final revision of book 5 can be dated sometime during the period AD 15–18. The hidden assumptions here are first, that Strabo would have access to good recent information about developments in Sardinia, and, second, that he would have been concerned to keep his work absolutely up to date in such matters. Since Strabo does not name his source for his account of Sardinia, and does not refer to any specific occurrence there dateable within his own lifetime even, it is not at all clear to what period one should date his knowledge of Sardinia. For comparative purposes, see e.g. Z. Safrai, "Temporal Layers within Strabo's Description of Coele Syria, Phoenicia and Judaea", in D. Dueck, H. Linday, – S. Pothecary (eds.), *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of a Kolossourgia*, Cambridge 2005, 250–58, on how Strabo can mix material from very different periods, some of which is long out of date by his time.

[14] On the unhealthy climate of Sardinia, see Liv. 23,34,11; Paus. 10,17,11; Strabo 5,2,7; Mart. 4,60,6; Sil. 12,371. These statements are generally taken to refer to the fact that, broadly speaking, Sardinia suffered a greater intensity of malaria than did mainland Italy. Yet Rome itself also suffered badly from malaria, particularly in the low-lying areas of the city where the ordinary masses were concentrated. This is why those who could afford to do so retired from the city during the late summer. See R. Sallares, *Malaria and Rome: A History of Malaria in Ancient Italy*, Oxford 2002, 90–93 on Sardinia, and 201–34 on Rome. Hence the humble conscript sent from Rome to Sardinia probably did not notice much change, if any, in the 'climate'

natives, then he should easily have been able to discover many locations far more threatening than Sardinia, whether facing the Germans in the cold and damp of the Rhine frontier in northern Europe or facing the Moors in the heat and dust of the desert fringe in northern Africa. The reality is that, as far as any ordinary inhabitant of the city of Rome itself was concerned, one could hardly have hoped for a safer or more convenient billeting than on Sardinia. The island was highly Romanised, the climate was like that of Rome, there was no threat of hostile incursion, and Rome itself was only a short distance across the Etruscan Sea. After all, bandits were a not uncommon problem even within peninsular Italy itself.[15] Finally, if Tiberius really had wanted to send some group to Sardinia in order to punish them, to the extent of endangering their lives even, he would probably have sent them to work in the mines there rather than to serve as soldiers.[16]

The purpose of this paper is to offer a new explanation as to why Tiberius expelled the Jews from Rome in AD 19 by paying due respect to these two aspects of the problem, the fact that he also conscripted 4,000 men, many, if not most, of whom were Jews, into the army, and the fact that he then sent these men to Sardinia in particular. I must begin, however, by clarifying my assumptions concerning the relationship between the three main sources for these events. This is important because one's assumptions concerning the relationships between the surviving sources affect how one treats their evidence. It is generally agreed that Tacitus and Suetonius used a common source for their accounts of the circumstances surrounding the expulsion of the Jews in AD 19. It has sometimes been assumed that this common source was the *Acta Senatus*, but there is no evidence for this.[17] It may just as well have been an earlier literary work. The bigger difficulty concerns the relationship between Josephus' account of this event and this common source of Tacitus and Suetonius. It is my hypothesis that all three authors depend on the same ultimate

[15] App. *Civ*. 5,132; Suet. *Aug*. 32,1, *Tib*. 37,1. In fact, banditry remained a permanent problem throughout the empire. See T. Grünewald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire*, London 1999, 14–32.

[16] In general, see F. Millar, "Condemnation to Hard Labour in the Roman Empire, from the Julio-Claudians to Constantine", *PBSR* 52 (1984) 123–47, although one must concede that the evidence for this practice during the Julio-Claudian period is very slight.

[17] E.g. Williams (above n. 7) 766.

source in this matter. Since all three authors were writing at the same location, Rome, during roughly the same chronological period, the late first and early second centuries AD, and, in part at least, about the same broad subject, the political history of the Julio-Claudian period, it seems inevitable that they should have shared several of the same sources. Hence the traditional assumption that they all drew upon the lost work of Cluvius Rufus for the reign of Caligula at least.[18] The real problem, however, is whether they knew the same sources in the same form. Here one notes that there is scattered evidence that Suetonius knew one of his major sources for the Julio-Claudians only in a Latin translation of its original Greek text.[19] My working assumption, therefore, is that they knew slightly different versions of the same ultimate source where this provided most of the information which remains common to at least two of the three authors. Such differences as exist between their accounts may best be explained as a result of their different abbreviations of their common material or their different inferences from the same material.

The acceptance that our three main surviving sources for the circumstances surrounding the Jewish expulsion from Rome probably all derive their information from the same ultimate source has an important consequence, that one cannot use the evidence supplied by one source to prove the veracity of the same or similar material in a second of the sources. The agreement of all three authors – Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius – in any matter can prove only that their ultimate source contained this detail, and not that this detail was itself correct. Similarly, the agreement of Josephus with one or other of Tacitus and Suetonius proves only that their ultimate source contained this detail, while the agreement of Tacitus and Suetonius proves only that their immediate source had contained this detail. Hence if the ultimate source for our three surviving sources contained some serious errors, whether in the sequence of the events which it described, the association which it described between these events, the motivations which it ascribed to those involved in these events, or the very details of these events themselves, there is no easy way of detecting such errors.

[18] This cannot be firmly proven, of course. Hence the criticisms by e.g. D. Wardle, *Suetonius' Life of Caligula: A Commentary* (Coll. Latomus 225), Brussels 1994, 47–54; L. H. Feldman, "The Sources of Josephus' "Antiquities", Book 19", *Latomus* 21 (1962) 320–33.

[19] See e.g. D. Woods, "Nero, 'Doryphorus', and the Christians", *Eranos* 104 (2006) forthcoming.

In a case such as this, therefore, it is important to think things through from first principles once more rather than to accept anything at face value, all the more so when there is strong reason to suspect that the ultimate source for the surviving accounts of the events under discussion did contain at least one serious error.

The error in this case was the allegation, by implication at least, that Tiberius conscripted 4,000 men into the army in order to punish them for their religious beliefs, whether present or former. Since all three surviving sources for the circumstances surrounding the Jewish expulsion from Rome agree in this, it is clear their ultimate source had explained Tiberius' conscription of these men in this way. Indeed, their agreement in this error is probably the best proof of my working assumption above that they do derive their information from the same ultimate source. One can also accept that the ultimate source had recorded that Tiberius conscripted as many as 4,000 men, because both Josephus and Tacitus agree on this figure. As already indicated, however, conscription had never been used to punish any other group of religious or political dissidents. More importantly, the examples furnished by the last two attempts to enforce conscription at Rome suggest that Tiberius would not have attempted a renewed levy there except in the case of pressing military need. For when Augustus had conscripted men there in AD 6, he had done so in response to the dangers posed by a revolt in Pannonia, and when he had conscripted men there in AD 9 again, he had done so in response to the German destruction of three whole legions at the battle of the Teutoburg Forest.[20] The obvious conclusion, therefore, is that when Tiberius raised 4,000 troops at Rome in AD 19, he did so in continuation of policies which he himself had helped enforce during the last years of Augustus and for the same reason again, because he felt a pressing military need for more troops.

The next step in rethinking this problem is to identify why Tiberius might have felt a pressing need for more troops in AD 19. Where was there fighting and, more to the point, where was the Roman army failing to perform as their

[20] Suet. *Aug*. 25,2 (slaves freed to serve in AD 6 and 9); Dio 56,23,1–3 (AD 9). The epitaph of C. Fabricius Tuscus (*AE* 1973, 501) reveals that he had supervised a levy of free-born men (*ingenui*) at Rome under Augustus, so during the emergencies of either AD 6 or AD 9. In general, see e.g. M. P. Speidel, "Citizen Cohorts in the Roman Imperial Army: New Data on the Cohorts Apula, Campana, and III Campestris", *TAPhA* 106 (1976) 339–48.

emperor might have wished them to ? The situation must have been very tense in several regions, such as in Moesia where the governor was ordered to take king Rhescuporis of the neighbouring kingdom of Thrace captive, or in Gaul where the Treviri and Aedui broke into open revolt finally in AD 21.[21] Nevertheless, everywhere remained at peace in AD 19, with the exception of the province of Africa. A certain Tacfarinas, a former member of the Roman auxiliary forces, had managed to unite the Musulamii and several other tribes in order to launch a guerrilla war against the Romans which lasted for eight years, AD 17–24.[22] He proved a capable and energetic leader so that in AD 18 he even managed to destroy a Roman cohort near the river Pagyda, and plundered far and wide within the province before he was finally driven away again.[23] The obvious suggestion, therefore, is that when Tiberius decided to raise new troops at Rome in AD 19, he did so in order to send them to Africa for use against Tacfarinas.[24] He was probably provoked by Tacfarinas' unexpected success against the Roman cohort, the continued failure since to inflict a decisive defeat upon him, and fears that he would turn out to be an African Arminius whose success in uniting the native leaders against the foreign enemy and turning the knowledge and experience gained as an auxiliary soldier against his former masters would lead to African equivalent of the disaster at the Teutoburg Forest. As a measure of the seriousness with which he treated the situation, one notes that he ordered the transfer of a second legion, the *IX Hispana*, to Africa in order to assist the legion already stationed there, the *III Augusta*, and that this

[21] Tac. *ann*. 2,66–67; 3,40–47.

[22] Tac. *ann*. 2,52. In general, see R. Syme, "Tacfarinas, the Musulamii, and Thubursicu", in P. R. Coleman - Norton et al. (eds.), *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honor of Allan Chester Johnson*, Princeton 1951, 113–30.

[23] Tac. *ann*. 3,20–21.

[24] Marasco (above n. 13) comes nearest to this solution when he suggests that Tiberius sent the conscripts to Sardinia because the safeguarding of the Roman corn-supply from there became much more important now that Tacfarinas was disrupting the supply from Africa. The difficulty with this suggestion is that, as already indicated, there is no firm evidence of any threat to the corn-supply from Sardinia at this period, whether from 'bandits' or any other cause.

legion had reached Rome by late AD 20.[25] Hence the decision to raise 4,000 recruits at Rome may have formed part of a larger plan to reinforce the Roman garrison in Africa by quite a considerable amount. Yet if this really was the case, why did the 4,000 conscripts end up on Sardinia ? The answer to this lies partly in the geography of the region, partly in the nature of our surviving sources of information in this matter. Their journey to Africa probably took the 4,000 conscripts to Sardinia first, since it lay between their starting point in Rome and their final destination in Africa.[26] In so far as Roman sailors tended to prefer to spend the night on land, and to stay in sight of land as they made their journey, then the fleet bearing the conscripts may have decided to transport them via the coast of Sardinia rather than pursue a more direct course from Rome to Africa. Alternatively, the conscripts may have been sent to Sardinia in order to link up with and reinforce some units already stationed there before commencing a united journey onwards to Africa itself.[27] Hence our surviving sources are probably correct when they say that the 4,000 conscripts were sent to Sardinia. The problem is that this need not be the full truth. Yes, they were sent to Sardinia, but this may have been a stop on their journey to their final destination rather than the final destination itself. The agreement of our three surviving sources in this matter proves only that their common source had described the despatch of the 4,000 conscripts to Sardinia, and in such a way as to lead its readers to assume that this had been their final destination. This does not prove that Sardinia had indeed been their final destination, not

[25] The identity of the anonymous legion whose journey from Pannonia to Africa via Rome is mentioned at Tac. *Ann*. 3,8,1 is supplied by *Ann*. 4,23,2. The fact that this legion was travelling via Rome raises the question whether it was supposed to unite with the conscripts from Rome in order that they might journey together to Africa. If so, then one must assume either that the new conscripts spent almost a year training in or about Rome, or that the conscription and the subsequent expulsion of Jews need to be redated to AD 20. Vegetius (*mil*. 2,5) suggests that basic training normally took at least four months.

[26] See e.g. Caes. *bell. Afr*. 98 where he records his route in 46 BC from Utica in north Africa to Rome via Caralis on Sardinia; also, Claud. *in Gildonem*. 504–25 where he records Mascezel's route in AD 398 from northern Italy to Africa via Olbia and Caralis on Sardinia.

[27] One notes here that the *Cohors I Corsorum Civium Romanorum* which had been stationed on Sardinia during the reign of Augustus was stationed in Mauretania Caesariensis by AD 107, and that while it has been assumed that it was transferred directly from Sardinia to Mauretania when that kingdom was incorporated within the empire in AD 40, it is equally possible that it was transferred to Africa first, in order to participate in the war against Tacfarinas, to be eventually transferred to Mauretania from there rather than from Sardinia. See J. Spaul, *Cohors*^{2}*: The Evidence for and a Short History of the Auxiliary Infantry Units of the Imperial Roman Army* (BAR Int. Ser. 841), Oxford 2000, 50.

even if this common source had specifically stated that this was the case, since it need not have been any more correct in this than it was about the alleged religious or social motivation of Tiberius in ordering the conscription in the first place.

It may be objected at this point that Tacitus specifically states that the 4,000 conscripts were sent to Sardinia in order to check banditry there (*coercendis illic latrociniis*). At first glance, therefore, this seems to exclude the interpretation which I have just proposed, that the conscripts were actually on their way to fight against Tacfarinas in Africa. Yet none of our other sources supports Tacitus in this. Hence this claim may represent an inference by Tacitus himself rather than a detail from his ultimate source. Let us concede, though, that the ultimate source behind our three surviving sources did indeed state that the conscripts were raised and despatched in order to check banditry. This need not actually have been the case. Again, it is important to stress that the author of this source need not have been any more correct in this than he was about the alleged religious or social motivation of Tiberius in ordering the conscription in the first place. However, his choice of language may preserve some insight into his own source-materials. Here one must ask oneself what a 'bandit' (*latro*) is. One should be careful not to fall into the trap of assuming that 'banditry' (*latrocinium*) here must denote the activities of common criminals with no higher social or political motives. Roman authors frequently used the term 'bandit' to abuse those whose social or political motives they emphatically rejected, whether leaders of national revolts against Roman rule or rival emperors.[28] Of most note here, Tacitus denigrates Tacfarinas as a 'bandit' despite the fact that his own descriptions of his political success in uniting several different tribes behind him and his ability to raise and train an army sufficient to meet the Romans face-to-face on the battlefield proves that he was very much more than this.[29] Hence if the author of the common source behind the three surviving sources did claim that Tiberius had raised the 4,000 conscripts in order to check banditry, he may well have been influenced by the use of this term within his source-materials in reference to the revolt by Tacfarinas rather than in reference to the activities of those whom we would more correctly describe as bandits.

[28] Grünewald (above n. 15) 33–161.

[29] Tac. *ann*. 2,52 (*vagos primum et latrociniis suetos ad praedam et raptus congregare*); 3,73 (*latro Tacfarinas*). See Grünewald (above n. 15) 53–55.

One must now return to the religious question. What does the conscription of 4,000 men in Rome really have to do with the expulsion of the Jews from the city ? Josephus comes the nearest to the truth when he says that the consuls punished many Jews who refused to serve in the army for fear of breaking Jewish law. It is noteworthy, however, that he does not tell us how exactly the consuls punished these men. Although he presents events as if the conscription of the 4,000 men and their despatch to Sardinia was part of the wider expulsion of the Jews from the city, itself the response to the way in which some Jewish criminals had managed to cheat a Roman noblewoman of purple and gold, one suspects that, following his source, he has completely misunderstood these events. The Jews who were banished from the city were those who had refused to be conscripted into the army. Their banishment had nothing to do with the defrauding of a Roman noblewoman by some Jews. For some reason, however, the author of the common source behind the surviving descriptions of these events by Josephus, Suetonius and Tacitus, traced a causal connection between the defrauding of a Roman noblewoman by some Jews and the banishment of those Jews who refused to participate in the conscription process. He may have been misled somewhat by the fact that the Julio-Claudian emperors had been accustomed to exile their enemies to various islands, including Sardinia, to assume that anyone sent there had to have been effectively banished for some reason, whatever their apparent status.[30] Alternatively, he may have assumed a sequence of cause and effect where none in fact existed in accordance with some deep prejudice against 'foreign' religions. At the very least, however, he used the description of the defrauding of the Roman noblewoman by some Jews as a literary bridge from one subject, the duping of Roman noblewomen by adherents of foreign cults, Egyptians and Jews, to the next, the circumstances surrounding the conscription of 4,000 men in the city when some Jews refused to participate in the process.

One cannot totally exclude the possibility that those in charge of the conscription process at Rome in AD 19 somehow interfered with it so that the burden fell disproportionately hard upon the Jewish or Egyptian populations of the city, and that they did so in response to the recent scandals involving

[30] In general, see S. Bingham, "Life on an Island: A Brief Study of Places of Exile in the First Century AD", in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* XI (Coll. Latomus 272), Brussels 2003, 376–99: also S. T. Cohen, "Augustus, Julia and the Development of Exile *Ad Insulam*", *CQ* 58 (2008) 206–17.

Egyptians and Jews. Unfortunately, however, we know almost nothing about how the process of conscription actually worked at this period.[31] Nor is the hypothesis necessary. The Jewish conscription-controversy of AD 19, if one may call it that, was a crisis which had been waiting to happen. The Jewish population of the city seems to have grown significantly during the first century BC so that over 8,000 Jewish men were able to rally there in 4 BC in support of a delegation petitioning Augustus to end Herodian rule in Judaea.[32] Since the Jewish population seems to have been concentrated in one particular region, that part of the city across the Tiber,[33] they may have been able to avoid the drafts of AD 6 and 9 if these had been organized on a territorial basis, however indirectly. The result of such a system, however, is that it would have impacted very heavily on the community when the burden of conscription finally fell on their region of the city, as it would have to have done at some point. While the emperor may have been able to excuse individual Jews from military service if they had formed a tiny proportion of a larger draft without arousing jealousy against their community, he would not have been able to excuse a larger number en masse without risking public unrest and the start of the inter-communal violence one would normally associate with the cities of the east. Hence when Tiberius decided to banish those members of the Jewish community who refused military service in AD 19, he was probably acting with an eye to the longer-term interests of the community as a whole. Indeed, his decision to banish these ancient refuseniks from the city compares very favourably with Augustus' measures in AD 9 when he had stripped many of their property, disenfranchised others, and even executed some,[34] although one may choose to interpret the relative mildness of Tiberius' actions as proof that there was no real military crisis at the time rather than that he was particularly well disposed towards the Jewish community.

A second objection to the interpretation proposed above must be raised at this point also, that Seneca preserves a passage which seems to support the traditional interpretation, that Tiberius expelled the Jews, and others also perhaps, from Rome for religious reasons rather than as a result of their

[31] In general, see P. A. Brunt, "Conscription and Volunteering in the Roman Imperial Army", *SCI* 1 (1974) 90–115.
[32] Joseph. *AJ* 17,300.
[33] Philo, *Leg*. 155.
[34] Dio 56,23,2–3

resistance to conscription.[35] It is important here, however, that one pays due attention to the nature of Seneca's text. He does not intend to provide a technical legal description of the event to which he alludes. Nor does he describe the event as part of a full and detailed political narrative of the reign of Tiberius. He simply refers to the event in passing as the background to a time in his youth when he abandoned the vegetarianism of the Pythagoreans and returned to eating meat. The event itself does not form the focus of his attention. It is nonsense, therefore, to try and read precise definitions into his language. Hence when he claims that 'foreign rites were being expelled then' (*alienigena tum sacra movebantur*), one should not read this as more than a vague generalisation concerning the event in question. He does not say that all practitioners of these rites were being expelled, but he does not say either that only a limited group were being expelled. Nor does he say why they were being expelled. Perhaps the key point in this passage is Seneca's report that he abandoned his vegetarianism at the request of his father, but that his father did request this of him not because he feared *calumnia*, but because he hated philosophy. If one interprets the use of the term *calumnia* here in a technical legal sense to mean 'prosecution', then this passage could be read to imply that the government was prosecuting anyone suspected of being a Jew, or other forbidden religion, simply for being a member of that religion, although this is

[35] Sen. *epsit*. 108,22: *Hic ego instinctus abstinere animalibus coepi, et anno peracto non tantum facilis erat mihi consuetudo, sed dulcis. Agitatiorem mihi animum esse credebam, nec tibi hodie adfirmaverim, an fuerit. Quaeris, quomodo desierim ? In primum Tiberii Caesaris principatum iuventae tempus inciderat. Alienigena tum sacra movebantur, sed inter argumenta superstitionis ponebantur quorundam animalium abstinentia. Patre itaque meo rogante, qui non calumniam timebat, sed philosophiam oderat, ad pristinam consuetudinem redii. Nec difficulter mihi, ut inciperem melius cenare, persuasit*. For the traditional interpretation, see e.g. Smallwood (above n. 5) 320; Dixon Slingerland (above n. 11) 21–23.

not necessarily the only possible reading of this text.[36] Alternatively, if one interprets it to mean 'false accusation' in a non-technical sense, then this passage need imply only that social odium was attached to anyone suspected of being a Jew at this time, when some Jews were being expelled from the city, for whatever reason, and that Seneca was proud of the fact that his father was not swayed by such irrational prejudice, no matter how widespread it had become. In brief, Seneca's evidence is infuriatingly vague, and cannot be used to tell decisively either for or against the interpretation which I have outlined above.

The possibility has been raised above that the ultimate source of our surviving accounts by Josephus, Suetonius, and Tacitus misrepresented the events of AD 19 in accordance with his own religious prejudices, that he distorted the relationship between events to make it seem that Tiberius had punished the whole community of Jews, and perhaps all the adherents of Egyptian rites also, for the crimes of a only a small group of their co-religionists in each case. The obvious implication is that he did not like either group and wished to highlight the fact that the early emperors did not hesitate to act decisively against these foreign religions when the need arose. This may tell us something about the period at which he wrote, but it also warns us against the simple acceptance of any other of his statements in such matters should we prove able to detect them. One needs to be highly suspicious, therefore, of the origin and reliability of that passage where Suetonius reports that Augustus had treated ancient Greek rites with respect but had omitted to make even a slight detour to visit the temple of Apis when he had been in Egypt, and that he had praised his grandson Gaius for not offering prayers at Jerusalem when he had passed near there in AD 1.[37] The hostility towards Egyptian and Jewish religion once more suggests that Suetonius derives this information from the same

[36] J. Gummere (ed.), *Seneca VI*: *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales III* (Loeb Classical Library 77), Cambridge, MA 1925, 243, translates 'prosecution', as does Dixon Slingerland (above n. 11) 320. M. H. Williams, T*he Jews among the Greeks and Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook*, Baltimore 1998, 58, translates 'false accusation', but proceeds to clarify, 187, that she means this in a technical legal sense also. If one insists on translating this term as 'prosecution', then it is important to note also that it may well refer to prosecution for refusing conscription rather than for being Jewish or a member of an Egyptian cult as such. Many of those liable for military service as a result of the recent conscription would probably have gone on the run within the city of Rome itself. Seneca's father did not wish to see his son mistakenly accused by someone of being one such draft-dodger, many of whom were known to be Jews and Egyptians, easily identifiable by their unusual dietary behaviour, and this is why he urged him to stop his vegetarianism.

[37] Suet. *Aug*. 93.

ultimate source as he does his account of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in AD 19, and that it is likely to represent a similar distortion of the truth. At least one modern scholar accepts this passage at face-value, to mean that Augustus had praised Gaius for snubbing the Jewish religion, and uses it to prove the anti-semitism of both.[38] On the contrary, if this incident has been as badly misrepresented as the events of AD 19, it is more likely that Augustus praised Gaius for not praying at Jerusalem because he thought that this was the more diplomatic gesture towards the Jews who had always been so sensitive about their temple there. Gaius had resisted the temptation to act the religious tourist and intrude where the natives would not have cared to be reminded once more of their powerlessness before Rome. If more Romans had showed the same tact subsequently, then a lot of lives could have been saved on both sides. Finally, it is useless to speculate as to the identity of the author of the ultimate common source behind our three main surviving accounts of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in AD 19, or that of the intermediate source used by Suetonius and Tacitus alone, whether he is identifiable as Aufidius Bassus, Servilius Nonianus, Fabius Rusticus, or Cluvius Rufus, if for no other reason that we know so little about the works of any of these authors in the first place.[39]

To summarize, the accounts by Josephus, Suetonius, and Tacitus of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in AD 19 are second or third-hand accounts, and need to be treated accordingly. In so far as they all repeat the same bizarre claim that Tiberius conscripted 4,000 men at Rome in order to punish them for their religious beliefs, it is clear that they all depend on the same ultimate source. In fact, the emperors only performed conscription to serve military needs. Either the author of their common source was very careless in his reading of his own source materials, or, much more likely, he deliberately re-

[38] See e.g. Dixon Slingerland (above n. 11) 47–49, who contrasts the behaviour of Gaius to that of Marcus Agrippa who had visited Jerusalem and offered sacrifice there in 15 BC, to the great joy of all concerned if one wants to believe Philo (*Leg*. 297) and Josephus (*AJ* 16,14), although they have every motive to exaggerate the historical harmony between Jew and Roman. A great deal had happened, though, between 15 BC and AD 1, not least when the Romans had destroyed the porticoes of the Temple and looted the Temple-treasury during their crushing of anti-Herodian rebels in 4 BC (Joseph. *AJ* 17,261–64). E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations*, Leiden 1976, 117, interprets Gaius' behaviour as a snub to the ethnarch Archelaus, whose territory included Jerusalem, rather than to the Jewish faith.

[39] On the lost sources for the Julio-Claudian period see e.g. R. Syme, *Tacitus*, Oxford 1958, 271–303.

shaped events in accordance with his own religious prejudices against Egyptian and Jewish religion. The reality is that it was probably the continued success of the revolt by Tacfarinas in Africa in AD 19 which provoked Tiberius to institute conscription at Rome. The coincidence between the alleged destination of the 4,000 conscripted adherents of the Jewish and Egyptian rites and the position of Sardinia on the main sea-route between Rome and Africa proves as much. Tiberius sent the conscripts to Sardinia, but only as a stop on their journey to fight against the 'bandit' Tacfarinas in Africa, not as their final destination. As for the Jews in Rome, the burden of conscription seems to have fallen rather heavily upon them in AD 19, so that it caused a great controversy when many of them refused to accept their conscription. It was these Jews alone who were expelled from Rome, not the community as a whole.

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