
Historiographical transfers

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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TRANSFERS
JOSEPHUS, CAESAR AND THE JEWISH PRIVILEGES

“There are other signs that the Greeks began to notice the peculiarities of Roman social life and of Roman behavior in international affairs. True enough, the famous set of Roman values – fides, constantia, severitas, auctoritas, etc., – was discovered for the first time by German professors during the First World War, and helped their pupils to mark time while Hitler was deciding what to do with the classics”.

Arnoldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*.

For anyone interested in the transfer of historiographical models from one culture or language to another, Flavius Josephus offers a privileged field of research, because of his situation at the meeting point of distinct civilizations, Jewish, Hellenistic and Roman, and because of the constant cross-references of rhetoric, history, and political or religious ideology in his work as well as in his translators' work, ancient or modern.

His case is certainly not unique. We can think of the influence that the historian Livy had on the historiography of the French Revolution or of the Conquest of the Americas, when he wrote the ethnocentric Roman epic of the Greek writer, Polybius, who was brought back as a hostage to the camp of the winners.

Named the “Greek Livy” by Jerome of Stridon¹, Flavius Josephus is nonetheless an exceptional example of the transposition of writing models. A Jew of Aramean language, he writes a history of the Hebrew people in Greek, based upon Hellenistic canon. His work holds a considerable posterity in Latin historiography and through it in the history of western philology².

From the Latin work of Pseudo-Hegesippus (the first complete re-writing of the *War of the Jews* according to interpretative schemes based on the Judeo-Christian dispute of the IIIrd and IVth centuries) to the legacy of his work in the contemporaneous Israeli society, Flavius Josephus is one of the ancient writers who best reveals the meta-language of the historical discourse through time³.

We are going to focus here on the *Antiquities of the Jews* and the renewal of interest that Book 14 creates today with historians of the Roman period.

The French publication of the *Antiquities of the Jews* by Flavius Josephus is in the process of preparation at the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem (The French Biblical and Archaeological School of Jerusalem), under the direction of Étienne Nodet. The first five books out of a total of 20 have come out with text, *apparatus*, translation and comments⁴.

Books 14 and 15, on which we are working, are of the greatest interest for the information on politics at the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning

¹ *Epistulae ad Eustochium*, 22, 35, 8 in *Patrologia Latina*, 22. 24: *Iosephus, Graecus Livi*.

² About his legacy, see the synthesis by M. Hadas-Lebel, *Flavius Josèphe, Le Juif de Rome*, Paris, 1989, pp. 261-280. We don't list fewer than 171 manuscripts for the Latin translation of his works, spread throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. About the specifically Latin conception of the history of Rome, Greece and “barbarians”, we refer to our book *Le portrait chez Tite-Live. Essai sur une écriture de l'histoire romaine*, “Collection Latomus”, Brussels, to be published at the end of 1998.

³ For the *De bello Judaico*, also known in the manuscripts as *De excidio Hierosolymitano*, see the critical publication by V. Ussani, Vienna, 1932, in the *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*, 66, 1. The study of reference remains that by Albert A. Bell, *An Historiographical Analysis of the “De Excidio Hierosolymitano” of Pseudo-Hegesippus*, Ph.D. Diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1977. On Josephus in modern Israel, we can mention the very rich bibliography by Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots. Collective memory and the making of Israeli National Tradition*, Chicago, London, 1995, pp. 299-324.

⁴ *Livres I to III*, with the collaboration of G. Berceville and E. Warschawski, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1990 (2nd edition: 1992); *Livres IV and V*, with the collaboration of S. Bardet and Y. Lederman, 1995. The norms on which this publication is based, are similar to those of the publication of the complete works of Philo of Alexandria and the series of the Christian Sources.

of the Empire, for Josephus includes there, in Greek, many senatorial documents.

Connected to the publication of Books 14 and 15, this work should logically initiate an analysis of the Latin version of the *Antiquities*, well placed in the manuscript *stemma* of Josephus' works. We refer here to the rather literal translation undertaken under the direction of Cassiodorus in the VIth century. Although Latin translations of Josephus' works have been few and incomplete (inventoried by Louis H. Feldman in his monumental bibliography), no critical publication has ever been offered⁵.

The enterprise of Franz Blatt, started in 1948, has not gone beyond the first five books of the *Antiquities*⁶. Some 171 manuscripts of this work have been well listed in the introduction, but few of them have been brought together in the *apparatus*. The completed publication of the version by Cassiodorus remains therefore an expected step in Josephian studies⁷.

Among the problems the historian may face in Book 14, none is more difficult than the dating and the interpretation of the texts of the Laws mentioned by Josephus and traditionally designated as "Jewish privileges"⁸.

These texts concern the decrees taken by the Senate between 48 and 44 before our era, at the initiative of Caesar, giving to the Jews a certain number of legal advantages distinct from the common law. This jurisdiction of exception for the Jews of the Diaspora was strengthened by Augustus⁹ and the emperors following him (with certain nuances according to each ruler) due to a generalized Roman conservatism. This jurisdiction of exception was not changed fundamentally despite the Revolts of Judaea in the Ist and IInd centuries of our era¹⁰.

⁵ *Josephus and Modern Scholarship*, 1937-1980, Berlin-New-York, 1984, pp. 40-47 and p. 901.

⁶ F. Blatt, *The Latin Josephus I: Introduction and Text, The Antiquities, Books I-V* (*Acta Jutlandica* 30.1, *Hum. Ser.* 44), Aarhus, Copenhagen, 1958.

⁷ See Louis H. Feldman, *op. cit.*, p. 887. See, nevertheless, "Le texte des *Antiquités* de Josèphe", *Revue biblique*, 1987, pp. 323-376, for É. Nodet's reservations regarding Books I to X.

⁸ *Ant.*, 14, 190-264, 306-323; see also 16, 160-172.

⁹ *Ant.*, 16, 16, 2.

¹⁰ Regarding the progressive transformations of the status of Jews in the Late Antiquity, we can refer to F. Blanchetière, *Aux sources de l'anti-judaïsme chrétien, IIe-IIIe siècles*, Les Cahiers du Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem, in the series "Hommes et sociétés", vol. 4, Jerusalem, 1995.

The first measures in favor of the Jews are religious in nature and go back to Pompey's time. By officially ratifying the link connecting the Jews of the Diaspora to the Great Priest of Jerusalem, Caesar goes beyond the simple tolerance toward a religious particularism: he grants in some ways this double legal setting to the Jewish communities, giving therefore an increased importance to the previous laws, to the extent that historian B. Niese, in a seminal paper, was able to speak of the "Great Charter" of the Jews, *Magna Carta*¹¹.

Mommsen (1817-1903) had already focused in many publications on these senatorial decrees for which the dating poses some difficult problems. However Jean Juster, a French scholar, has written the most detailed study on the legal status of the Jews of the Diaspora, remaining today a starting point for all the works on this question¹². If the study by E. Mary Smallwood¹³ has completed in many aspects the considerable work by Juster, she has not modified his conclusions. The Jews have benefited from a privileged situation in the Empire because of the specificity of their religion, which could not be integrated into the Greco-Roman Pantheon. The free exercise of their religion required some legal exceptions in order not to infringe upon their own laws and customs (rest on the Sabbath, dietetic purity, annual contribution given to the Temple in Jerusalem ...). Confronted with such a situation, the Romans had to choose between persecutions or privileges and, following Caesar's politics, they gave a special status to the Jewish communities of the Diaspora.

From the seminal paper by Niese (1876) to the last synthesis by Smallwood (1976), exactly a century of research is represented, during which the reflection of the historians has focused as much on the existence of these laws as on their interpretation: Are we dealing with a false text? Is this "Charter" due to the recognition by Caesar for the help provided by Antipater's and Hyrcan's troops in Alexandria in the middle of the civil war? Did it concern a decision initiated only by immediate circumstances or conversely by a thoughtful act which reveals the dictator's political lucidity while he was setting up the basis of a new empire promising a long future? Such a subject could not be kept away from debates. As it often happens for Latin and Greek sources related to the Jews and Judaism, the analysis of Josephus' Book 14 creates among his principal commentators ideological divisions or connotations, below or beyond the historical debate. Thus, contradictory readings of Caesar's laws, of

¹¹ "Bemerkungen über die Urkunden bei Josephus, Archaeol. B. XIII, XIV, XVI", *Hermes*, 11, 1876, p. 488.

¹² Jean Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'empire romain ; leur condition juridique, économique et sociale*, 2 vol., Paris, 1914 (anast. reprinted, New York, 1968).

¹³ *The Jews under Roman Rule*, Leyde, 1976.

assimilationist, Zionist, religious, civil... nature, appear within the Jewish scientific community.

This situation is not surprising concerning Book 14 of the *Antiquities*: Josephus himself has referred to the senatorial publications in an apologetical perspective, well analyzed by Juster¹⁴. Thus he publishes only the laws in favor of the Jewish community without ever mentioning anti-Semitic tendencies of the areopagus of the Greek cities and explicitly announces the demonstrative character of his work: “I believe it is necessary to record here all the marks of honor and alliance granted by the Romans and their chiefs to our people, in order that nobody can ignore the fact that the kings in Asia as well as in Europe have held us in high esteem, and had high consideration for our value and faithfulness”¹⁵. Still according to Juster, Josephus is interested first of all by the laws which proclaim in general terms the freedom of the Jewish religion, being silent about the legal passages which over-emphasize the Jewish separatism, particularly in the matter of civil rights, as for example the marriage¹⁶.

At the heart of the source itself is raised therefore a type of problematique (assimilation and/or separatism, with connected questions such as the one of double identity) that the historians have analyzed with concepts and terminologies related to their period.

It is not the point here to relate the history of these comments. These official publications have aroused a huge bibliography which, because of the ideological stake it created, would merit being itself subjected to epistemological research, similar to what was published for the “Testimonium Flavianum” of Book 18 of the *Antiquities*¹⁷.

We would like to recall Mommsen’s analysis in a famous passage of his *Roman History* (1854-1856) where he presents the situation of the Jews of the Diaspora and Caesar’s politics in quite ambiguous terms, which were eventually used by the ultra-nationalists of his time, even if he himself was a member of

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, vol.I, p. 153 and sq. Same analysis in H. R. Moehring, “Joseph ben Matthia and Flavius Josephus: the Jewish Prophet and Roman Historian”, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 21 (2), 1984, pp. 894-897. See also M. Hadas-Lebel, *Jérusalem contre Rome*, Paris, 1990, pp. 49-64.

¹⁵ *Ant.*, 14, 186.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, tome I, p. 154 note 2.

¹⁷ Serge Bardet, *Flavius Josèphe et les Français. Études d’histoire et d’épistémologie, 1838-1989*, unpublished Ph.D. Diss., École des Hautes Études en Sciences sociales, Paris, 1994. On the Jewish privileges, see H. R. Moehring, “The *Acta pro Judaeis* in the *Antiquities* of Flavius Josephus: a study in Hellenistic and Modern Apologetic Historiography”, in J. Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Graeco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, III, Leyde, 1975, pp. 125-158.

the liberal party: "... although Judaism does not represent a joyful figure in the sad picture of the century, it still constitutes a considerable historical element, finding the law of its development in the natural course of things, that the true politician could neither deny nor combat. Caesar... called out to the Jews in Alexandria and in Rome by granting them advantages and special privileges. Notably he protected their religion against the intolerance of local Greeks and Roman priests. ... But the Jew is not a westerner, he has not received the political genius from Pandora's box. Indifferent to the nature of the State, it is difficult for him to abandon the core of his national character as he accepts the costume of another nationality and he bonds, to a certain degree, with all the foreign peoples. Wasn't he, if we can say so, created intentionally to take his place in the Empire, in this country built on the ruins of a hundred various countries each with their own life, in this new and in some ways abstract nation with the angles dulled in advance? Judaism in the Old World brought also a fertile soil for cosmopolitanism and desegregation of peoples"¹⁸.

In this analysis one can emphasize the threat that the Jews represented for the Roman State, which is what the anti-Semites of his generation certainly did. Or on the contrary, one can see, such as J.A. Hild, in a study on the image of Judaism in Rome, an indirect praise of the universalism of Jewish values by a historian who "as a German is nothing less than kind to the Jews"¹⁹.

The same Hild, by interpreting in his turn the charter of Jewish privileges, sees in Caesarism a prefiguration of the French laity under the Third Republic: "These favors granted by Caesar's government to the Jewish communities of the Empire (...) show quite clearly that Caesar, breaking with all of the old traditions in the matter of religious politics and taking the risk of becoming unpopular, was far beyond not only the most perceptive politicians of his time but also the sensible ones of the times to come. ... Taking as a whole these favors are the application of a true system of religious politics in the modern sense of the word: they organize the free Church (*sic*) within the Roman State, which is an organization as much religious as political"²⁰.

¹⁸ If Theodore Mommsen was a vigorous opponent to anti-Semitism and worked against measures of exclusion of the Jews within the German university, his writings, paradoxically, have fed the anti-Semitism of his time; we can refer to the note about him in the *Encyclopedia judaica*.

¹⁹ "Les Juifs à Rome devant l'opinion et dans la littérature", *Revue des Études juives*, VIII, 1884, p. 33. On the controversial context of the papers of the REJ published in the 1880s, see Perrine Simon-Nahum, *La cité investie. La "science du Judaïsme français" et la République*, Paris, 1991, p. 215.

²⁰ *art. cit.*, p. 36.

We can find a similar approach in the works of Theodore Reinach, the director of the translation of Flavius Josephus' *Opera Omnia*²¹. His preface to the collection of *Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au judaïsme* (Texts of Greek and Roman Authors Relating to Judaism) carried already the hallmark of his assimilationist reading of antiquity: "the spectacle of past misunderstandings will put an end to the debate that (...) there has been a true need as well as a requirement for an independent Israel in order to reconcile faithfulness to its religious tradition (its honor before history) with the most complete moral and external assimilation to the fellow citizens of other religions"²². Nonetheless aware of the limits of integration and participation structures of Greco-Roman citizenship, Reinach writes further: "Such an enterprise was impossible or dangerous in ancient or feudal society where all of the acts of political and civil life were somehow embedded and penetrated into religious practices; in a secularized society, such as that which came out of the Revolution, this enterprise does not offer any danger nor serious difficulty. Therefore it has succeeded everywhere, at least where external causes have not and still don't delay this inevitable evolution".

The subject of anti-Semitism is inevitably in the background of these analyses, be they favorable or not to the Jews²³.

Some works published in the 1930s and 1940s did integrate Caesar's edicts in the arsenal of the anti-Semitic controversy. Thus in a pseudoacademic work which appears as a complete collection of ancient texts on Judaism, the Caesarean privileges rank high among the grievances against the Jews which

²¹ *Œuvres complètes de Flavius Josèphe*, 7 vols., Paris, éd. Ernest Leroux, 1900-1932 under the editorial of Théodore and then Salomon Reinach.

²² *Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au judaïsme*, Paris, 1895, Préface, p. XX. The publication by Reinach, for a long time the only available tool for research, has been replaced by the corpus edited by Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. I: *From Herodotus to Plutarch*, Jerusalem, 1974, vol. II: *From Tacitus to Simplicius*, 1980, vol. III: *addenda and index*, 1984. The work is dedicated to the memory of Hans Lewy, who had the initiative of this project, but passed away before its achievement.

²³ See J. N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Antisemitism in the Ancient World*, Leyde, 1975, pp. 140-160. About the prejudices of the XVIIIth century philology considering Josephus' texts as Jewish trickery, see E. Bickermann "Une question d'authenticité : les privilèges juifs", *Studies in Jewish and Christian History II*, Leyde, 1980, pp. 24-43. On the Reinachs and classical Antiquity, see the introduction and the notes by Agnès Rouveret added to Adolphe Reinach's book, *Textes grecs et latins relatifs à l'histoire de la peinture ancienne*, Paris, Editions Macula, 1985 (1st edition, 1921, Klinksieck). We can remember that Léon Reinach, son of Théodore, died with his wife and their two children in a death camp in 1944.

form the book's structure: the omnipresent Jew, the Jew-dealer... the privileged Jew²⁴.

Has Caesar's jurisdiction ended the Greek cities' chronic hostility toward the Jews, or on the contrary, hasn't it reinforced jealousies and misunderstandings²⁵? There was no doubt for J. Isaac that Caesar's "masterstroke" had beneficial consequences "innumerable" for the Jews of the Diaspora²⁶.

Regarding such a subject, that is the jurisdiction of exception for the Jews, it will be agreed upon that it is interesting to reveal what the standpoint was of a more recent scholar like Jérôme Carcopino²⁷. In his *Jules César*, a classical book constantly reprinted²⁸, Carcopino, following Mommsen, attributes to the political genius of the dictator the promulgation of the Jewish privileges: "we could not admire enough here Caesar's skill, the consummate art with which he turned in Rome's favor all of the initiatives he seemed to take in the interest of his subjects. Better than any measure of coercion, the universally compulsory perception of the ritual didrachm cut short the proselytism of the Jewish communities. Then the link established between them offered neither problems

²⁴ E. Fischer, G. Kittel, *Das Antike Weltjudentum (Tatsachen, Texte, Bilder)*, Hamburg, 1943. We did not mention this publication beside those of Reinach and Stern (previous page, note 1) of course. On the "super-corpus anti-juif gréco-romain", "l'abominable Fisher-Kittel" (Mélèze-Modrzejewski), see C. Lévy, "L'antijudaïsme païen : essai de synthèse", in V. Nikiprowetzki (éd.), *De l'antijudaïsme antique à l'antisémitisme moderne*, Lille, 1979, pp. 51-86, and J. Mélèze-Modrzejewski, "Sur l'antisémitisme païen" in M. Olender (éd.) *Pour Léon Poliakov : le racisme, mythes et sciences*, éd. Complexe, Bruxelles, 1981, pp. 411-439.

²⁵ See E. M. Smalwood, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

²⁶ J. Isaac, *Genèse de l'antisémitisme*, Paris, 1956, p. 100.

²⁷ On Carcopino's scientific work, one of the most important since Mommsen according to Pierre Grimal, one could consult the very interesting chapter devoted to him by Grimal in a collective publication which is otherwise apologetic: P. Grimal et alii, *Jérôme Carcopino, un historien au service de l'humanisme*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1981; on what Carcopino brought to the Caesarian studies more specifically, we could refer to, by the same publisher, the book by the outstanding Israeli specialist of Rome, Zvi Yavetz, *César et son image. Des limites du charisme en politique*, translated from the English by Elie Barnavi, Paris, 1990 (original version in English published in 1983); finally, on Carcopino's role in the anti-Jewish measures by the government of Vichy, particularly when establishing the *numerus clausus* in public professions, we could refer, by again Les Belles Lettres, to the book by Claude Singer, *Vichy, l'Université et les Juifs*, Paris, 1992 and to the substantial review of it by M. O. Baruch in *Revue des Études juives*, 155, 1996, pp. 515-522.

²⁸ P.U.F., Paris, 1935 (6th edition: 1990).

nor dangers. On the contrary, the link brought them new grounds for unification from where the Roman organization would grow...²⁹. This analysis, written in 1934, has been picked up thirty years later in a popular book in a chapter significantly entitled “Actuality of Caesar”³⁰. The historian insists more on the political modernity and lucidity of the dictator who sets the bases of a universal empire: “How, two thousands years behind us, could a man be present? ... Actually, if a statesman has to be juggled according to the impact of his actions and the duration of his work, Julius Caesar’s greatness is incomparable and it will be quite easy for me to list everything we still owe to him. ... That which reveals the best, that which was modern, or rather for us, eternal, in Caesar’s conceptions of religious matter or, to use the word which translate the reality he will have founded , in Julius Caesar’s tolerance, is his attitude toward the Jews... Caesar was able to prove that Rome governed by him would be capable of opposing its generous understanding with the exclusivity of the Jews”³¹.

We won’t elaborate more on the commentaries incited by the Caesarean privileges.

Universally and despite all of the possible differences regarding the interpretation of senatorial edicts, the various works we cited, among many others, have as common point a corroboration of Mommsen’s data analyses complemented by Juster’s. The agreement remained unanimous on “the exceptional situation of the Jews”³² as well as their “extraordinary position”³³.

Nevertheless for a decade now, studies have been published which don’t necessarily question Josephus’ documents as such, but rather seriously question the significance of the Caesarean “charter”, even its existence³⁴. From the secular unanimity on the Jewish privileges we switched to an era of suspicion.

Haven’t we given indeed too much importance solely to Josephus’ testimony to the detriment of other types of sources such as epigraphy or papyrology? Haven’t we also, like Josephus, isolated these particular edicts in the legislative

²⁹ *op. cit.* p. 541.

³⁰ *Profils de conquérants*, Paris, Flammarion, 1961.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 317 et p. 351.

³² C. Saulnier, “Lois romaines sur les Juifs selon Flavius Josèphe”, *Revue biblique*, 88, 1981, p. 161.

³³ H.R. Moehring, *art. cit.* (note 17), p. 901.

³⁴ Notably T. Rajak, “Was There a Roman Charter for the Jews?”, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 74, 1984, pp. 107-123 and M. Pucci Ben Zeev, “Greek and Roman Documents from Republican Times in the *Antiquities*: What was Josephus’ Source?”, *Scripta Classica Israelica*, vol. XIII, 1994, pp. 46-59 and, id., “Did the Jews enjoy a privileged position in the Roman world?”, *Revue des Études juives*, CLIV (1-2), janvier-juin 1995, pp. 23-42.

apparatus from the favors granted to other peoples within the Empire? The notion of a “Great Charter”, emphasizing Roman legalism too much, takes the risk of hiding the true reluctances of the Greek cities to apply these decrees and the struggle their obtainment implied, case by case, for the Jewish communities. Therefore the Roman significance of these laws is far from their Jewish interpretation or the Greek application.

We again find here the same kind of questioning as that, which was stimulated by the Jewish jurisdiction in Alexandria and more generally in the Greek Orient. The two subjects are connected. We know that the analysis of the juridical status of the Jewish community of Alexandria still divides modern historiography, especially since the publication between 1957 and 1964 of the three volumes of the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* by Victor Tcherikover in collaboration with Alexander Fuks for the first two volumes and with Menahem Stern for the third one³⁵. We think for example of the controversy aroused by Arie Kasher’s dissertation, defended at the University of Tel Aviv in 1972, under the direction of J. Efron and S. Applebaum³⁶.

The subject focuses mainly around the interpretation of the *politeuma*, this Greek structure which offers to the Jewish community the juridical and political autonomy necessary for the preservation of its religious practices. Did it concern in the case of the Jews a specific institutional framework, which did not grant *de jure* citizenship in Alexandria, or must we consider this civic organization as a simple type of association among the very numerous others which were encountered in Hellenistic times? Did the religious organization of the Jewish community necessarily rely on the juridical framework of a *politeuma*?

As for the Caesarean charter, we are in a controversy which concerns transpositions or at least influences of historiographical models. Isn’t it already Mommsen who saw in the *politeuma* a city “quite similar to the “Jewish quarter” of our towns”³⁷? The situation of the ghetto in medieval and modern Europe until the Emancipation has been present in the minds of numerous historians of Greek and Roman Antiquity, including those of the 20th century, even if it is not always made so much explicit in their works.

³⁵ Vol. I, Cambridge, MA, 1957; vol. II, 1960; vol. III, 1964. On the different positions represented, see in last instance, S. Honigman, “Philon, Flavius Josèphe et la citoyenneté alexandrine : vers une utopie politique”, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. XLVIII, N°1, 1997, pp. 62-90.

³⁶ *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv, 1978, English transl., Tübingen, 1985. See C. Zuckerman, “Hellenistic *politeuma* and the Jews: A reconsideration”, *Scripta Classica Israelica*, 8-9 (1985-1988), pp. 171-185.

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 427.

Thus V. Tcherikover considered that the existence of an independent *politeuma* was the only way for the Jews to obtain free exercise of their religion and that the Jews in general can benefit only from a collective juridical status. Commenting on the bloody events of Alexandria from 38-41 BC, he saw in the demands of the Jewish elites “a struggle for emancipation”³⁸.

The subject of anti-Semitism comes up again, inevitably, in relation with juridical status of the Jewish community. Let us quote Zvi Yavetz, who was a student of V. Tcherikover: “Consciously or unconsciously, Zionist historians assume that even in antiquity, the alien character of the Jews is the central cause for anti-Semitism. V. Tcherikover, one of the most moderate historians I have ever met, never dedicated a special study to ancient anti-Semitism, but I think that Pinsker was in the back of his mind when he wrote: ‘The inner quality of anti-Semitism arises from the very existence of the Jewish people as an alien body among nations’”³⁹.

Whether the research concerns Alexandria or Rome, it aims at assessing the status of the Jews in the Diaspora and their ties with Jerusalem by taking into account the models which could have interfered in the interpretation of the historians. Therefore, beyond the citations of Josephus, any new publication with commentaries of Book 14 of *Antiquities* must first have an epistemological critique of the historiography stimulated by the author of *Against Apio*. Next it must fit in a more universal reflection on the role and the place of Jews and Judaism during an essential period when the destiny of the Roman State and the surrounding Mediterranean nations at the border of its conquering imperialism is being played out.

No one will remain indifferent to the fact that an important number of these works on the Jewish privileges and the controversies they led to began in Israel, especially if, by a final transfer, we were by any chance tempted to admit with Mommsen again that “Jerusalem meant nothing more to the successors of David and Salomon at the time of Caesar than it means for them today”⁴⁰.

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(Translation: C. and K. Delage)

³⁸ V. A. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, Philadelphia, 1959.

³⁹ “Judeophobia in Classical Antiquity: A Different Approach”, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. XLIV, 1, 1993, p. 6.

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 427.