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The Flavian Triumph and the Arch of Titus: The Jewish God in Flavian Rome

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Author

Schmidt, Emily A.

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1. *The Flavian Triumph and the Arch of Titus: The Jewish God in Flavian Rome*¹

Introduction

In 70 CE the Roman forces besieging Jerusalem gained control of the city and destroyed the Jewish temple.² The emperor Vespasian (r. 69 CE – 79 CE) and his son Titus (r. 79 CE – 81 CE), who served as general at the siege, were awarded a joint triumph to celebrate the victory over the Jews in Judaea. Celebrated in 71 CE, the Flavian³ triumph is described by the Jewish historian, Josephus (37 CE – c. 100 CE), who may have been an eye witness to the procession. This same triumphal procession is depicted on a monument known as the Arch of Titus, located on the Via Sacra in Rome. It was probably dedicated around 81, early in the reign of Domitian (r. 81 CE – 96 CE), brother and heir to Titus.⁴ In this paper I investigate the ways that ritual and monument bring the Jewish god from the edge of the empire into the imperial capital, and how ritual and monument construct a Flavian dynastic identity.

Ritual and Space: The Flavian Triumph

A triumph is a ritual that celebrates a spectacular Roman victory. Awarded by a vote of the Senate to a general who had defeated an enemy army with an exceptionally large count of enemies killed, a the ritual of the triumph included special prayers, a procession, sacrifices to Jupiter Optimus Maximus (the highest god of the Roman pantheon) and sometimes the execution of captured enemy leaders.⁵ Triumphal processions were an important aspect of the creation and expression of Roman collective identity, celebrating the military might of the Roman people. The Roman historian Livy (59 BCE – 17 CE) deploys descriptions of triumphal processions from as far back as the mythical history of Rome in his narrative of *The History of Rome* in order

¹ I'd like to thank Samuel Thomas, the respondent, and my fellow panelists, Douglas Underwood and Jason Shattuck for helpful questions and discussion. I'd also like to thank Christine Thomas, Harold Drake, Elizabeth Digeser, Frances Hahn, Thomas Sizgorich (who is greatly missed), Robyn Walsh, Ibukun Bloom, Jessica Ambler, Jason Lamoreaux and Samira Mehta for their helpful questions and comments. Remaining errors are mine.

² On the First Jewish-Roman War see: Susan Sorek, *The Jews against Rome*, (New York: Continuum, 2008); Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations*, (New York: Vintage, 2007); Andrea M. Berlin and J. Andrew Overman, eds., *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History, and Ideology*. (London: Routledge, 2002); Neil Faulkner, *Apocalypse: The Great Jewish Revolt against Rome, AD 66-73*. (Charleston, SC: Tempus, 2002); Jonathan J. Price, *Jerusalem under Siege: the Collapse of the Jewish State, 66-70 CE*, (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome, A.D. 66-70*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

³ The Flavian dynasty was made up of the emperors Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. The dynasty reigned 69 CE – 96 CE. The adjective Flavian is derived from the family name, the *gens Flavia*.

⁴ Michael Pfanner. *Der Titusbogen* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1983) is the only monograph on the arch. See pp. 91-93 for study of dating, where Pfanner argues for a Domitianic date. The date has been debated; see Robin Haydon Darwall-Smith, *Emperors and Architecture: A study of Flavian Rome*, (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1996) for bibliography on the Arch of Titus. Darwell-Smith 166-12 agrees with Pfanner, and notes which authors favor Domitianic dating in fn. 194 on p. 168. Pfanner's argument should settle the debate on dating.

⁵ On the triumph see: Ida Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); Tanja Itgenshorst, *Tota illa pompa: Der Triumph in der römischen Republik*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005); H.S. Versnel, *Triumphus: An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph* (Leiden: Brill, 1970)

to advance his glorification of Rome's power. Jonathan Z. Smith explains the construction of an idealized reality through ritual, writing that "ritual is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension with the way things are."⁶ Processions in particular are often interpreted as presenting both an idealized image of the city and an idealized image of its residents. The city is mapped haptically and kinetically⁷ as a procession moves through most important streets and passes by the most important buildings. The residents of the city are categorized and organized so that participants in the procession represent the kinds of people who inhabit the city. If an individual or a group did not fit in the categories presented, that person or group probably did not belong to the idealized civic body.⁸

We are fortunate to have a vivid description of the Flavian triumph recorded by the Jewish historian Josephus in book 7 of *The Jewish War*. He served as a general of the Jewish army in the war against Rome, infamously surrendering the besieged town of Jotapota⁹ to the Roman forces in July 67, shortly after which he uttered the prophecy that Vespasian would become emperor; this prophecy probably kept him alive.¹⁰ He gained favor with Vespasian, served as translator and interrogator for the Romans,¹¹ and ultimately received citizenship, a salary and land from Vespasian.¹² He claims that *The Jewish War* was read and approved by Vespasian and Titus as the official history of the war.¹³

Josephus describes the Flavian triumph in great detail.¹⁴ He reports that despite being awarded individual triumphs, Vespasian and Titus decided to celebrate one triumph together. After camping near the Temple of Isis, Vespasian and Titus received acclamations from their soldiers and then, with their heads covered, the father and son offered prayers. Josephus notes that countless treasures from all over the Roman Empire were displayed in the procession: items

⁶ Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," in *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: University of City Press, 1982) 53-65, 63

⁷ Annabel J. Wharton, *Refiguring the Post-Classical City: Dura Eurpos, Jerash, Jerusalem and Ravenna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) emphasizes the haptic and kinetic experiences in her approach to each of the cities she analyzes. She analyzes the bodily experience of movement and spatial location at these four sites in order to emphasize that meaning of places is influenced by their location in space, and by the location of the humans who use them.

⁸ On movement, procession, identity and idealization see: Christine M. Thomas "Greek Heritage in Roman Corinth and Ephesus: Hybrid Identities and Strategies of Display in the Material Record of Traditional Mediterranean Religions," in *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*, ed. Steven J. Friesen, Daniel Schowalter, James C. Walters (Leiden: Brill, 2010): 117-147; Diane Favro, "The IconiCITY of Ancient Rome," *Urban History* 33 (2006): 20-38; Henrik Gerding, "The Erectheion and the Panathenaic Procession," *American Journal of Archaeology* 110 (2006): 389-401; Wharton, *Refiguring the Post-Classical City: Dura Eurpos, Jerash, Jerusalem and Ravenna*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) M. O. H. Carver, *Arguments in Stone: Archaeological Research in the European Town In the First Millennium* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1993); Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place* (Chicago: University of City Press, 1987); Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," in *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: University of City Press, 1982): 53-65; Kevin A. Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960)

⁹ Josephus, *War* 3.316-409 describes the siege. Jotapata is the Greek name for the Jewish city whose Hebrew name is Yodefat.

¹⁰ Josephus, *War* 3.401-403

¹¹ Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.49

¹² Josephus, *Life* 423

¹³ Josephus, *Life* 363

¹⁴ Josephus, *War* 7.119-162

in silver, gold and ivory, tapestries and fabrics, and precious stones. Images of the Roman gods, wrought in fine materials were carried in the procession and many kinds of animals, well adorned, were led behind the gods. The captives were even richly dressed, in part, Josephus writes, to hide wounds and disfigurements suffered in the course of the war. He describes travelling stages – we would call them parade floats – and paintings that depicted battle scenes, war-wasted country sides, desolation and misery. Each float carried a captive Jewish commander, re-enacting his capture. After noting that most of the spoils were piled haphazardly in heaps, Josephus describes the spoils capture from the temple in Jerusalem: the golden table, the golden menorah and the Torah scrolls. Vespasian and Titus in chariots, and Domitian on horseback were at the end of the procession. The procession stopped at the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and awaited word that Simon bar Gioras, the enemy commander, had been executed. After word of his execution arrived, sacrifices were performed and the imperial family retreated to the palace.

Josephus describes the means through which Roman power and wealth were displayed. He begins his description of the items and people in the procession:

It is impossible to give a satisfactory account of the innumerable spectacles, so magnificent in every way one could think of, whether as works of art of varieties of wealth or rarities of nature; almost all the treasures that have ever come one at a time into the hands of fortunes favorites – the priceless marvels of many different peoples – were brought together on that day, showing forth the greatness of the Roman Empire.¹⁵

Josephus takes great care to emphasize the large quantity and precious nature of the materials displayed in the procession, describing them as “innumerable spectacles” and as “magnificent.” He specifies that they were “the priceless marvels of many different peoples” and that they showed the “greatness of the Roman Empire.” Clearly the contemporaries of the procession – even a former enemy general – understood the function of this public exhibition of material goods. Implicit in Josephus’ description is the understanding that these amazing items, representing multiple peoples, taken in conquest or given as “gifts” after conquest, were displayed in the triumphal procession to demonstrate the supremacy of Rome over other nations.

Mary Beard emphasizes that a triumph “re-presented and re-enacted the victory.”¹⁶ This is especially clear from Josephus’ description of paintings and parade floats. The paintings depicted the casualties of war: wasted landscapes, enemies slaughtered, walls destroyed by siege engines and overtaken by soldiers, temples burning, and houses torn down. It seems that Josephus intended for his readers to understand that some of the paintings he describes were part of the floats. He reports that captured enemy commanders were made to stand atop the floats, each re-enacting the moment of his capture.¹⁷ The Roman victory is clearly re-enacted for all

¹⁵ Josephus, *War* 7.132-134; Translations are from the Penguin edition, which is more readable than the Loeb translation, while still being an accurate translation. Josephus, *The Jewish War*, trans. G. A. Williamson, rev. E. Mary Smallwood, (New York Penguin, 1981), 384

¹⁶ Beard, *Roman Triumph*, 32

¹⁷ Josephus, *War* 7.147. This is a particularly poignant line, as Josephus likely knew some of the captured commanders personally.

who watch the procession, but it is presented the way it *should have been*: an easy, overwhelming Roman victory, not the way it was *in reality*: a four year hard war that ended only after a siege of Jerusalem that lasted five months and required four legions.¹⁸ Josephus also tells us that the enemy captives in the procession were dressed in “elaborate and beautiful garments” to hide “disfigurements due to physical suffering.”¹⁹ No one likes to think about what their soldiers actually *do* when they’re out in the field, after all! It’s like a little disclaimer “No actual Jews were hurt in the waging of this war.”

Surprisingly, Josephus does *not* describe the Roman soldiers among the items in the procession. The soldiers are mentioned in the description of the events immediately preceding the procession: they camped the night before near the Temple of Isis and shouted acclamations at Vespasian – and probably Titus, too, since he was a *triumphator*²⁰ along with his father. Josephus mentions that the victorious generals fed their soldiers breakfast that morning, but they are not mentioned *as soldiers* anywhere else in his description of the items, animals, people and gods who were in the procession.²¹ He describes large groups of men who served as escorts for all of the things in the procession; they wore garments of purple fabric that had been woven with gold and fine jewelry but he does not specify that they are soldiers.²² Unfortunately, we can’t know if Josephus’ audience would have known whether these escorts were or were not actually soldiers. Why might this matter? If they were, in fact, soldiers, Josephus purposefully omits a detail. He mentions that the men who served as escorts were dressed in purple, but he doesn’t specify soldiers’ uniforms or armor. If they were soldiers, this obscures them from literary view. Why might this matter? If they were, in fact, soldiers, Josephus purposefully omits a detail, but we would learn that soldiers who served as escorts were dressed in purple and not in soldiers’ garb or armor. If the soldiers were actually in the procession, their absence from Josephus’ description (either intentionally or unintentionally) serves to emphasize the spectacular nature of the treasures and the personal power of Vespasian and Titus by removing from literary sight the agents who were actually responsible for fighting the war and for collecting the spoils and captives. It would render anonymous the Roman soldiers who waged open war on Roman provincials. Scholars of the triumphal rituals generally assume that the army would have marched in the triumphal procession, following behind the *triumphator*.²³ If Josephus’ description of the triumph reflects the historical absence of Vespasian and Titus’ soldiers from the procession, then our interpretation of the ritual should be modified to account for the absence. Similar to the noted possible implications to the interpretation of the literary description, the absence of soldiers would emphasize the personal power and authority of Vespasian and Titus, and anonymize the men who had fought against Roman provincials.

Processions, however, do more than simply present idealized images of reality. They have the ability to transcend time and space. Smith demonstrates that the liturgical calendar and the ritual of the Stations of the Cross developed in ancient Christian traditions provided access across time and space to the Jerusalem of Jesus’ life and death for Christians everywhere and everywhen.²⁴ Beard applies this idea of ritual translocation when she writes that a triumphal

¹⁸ Fergus Millar, “Last Year in Jerusalem: Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome” in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 101-128, 101

¹⁹ Josephus, *War* 7:138

²⁰ *Triumphator* (singular), *triumphatores* (plural) = general who has been awarded a triumph

²¹ Josephus, *War* 7.123-132

²² Josephus, *War* 7.137

²³ Beard, *Roman Triumph*, 81-82 describes the assumed generic picture of a triumph, see footnote 23 for her sources.

²⁴ . Smith, *To Take Place*, 74-95

procession “brought the margins of the Empire to its center, and in so doing, celebrated the new geopolitics that victory had brought about.”²⁵ In the case of the Flavian triumph, the Jews of Judaea were literally brought (as captives) into the heart of the Roman Empire: into the city of Rome and before the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Taking these ideas further, Jodi Magness argues that the Flavian triumph brought the Jewish god himself into Rome.²⁶ The Romans were aware that the Jews had no statue of their god in the Jerusalem temple, but Magness suggests that the sacred vessels – the table of the Presence, the menorah and the Torah scrolls collected from the Jewish temple in Jerusalem – served to represent the Jewish god to the Romans.²⁷ Thus, the sacred vessels paraded through the streets of Rome represented the Jewish god as a captive prisoner of war. Magness does not carry this line of reasoning far enough; it was worse than simply thinking of the Jewish god as a captive.

Josephus describes the items in the procession in rough groups. As noted above, he first describes all the amazing treasures, and then notes that there were images of the Roman gods, animal, captives, and parade floats.²⁸ After extensive description of the floats and paintings, and the mention that there were ships in the procession, Josephus describes the sacred vessels. He writes:

Most of the spoils that were carried were heaped up indiscriminately, but more prominent than all the rest were those captured in the temple at Jerusalem – a golden table weighing several hundredweight, and a lampstand similarly made of made of gold but differently constructed than those we normally use. The central shaft was fixed to a base, and from it extended slender branches placed like the prongs of a trident, and with the end of each one forged into a lamp: these numbered seven, signifying the honour paid to that number by the Jews. After these was carried the Jewish Law, last of the spoils.²⁹

In this literary description of the triumphal procession, Josephus has categorized the temple vessels with the spoils.³⁰ If his description of the procession is accurate, then the temple vessels were displayed with other spoils – inanimate objects – rather than with captives – animate beings. Ida Östenberg maintains that statues of gods would typically be displayed among the spoils, and that without exception among descriptions of triumphs the sculptures gods are listed among the spoils towards the front of the procession, never with the captive at the end of the

²⁵ Beard, *Roman Triumph*, 32

²⁶ Jodi Magness, “The Arch of Titus and the Fate of the God of Israel.” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 69 (2008) 201-217, 209

²⁷ Magness, “Arch of Titus,” 209 supports this idea anachronistically with the late 2nd or early 3rd century writings of the Christian Minucius Felix, whose *Octavian* 10.4 describes the Jewish god as weak and enslaved to the Roman gods. She specifically interprets the image of the sacred vessels in procession depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome as representing the Jewish god as captive. Despite the anachronistic textual support for this idea, it is not only a plausible interpretation of the Arch of Titus, but a plausible interpretation of the historical act of displaying the sacred vessels in the Flavian triumph. We do know that by the time Minucius Felix wrote, at least some people thought of the Jewish god in these terms. It should also be noted that there are some interesting implications to the fact that he seems to distance the Jewish god from his own, presumably Christian, god.

²⁸ Josephus, *War* 7.132-148

²⁹ Josephus, *War* 7.148-152; trans. Williamson, rev. Smallwood, 385-386

³⁰ Östenberg, *Staging the World*, 111-115 discusses the location of the temple vessels among the spoils

precession.³¹ Of all the words used by Latin authors to describe statues (*imago, statua, species, simulacrum, and signum*), only *signum* is used to describe statues of gods presented in triumphs. She explains that *simulacrum* and *signum* are the only words used for statues of gods, and furthermore *signum* seems to be used at times when the author is emphasizing the materiality of the sculpture.³² This materiality, she writes, is demonstrated by the numerous times the word *signum* is modified by adjectives that describes the substance from which the statue was made (e.g. *signa aurea, aenea, marmorea, eburnea*) and the paucity of references to *signa* modified by the names of the gods they depict.³³

In other words, it would have been typical for Romans to categorize the statues of gods with material spoils, rather than with captives, in a triumphal procession. This point is further illustrated by the display of the Jewish sacred vessels in the Temple of Peace as if in a museum. Vespasian probably dedicated the Temple of Peace around 75 CE and displayed the spoils of war in it – everything from the Greek classics amassed by the emperor Nero (r. 54 CE – 68CE) to the newly collected treasure of the Jews.³⁴ The golden vessels that Magness argues represent the Jewish god as a *captive* were displayed in the Temple of Peace as *spoils* – as inanimate objects – as if to settle the question once and for all: the Jewish god isn't even animate.

Evocatio Deorum and the Sacred Vessels

Magness relates the treatment of the sacred vessels, and so of the Jewish god, to the treatment the gods of other conquered people received in the ritual referred to as *evocatio deorum*, the calling out of gods.³⁵ *Evocatio deorum* is an ancient Roman ritual that involved calling enemy gods out of cities besieged by Roman forces with the promise of a new temple and better worship in Rome. This ritual was already very ancient by the Flavian period, and is

³¹ Östenberg, *Staging the World*, 80-82, with references, on the ancient debates about sacrilege in two specific examples, with note 384 reminding us that the sources do not allow us to know when the statues of the gods in question were cult statues or simply statues established as dedicatory or votive, 82-85 on the question of whether the gods themselves or images of the gods were believed to be on display in a triumph .

³² Östenberg, *Staging the World*, 83

³³ Östenberg, *Staging the World*, 83, she notes that Livy, *History of Rome* 6.29.8-10 and Pliny, *Natural History* 37.6.14 name the *signa* with proper nouns. She questions the historicity of Livy's description of this triumph on the basis of conflicting or missing information about the statue in question and about the *triumphator*. She notes that Pliny's description of the statues is found among the descriptions of other valuable items displayed in the triumph.

³⁴ Important works on Roma imperial and specifically Flavian architecture include: Robin Haydon Darwall-Smith, *Emperors and Architecture: A study of Flavian Rome*, (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1996); L. Richardson, Jr. *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture*, (New York: Pelican, 1981); Frank Card Bourne, *The Public Works of the Julio-Claudians and Flavians*, (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1946); Samuel Ball Platner & Thomas Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1929). On the Temple of Peace see: Carlos F. Noreña, "Medium and Message in Vespasian's Temple of Peace," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 48 (2003) 25-43; James C. Anderson, "Domitian, the Argiletum and the Temple of Peace," *American Journal of Archaeology* 86 (1982) 101-110; A. M. Coloni, *Forum Pacis, Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale in Roma* 65 (1937) 7-40, +plates; Coloni, "Notizario di scavi, scoperte e studi intorno alle antichità di Roma e del Lazio – 1934," *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale in Roma* 62 (1934) 157-188. Nero was notorious for being a philhellene, a lover of Greek culture, and for collecting famous and priceless pieces of art from the Greek provinces for display in his palace and gardens.

³⁵ On *evocatio deorum* see: Gabriella Gustafsson, *Evocatio Deorum : Historical and Mythical Interpretations of Ritualised Conquests in the Expansion of Ancient Rome*, (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2000); V. Bassanoff, *Evocatio: Étude d'un Rituel Militaire Romain*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947)

important to the way later Roman historians portray Rome's relations to non-Roman gods.³⁶ Livy's *History of Rome* contains one of the most well-known descriptions of a particular *evocatio*. His description of Camillus' conquest of the city of Veii includes the elements of the model *evocatio*:³⁷ 1. a prayer asking the deity of a besieged city to leave town, 2. Roman victory over the besieged city, 3. the deity agrees to move to Rome, and 4. the deity receives a temple in Rome. Camillus first vows one tenth of the Veiiian spoils to Pythian Apollo. He then prays to Juno, asking her to leave Veii and follow the victorious army back to a new temple in Rome – one that will be worthy of her greatness. After the Roman forces had secured victory over the city, several young men were selected to move the cult statue to Rome. Nervous about the sacrilege of touching the divine statue, one of the men asked Juno if she wanted to go to Rome. The statue, we are told, nodded her head in assent. The statue of the goddess was easily moved to Rome, where Camillus fulfilled his vow to her by dedicating a temple to her on the Aventine Hill. Camillus was awarded a triumph for the victory over Veii.

The *evocatio* ritual seems to have been essential to Roman ritualization of warfare. The process of ritualizing warfare allowed Romans to mark the distinction between war and peace, between licit and illicit killing, between just and unjust war, and generally between pious and impious behavior towards the gods and towards humans. The ritual thus served to define some of the key characteristics of Roman self-identification. The ancient authors agree that gods could be called to come out of their cities and side with Rome, and they were likely to agree – at times even agreeing to relocate to Rome itself. In other words, Romans thought that gods might be willing to abandon the peoples and the cities they had previously protected and begin to protect Rome and the Roman people. The idea that gods (in general) were more favorable to Rome and Romans was an essential component of imperialist thought in the Julio-Claudian³⁸ and Flavian periods.³⁹

The treatment of the Jewish god can be seen as an inversion of the typical Roman treatment of or attitude towards foreign gods, perhaps as an anti-*evocatio*. In this case, the interpretation has shifted from reading a symbolic treatment of the Jewish god as an enemy captive, to reading a symbolic treatment of the Jewish God as war spoils, and ultimately to reading a symbolic treatment of the Jewish god him as if he isn't a god at all or as if he doesn't

³⁶ Gustafsson, *Evocatio Deorum*, 13-14 addresses the limited sources relating to specific, allegedly historical incidents of the ritual. The only physical evidence for the ritual is *CIL* 1².2954 = *AE* 1977, no. 816, which records the fulfillment of a vow to the god of Isaura Vetus (modern Bozkir, Turkey) after the Roman capture of the city in 75 BCE. For text, translation, and discussion see: Alan Hall, "New Light on the Capture of Isaura Vetus by P. Servilius Vatia," in *Akten des VI. Internationalen Kongresses für Griechische und Lateinische Epigraphik: München 1972* (München: Oscar Beck, 1973): 568-571, + plate 8.3. See also Gustafsson, *Evocatio Deorum*, 60ff. Gustafsson, *Evocatio Deorum*, 13-14 addresses the limited sources relating to specific, allegedly historical incidents of the ritual. The only physical evidence for the ritual is *CIL* 1².2954 = *AE* 1977, no. 816, which records the fulfillment of a vow to the god of Isaura Vetus after the Roman capture of Isaura Vetus (modern Bozkir, Turkey) records the fulfillment of a vow to the god of Isaurus Vetus (modern Bozkir, Turkey) after the successful capture of the city 75 BCE. For text, translation, and discussion see: Alan Hal, "New light on the capture of Isaura Vetus by P. Servilius Vatia," in *Akten des VI. Internationalen Kongresses für Griechische und Lateinische Epigraphik: München 1972*, (München: Oscar Beck, 1973) 568-71, + plate 8.3. See also Gustafsson, *Evocatio Deorum*, 60ff.

³⁷ Livy *History of Rome*, 5.20.1-5.21.3.

³⁸ The Julio-Claudian dynasty was the first Roman imperial dynasty. It spanned the reigns of the emperors Augustus, (r. 27 BCE – 14 CE), Tiberius (r. 14 CE – 37 CE), Gaius "Caligula" (r. 37 CE – 41 CE), Claudius (r. 41 CE – 54 CE), and Nero (r. 54 CE – 68 CE). The adjective Julio-Claudian comes from the names of the two common family names of the dynasty, the *gens* Julia and the *gens* Claudia.

³⁹ Roman imperialist thought, which position Rome as the leader of the world, bringer of peace, and punisher of the proud is stated in Virgil's *Aeneid* 6.

even exist. If he doesn't exist, then he doesn't need a temple or sacrifice. James Rives argues that this is exactly the message Vespasian intended to send.⁴⁰ In addition to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, Vespasian ordered the destruction of the Jewish temple at Leontopolis in Egypt, which had been established around 160 BCE in the midst of the conflict between Antiochus IV (r. 175 BCE – 164 BCE) and the Judaeans.⁴¹ With the destruction of *both* Jewish temples, Vespasian effectively ended Jewish religion as he understood religion. After all, the temple and sacrificial cult were the parts of Jewish practice that were most like Roman practices and most like the Roman concept of religion.

But the end of the Jewish religion is just the beginning of the Flavian dynasty. Beard argues that the Flavian triumph of 71 CE was the moment when “successful usurpers [were] turned into an established imperial dynasty.”⁴² It was the first time Vespasian and his two sons appeared together in public as the imperial family in the two years since he was acclaimed emperor by the Egyptian legions in July 69 CE.⁴³ At the time of this acclamation, Rome had been in the midst of a civil war following the death of Nero, the last emperor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and he was the fourth man to be acclaimed emperor in a year.⁴⁴ Vespasian was the last surviving challenger for the imperial power after a year of civil war in Rome, but he was not a member of the Julio-Claudian family and thus had no legitimate claim to the purple. What he had was military victory. The victory at Jerusalem was to the propaganda of the Flavians what the victory at Actium was to the propaganda of the Julio-Claudians.

Augustus (r. 27 BCE – 14 CE) secured his position of power at the end of a long civil

⁴⁰ James Rives, “Flavian Religious Policy and the Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple,” in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 145-166.

⁴¹ Josephus, *War* 7.421-435. Josephus concludes *War* with the story of the closure of the temple at Leontopolis and the aftermath of the closure – as if the end of all temple cult to the Jewish god is the end of the story, which it was, for Josephus. The temple at Leontopolis was founded sometime around 160 BCE in response to the desecration of the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus IV's establishment of a statue of Zeus in the Jerusalem temple and his improper sacrifices of on the altar of the Jewish God (2 Macc. 6:1-11). Antiochus IV was the Seleucid (dynasty of kings in Asia Minor, named after Alexander the Great's general Seleucus I Nicator, lasted 305 BCE – 63 CE) king against whom the Jews rebelled in the Maccabean War 167 BCE – 142 BCE. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.387; 13.65-68; 13.70ff describes the establishment of the temple at Leontopolis. This temple was not popular among Jews outside of Egypt. This temple is beyond the scope of this paper. On Leontopolis see: Timothy Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple and Early Christian Identity*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 120-139; Livia Capponi, *Il tempio di Leontopoli in Egitto: Identità politica e religiosa dei Giudei di Onia (c. 150 a.C. – 73 d.C)* (Pisa:Edizioni ETS, 2007); Manfred Bietak, “Tell el-Yahudiya, in *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), 791-792; J.M. Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt, from Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian*, trans. R. Cornman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 124–29; Emil Schuerer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (rev. English edition, G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Goodman, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), vol. 3:47–48, 145–47; R. Hayward, “The Jewish Temple of Leontopolis: a Reconsideration,” in: *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982), 429–43; M. Delcor, “Le Temple d'Onias en Egypte,” in: *Revue Biblique* 75 (1968), 188–203; Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1959), 275–81; W.M. Flinders Petrie, *Hyksos and Israelite Cities* (London: British School of Archaeology, 1906); Edouard Naville and F. L. Griffith, *The Mound of the Jews and the City of Onias* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner 1890), 13–21

⁴² Mary Beard, “The Triumph of Josephus,” in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 543-558, 552

⁴³ Tacitus *Histories* 2.79; Suetonius *Vespasian* 6.3; Beard, “Triumph of Josephus,” 550

⁴⁴ Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian were each acclaimed emperor in the course of the year 68 CE – 70 CE. Vespasian was the last to be acclaimed and the only one to survive the year. See Gwyn Morgan, *69 A.D.: The Year of the Four Emperors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Kenneth Wellesley, *The Year of the Four Emperors*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000) for the history of this year.

war, the symbolic end of which was the Battle of Actium (September 31 BCE), where Augustan forces defeated those of Marc Antony (83 BCE – 30 BCE) and Cleopatra II (r. 47 BCE – 44 BCE), the last independent Ptolemaic queen of Egypt.⁴⁵ Since waging open war on another Roman wasn't considered pious towards the gods or virtuous behavior towards fellow Romans, pro-Augustan propaganda framed Marc Antony as a traitor to Rome who had sided with Egypt, an acceptable enemy. In the Flavian case, Vespasian could be seen as a usurper, since Vitellius (r. April 69 CE – December 69 CE), who had been acclaimed emperor in April 69 CE, was still alive and holding power when the Egyptian legions acclaimed Vespasian emperor in July 69 CE, and it seems to have been pro-Vespasian forces who assassinated him. Flavian propaganda, like Julio-Claudian propaganda, emphasized foreign enemies over domestic enemies. Beard's suggestion is that the triumph was the moment that secured the public image of Vespasian as legitimate emperor and his sons as legitimate heirs by emphasizing his military conquest of a foreign people rather than his success at staying alive through the civil war of 69 CE.

The Arch of Titus and Flavian Dynastic Image

The Arch of Titus in the heart of Rome has long been understood as a monument to the military prowess of the Roman Empire and to the utter defeat of the Jewish people by means of the destruction and despoiling of the temple of the Jewish god in Jerusalem.⁴⁶ Dedicated early in the reign of Domitian, to the deified Titus by the Senate and the people of Rome,⁴⁷ the arch depicts the Flavian triumphal procession. The arch is 15.5 meters tall, 13.5 meters wide, and 4.75 meters deep. Around the exterior, a frieze depicted the length of the procession, with figures representing sacrificial animals, soldiers, captives and even, interpreters believe, the statue of a river god. On the interior, details of the procession are shown in close-up. On the south side, the spoils of the Jerusalem temple are carried by soldiers. These can be clearly identified by the enormous menorah which is the focal point of this panel. On the north side, Titus is seen in his chariot, crowned by a winged Victory and led by his soldiers. The apotheosis of Titus is represented at the apex of the arch's ceiling, in an image of Titus riding an eagle (a symbol of Jupiter) to the heavens. The arch is located east of the Flavian Amphitheater, that is, the Colosseum, along the Via Sacra. It is possible, even likely, that future processions, triumphal or otherwise, passed through the arch.

This monumentalization of the Flavian triumph in the Arch of Titus serves as perpetual re-enactment of the procession. Every time someone sees it, walks through it or around it, the Flavian triumph is re-enacted and the captivity of the Jewish god is displayed once again. Michael Pfanner, the author of the most thorough monograph on the arch, suggests that it is best considered a memorial arch intended to celebrate the apotheosis of Titus.⁴⁸ This is a reasonable conclusion, but I believe it doesn't go far enough. I suggest that the monument functions as a *dynastic* monument, serving to link Domitian to the conquest of Judaea even though he was too young, at the time, to participate in the Jewish War. That is, it serves to link *Domitian's* right to

⁴⁵ The Ptolemaic kingdom was centered in Egypt following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE. The Ptolemaic dynasty is named for Ptolemy I Soter (r. 323 BCE – 283 BCE), the first Ptolemaic king. The dynasty ended with the death of Cleopatra VII in 30 BCE.

⁴⁶ Pfanner. *Titusbogen*, 93-103, Darwell-Smith, *Emperors and Architecture*, 166-172. See also R. Ross Holloway, "Some Reflections on the Arch of Titus" *L'Antiquité Classique* 56 (1987) 183-191.

⁴⁷ CIL VI, 945. Senatus Populusque Romanus divo Tito divi Vespasiani filio Vespasiano Augusto = The Senate and People of Rome [dedicate this] to the divine Titus Vespasianus Augustus, son of the divine Vespasian.

⁴⁸ Pfanner, *Der Titusbogen*, 91-102

rule with his *brother's* military victories. But that's not all. The dedicatory inscription refers to the deified Titus and divine Vespasian. The inscription is absolutely enormous and could be fairly easily seen and read by the literate. Those who were unable to read could surely guess its meaning – and if they could not, the image of Titus being carried away on the back of an eagle was surely intelligible to all who look up as they pass through the arch. To put it simply, the arch emphasized that Vespasian and Titus were *divi* – deified emperors – and Domitian was part of the family. His claim to legitimacy was based on the military prowess of his father and brother, and on their divinity. The arch, of course, doesn't directly stake a claim for Flavian legitimacy or even Domitian's legitimacy with linear, discursive means of communication. It uses symbolic and non-discursive communication.

Objects do not simply reflect values, identity or meaning, but as John Moreland writes, they are among “the means through which social relationships are constructed, produced and transformed.”⁴⁹ This is most clear in image-laden propaganda, but geography and objects can also serve as symbols or mnemonic devices that direct viewers to stories and interpretations.⁵⁰ Because meaning is a socially constructed network of texts, objects and ideas, Moreland emphasizes the importance of context for interpretation. He encourages scholars to take material evidence as seriously as we take textual evidence and explains that “artifacts and texts are more than just sources about the past; that they had efficacy in the past ... they were used in the construction of social relationships and identities in historically specific circumstances.”⁵¹ In other words, scholars must attempt to read the non-discursive, non-verbal language of artifacts and architecture that remain from past times. Scholars who seek to reconstruct cultural history⁵² using material remains face the dual problems of trying to understand people with very different social-historical contexts and world views through a medium that does not translate into discursive language. Explaining or describing “sense of significance,” “values,” “meaning” or “emotions” expressed in archaeological materials with the discursive language of scholarship is subjective translation at best and carries with it the danger of doing injustice to the experiences of people who lived and had thoughts and feelings.

The Arch of Titus directs viewers to recall the day of the triumph and all it stands for. It presents an idealized image of the world. In the world depicted in the Arch of Titus there is only the celebration of victory won by gods and a procession of treasures, both sacred and mundane. The south panel, the *spoila* relief, showcases the menorah and the table of the Presence. To Roman eyes, this might read – like it probably did in the triumph – as though the Jewish God were conquered and captive. Outside of the arch, however, the reality was a city marked by the effects of civil war. The Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus had been burned in 68 CE, in the course of conflict between Vespasian and Vitellius.⁵³ Rebuilding began under Vespasian in 70 CE, only to find the temple burned again in the fire of 80 CE, the reconstruction completed by Domitian.

⁴⁹ John Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, (London: Duckworth, 2001), 82

⁵⁰ Moreland 80; Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996) describes the way landscape functions as a mnemonic for stories that teach Apache values and mythic history – Apache landscapes hold knowledge. Other peoples use landscapes, objects or images in similar ways.

⁵¹ Moreland 111

⁵² Ian Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000) discusses the relationship between textual and material evidence in the study of cultural history, especially in chapter 1, “Archaeology as Cultural History.”

⁵³ Tacitus, *Histories* 3.72; Josephus, *War* 4. 645-649

The Jewish war and the Jewish god were present in the city of Rome in other ways. According to an inscription recovered from the Flavian Amphitheater, it was built from the spoils of war, and the best candidate for a war under Vespasian that generated enough booty is the Jewish War.⁵⁴ This amphitheater was not only a symbol of Flavian power, but of the power of Rome itself, being depicted on coins issued as long ago as the Flavian dynasty as recently as 2010, by the European Union. The Flavian amphitheater became the canonical type for and pinnacle of amphitheater architecture, carrying the Flavian influence on Roman identity throughout the empire. Ironically, the monument that best calls to mind the realities of years of war in Judaea and a year of internal civil conflict is the Temple of Peace, the depository for and museum of war spoils. The Jewish sacred vessels symbolizing the Jewish god were displayed there for centuries, even becoming a pilgrimage center for later Jews seeking to see them.⁵⁵ The Jewish god was rendered captive, powerless, and ultimately inanimate by Roman ritual monuments, and the Jewish people were made into the ultimate anti-Romans: defeated godless rebels.

Conclusion

Michael Taussig writes about public secrets in *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*.⁵⁶ A public secret is something everyone knows, but no one talks about, something that can't be articulated. It's the knowledge of what *not* to know. In Flavian Rome, the celebration of the Triumph and the Arch of Titus, with their emphases on the Flavians as conquerors over the Judaeans certainly could not have disguised the fact that Judaea had already been a Roman provincial territory for the better part of a century, that the Jews and their aniconic god were already in the Empire and the city.⁵⁷ The Flavian spectacles and monuments

⁵⁴ On the Flavian Amphitheater see: Katherine E. Welch, *The Roman Amphitheatre: From Its Origins to the Colosseum* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Keith Hopkins and Mary Beard, *The Colosseum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Peter Connolly, *Colosseum: Rome's Arena of Death* (London: BBC Books, 2003); Filippo Coarelli, Ada Gabucci, et al., *The Colosseum*, ed. Ada Gabucci, trans. Mary Barker, (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2001); Ada Gabucci, Filippo Coarelli, et al., *Il Colosseo*, ed. Ada Gabucci, (Milano: Electa, 1999). On the recovered inscription, *CIL* 6.40454a = *AE* 1995, IIIb, probably an abbreviation of the dedicatory inscription, see: Geza Alföldy, "Eine Bauinschrift aus dem Colosseum," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 109 (1995): 195-226; Louis Feldman, "Financing the Colosseum," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 27.4 (2001): 20-31, 60-61. The inscription has been reconstructed to read, "IMP[MP(ERATOR) T(ITVS) CAES(AR) VESPASI[ANUS AVG(VSTVS)] / AMIPHITEATR[V]M NOVVM] / [EX] MANVBI(I)S (VACAT) [FIERI IUSSIT] = The Emperor Titus Caesar Vespasianus Augustus ordered the new amphitheater to be made from the (proceeds of the sale of the) booty."

⁵⁵ See Ra'anan Boustán, "The Spoils of the Jerusalem Temple at Rome and Constantinople," in *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*, eds. Gregg Gardner and Kevin Osterloh (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 321-372 and Steven S. Fine, "'When I Went to Rome ... There I Saw The Menorah': The Jerusalem Temple Implements During the Second Century C.E.," in *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the "Other" in Antiquity: Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers*, (Boston: American School of Oriental Research, 2007) 169-181

⁵⁶ Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*, (Stanford: University of California Press, 1999).

⁵⁷ The Roman general Pompey (106 BCE – 48 BCE) conquered an area including Judaea in 63 BCE, which became the province of Syria. In 6 CE Judaea became a province in its own right, with a capital at Caesarea rather than Jerusalem, the traditional Jewish capital of the region. The province of Judaea was made of the kingdoms previously known as Judah, Samaria, and Edom. The Jewish diaspora included large Jewish populations in major cities of Roman Empire even before the conquest of Judaea by Pompey, in cities such as Alexandria, Sardis, and Rome itself.

emphasized the presence of the Jews in the city and the empire, but transformed them into defeated anti-Romans in order to legitimize Flavian power. In the end, the rise of the Flavian dynasty, and ultimately the rise of the Flavian *divi*, was at the expense of the Jewish god – at least from the perspective of Roman propaganda.

Emily A. Schmidt
University of California, Santa Barbara