

The Reign of Aristobulus I in Josephus' *Jewish War* and Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De excidio Hierosolymitano*

The *Jewish War*, written by Josephus in Greek at the end of the first century CE, depicts the Jewish War against Rome to the siege of Masada. There are two known Latin translations of this work: one is anonymous and probably from the fourth or fifth century; the other is Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De excidio Hierosolymitano*, a fourth-century Christian adaptation with an elevated Latin style (Levenson and Martin 2016, 323-24). It was through these Latin translations, copied by hand into manuscripts, that Josephus' account of Jewish history was known for centuries in Western Europe up to the publication of the first Greek printed edition in 1544 (Levenson and Martin 2017, 765). While these two works can be considered translations of the Greek *Jewish War*, the content, register, and tone differ between the Greek *Jewish War*, the anonymous Latin translation, and *De excidio Hierosolymitano*. These differences have an effect on readers' perceptions of the text and of Jewish history. They are important because of the greater popularity of *De excidio Hierosolymitano* and because of the context of this work not as a direct translation but as a Christian adaptation of Josephus' text (Pollard 2015, 79-100). While much work has been done on the style and language of *De excidio Hierosolymitano* (Bay 2022; Somenzi 2009), there is little scholarship on the style of the anonymous Latin translation of the *Jewish War* beyond Bader's edition (2019). This paper will examine the differences in style and content between the Greek *Jewish War*, the anonymous Latin translation, and Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De excidio Hierosolymitano* in the passages depicting the full reign of King Aristobulus I of the Hasmonean Dynasty.

This passage is important in the larger picture of Jewish history because Josephus portrays the reign of Aristobulus I as the beginning of the decline of the Jewish kingdom which

would ultimately end with the destruction of the temple (Joseph. *BJ* 1.69). This account immediately follows after the passage about John Hyrcanus, whose rule was considered a high point of the Hasmonean dynasty (Joseph. *BJ* 1.68-69). In the story recounted in these passages, Aristobulus I becomes king and then imprisons his mother and brothers (except for Antigonus) (Joseph. *BJ* 1.70-71; ps.-H 1.2). Antigonus returns during the Festival of Tabernacles while Aristobulus is sick, and the queen and her co-conspirators persuade Antigonus to come, armed, to Aristobulus, who believes that Antigonus is coming to kill him and has Antigonus killed (Joseph. *BJ* 1.72-77; ps.-H 1.5-6). After a discussion of the prophecy of Judas the Essene regarding the death of Antigonus, this passage ends with Aristobulus' guilt, sickness, and death (Joseph. *BJ* 1.78-84; ps.-H 1.7-8).

Josephus' *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* (written after the *Jewish War* and covering the history of the Jews through the Biblical era to Josephus' own time) are the main sources for the life of Aristobulus I and for postbiblical Jewish history in general. Therefore, an understanding of how these passages changed over time, especially from a Jewish historiography in Greek to a Christian historiography in Latin, is essential in comprehending Christian views on Jews and Judaism in medieval Europe. These views were shaped by the depiction of postbiblical Jewish history as a period of decline with corrupt leaders, which, in Christian eyes, culminated in the killing of Jesus, rejection of the Gospel, and punishment of the Jewish people by the destruction of the temple and ongoing exile from their land.

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