

Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome

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Last Year in Jerusalem: Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome 1

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores in detail the role of the Flavian victory in Judaea in the physical transformation of the city of Rome. The triumph of Vespasian and Titus *ex Iudaeis* in June 71 CE was an event made more memorable by Josephus' lavish description of it. The defeat of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple were enshrined in the very fabric of the urban centre and hence in Roman public memory, reminding the inhabitants of the city of the decisive role played by Vespasian and Titus in that victory. The triumphal arches to Titus (erected in 81 and after his death), the Flavian Amphitheatre (inaugurated in 80), and the Temple of Peace (dedicated in 75) were all related to the Flavian victory in Judaea and helped give the dynasty a lasting legitimacy.

Keywords: Flavian emperors, Judaea, Flavian triumph, topography, architecture, monuments, Arches of Titus, Flavian amphitheatre, temple of Peace, Golden House of Nero

Readers of Josephus' *Jewish War* will be familiar with the magnificent description in Book 7 of the triumph which Vespasian and Titus celebrated in Rome in 71 CE, a year after the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (*BJ* 7. 123–57). Not all readers, however, will realize that this is the fullest description which survives of any triumph held in the Imperial period. Nor will all students of Jewish history, accustomed to think of their subject as having been, from the Roman viewpoint, that of a minor, if difficult, province, be aware that in comparative terms the Jewish war, culminating in the siege of Jerusalem, had been a major event in Roman military history, demanding a massive concentration of forces. For the siege itself, which lasted some five months (the

longest, to the author's knowledge, in the whole of the Imperial period), the Romans had assembled four legions, with detachments (*vexillationes*) of two others; twenty infantry *cohortes*; eight mounted *alae*; and 18,000 men supplied by four dependent kings: Antiochus of Commagene (whose troops will have had to march some 700 kilometres to reach Jerusalem), Sohaemus of Emesa, Rabel of Nabataea, and Agrippa II (*HJP* 1. 501; Millar 1993: 75–6). To put these figures in perspective, the forces committed to the siege were significantly larger than those which had been deployed for the invasion of Britain in 43 (Frere 1987: 48).

(p.102) So there was every reason, in purely military terms, for the celebration of a triumph, even if this one was an anomaly, in being the only triumph ever held to celebrate victory over a provincial population. In this case, however, there was an obvious further factor, namely that it had been while he was serving as the *legatus* for the Jewish War that Vespasian had proclaimed himself Emperor in summer 69, and had then left his elder son Titus to conduct the siege of 70. As a first-generation senator, Vespasian had no inherited social prestige to draw on, and immediate steps needed to be taken to enhance the public standing of the new Flavian dynasty (Griffin 2000 *a*). The memory of the successive emperors who had briefly ruled in 68–9, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, no doubt presented little challenge. But Nero, who had ruled from 54 to 68, was a different matter: not only had he been the last Julio-Claudian, and therefore the descendant of a complex of major Republican aristocratic families, but his building projects, following the fire of 64, had left a major imprint on the city of Rome, above all his ‘Golden House’ which stretched across from the Palatine to the Oppian hill (Griffin 1984: 125–42). Pliny the Elder, finishing his *Natural History* at exactly the same time, namely the later 70s, when Josephus was writing his *Jewish War*, records that Nero had commissioned a colossal statue (106 1/2 feet high, he claims), which had been intended to represent himself, but was now dedicated to Sol, the Sun (*NH* 34. 45). Suetonius, writing some five decades later, sees it as having marked the vestibule of the Golden House (*Nero* 31). As we will see later, Cassius Dio (66. 15. 1) notes that it stood on the Sacra Via, hence somewhere on the northern side of the Palatine. As we will also see, this was just the area, to the east of the Forum Romanum, which was to be massively redeveloped by the Flavians and their successors.

Coping with the memory of Nero, and with his physical impact on the urban environment, was thus a significant issue for the new dynasty, and one which interacted in a quite complex way with the memorialization of the Jewish War. For of course the first claim made by the new dynasty—and the first, but not the only, contrast to be established with Nero—was the achievement of a major military victory.

As we will see, even on the most minimal view, the monumental record of the War in Rome was to be extremely striking. **(p.103)** In fact, however, we should go beyond that and see as memorials of the War not only the arches which

between them occupied two of the most prominent and visible locations in the entire city of Rome, but the two greatest monuments of the Flavian period, the Temple of Peace and the Colosseum. But in these cases complex questions arise about the role and associations of these two major structures, in the eyes either of contemporaries or of later Roman viewers.

To understand the complexities of the story, we need to go back to Josephus' account of the triumph, which begins by giving a very detailed topographical impression of the first stage of the route (*BJ* 7. 123–31, Loeb trans.):

(123) The military, while night still reigned, had all marched out in companies and divisions, under their commanders, and been drawn up, not round the doors of the upper palace, but near the temple of Isis; for there the emperors reposed that night. (124) At the break of dawn, Vespasian and Titus issued forth, crowned with laurel and clad in the traditional purple robes, and proceeded to the Octavian walks [the Porticus Octaviae]; (125) for here the senate and the chief magistrates and those of equestrian rank were awaiting their coming. (126) A tribunal had been erected in front of the porticoes, with chairs of ivory placed for them upon it; to these they mounted and took their seats. Instantly acclamations rose from the troops, all bearing ample testimony to their valour: the princes were unarmed, in silk robes and crowned with bays. (127) Vespasian, having acknowledged their acclamations, which they wished to prolong, made the signal for silence; (128) then amidst profound and universal stillness he rose and, covering most of his head with his mantle, recited the customary prayers, Titus also praying in like manner. (129) After the prayers, Vespasian, having briefly addressed the assembled company, dismissed the soldiers to the customary breakfast provided for them by the emperors, (130) and himself withdrew to the gate which, in consequence of the triumphal processions always passing through it has thence derived its name [the Porta Triumphalis]. (131) Here the princes first partook of refreshment, and then, having donned their triumphal robes and sacrificed to the gods whose statues stood beside the gate, they sent the pageant on its way, driving off through the theatres, in order to give the crowds an easier view.

We need not dwell on the complex issues of urban topography at the southern end of the Campus Martius which this passage raises: where exactly was the Porta Triumphalis (evidently **(p.104)** lying somewhere between the Capitol and the bank of the Tiber)? What were the 'theatres' through which the triumphal procession then passed? It is perhaps just possible that the Porta Triumphalis lay far enough north for the procession then to go through the Theatre of Marcellus. But if more than one theatre is intended, the only other possibilities, the Theatres of Pompey and Balbus, if the procession really passed through them, must have necessitated its reversing direction, and, what is more, re- crossing

the *pomerium*, the ritual boundary of the city. Alternatively, even if the reference to 'theatres' is a rhetorical plural, and only one theatre, that of Marcellus, is at issue, did the structure of a theatre allow for a procession to enter by the *parados* at one side, to pass in front of the stage, and to exit by the other *parados* (which would be required if a theatre were really to afford a privileged viewpoint for spectators)? In fact we can give a positive answer to this question, for a relief of the early imperial period found at Castel S. Elia near Nepi shows a procession passing through a theatre (Fig. 1).²

One other possibility which should be canvassed is that Josephus' terminology is very loose here, and that by 'theatres' he means any large structure for popular entertainment which could provide a vantage-point for the public. This notion needs to be aired, first, because Josephus' account, having begun with so much (if so problematical) topographical detail, gives no other such details until the procession gets to the Capitol, culminating in the execution of Simon bar Giora in the Carcer and in sacrifices at the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus (*BJ* 7. 153–5). Secondly, the question touches on a problem of surprising difficulty: what in fact was the established route of the triumphal procession?³ It seems clear that from its starting-point in the southern Campus Martius it must have entered the Forum Boarium. Did it then go round the Palatine on its western and southern sides, thus approximately following the traditional line of the *pomerium*, as is the established view (Künzl 1988, with a plan of the route on p. 15)? If so, was one of the 'theatres' from which people had a particularly good view of **(p.105)**

(p.106) it in fact the Circus Maximus itself? In that case, presumably the procession entered by the *carceres* at the north-west end, leading in from the Forum Boarium, passed through the Circus, and then left through the hemicycle at the south-east end? Surprising as it may seem, there is only one passage in all of the ancient literature relating to Rome which seems to suggest a role for the Circus as a vantage- point for witnessing triumphs. It comes from Plutarch's *Life of Aemilius Paulus*, and relates to his triumph in 167 BCE (*Aem.* 32, Loeb trans.):

The people erected scaffoldings in the theatres for equestrian contests, which they call circuses (ἐν τε τοῖς ἵππικοῖς θεάτροις, ἃ Κίρκους καλοῦσι), and around the forum, occupied the other parts of the city which afforded a view of the procession, and witnessed the spectacle arrayed in white garments.



Fig. 1. Relief from Castel S. Elia, showing a procession passing through a theatre

The passage again uses a plural which might be hard to justify (unless the Circus Flaminius, in the southern corner of the Campus Martius, is relevant: Viscogliosi 1993 *b*; Coleman 2000: 217–18), but also offers a use of the word *theatron* which clearly extends to cover structures of a circus type. The implication must, however, surely be that the Circus Maximus (at least) did function to provide a view of the triumphal procession. Some confirmation of this possibility is offered by the report in Athenaeus (5. 197c) that Ptolemy Philadelphus had routed his great procession of 275/4 through the stadium of Alexandria to offer a viewing-point to spectators (Coleman 1996: 51).⁴ If so, the triumphal route did indeed circle the entire Palatine, next proceeding along the east side of it, and then (as has always been presumed) mounting the Velia and descending by the Sacra Via to the Forum, proceeding across it, and finally going up to the Capitol. If this conclusion is correct, it is highly relevant, as we will see, to the memorialization of the Jewish War. For both of the two indubitable monuments of the War, namely the two arches ‘of’ Titus, lay directly on this route, the one (now destroyed, except for some excavated foundations) constructed on the hemicycle of the

Circus Maximus and the other, still standing **(p.107)** (if restored), on the crown of the Velia. As we will also see, this raises the further question of whether we should envisage all, or at least many, of the known 'triumphal arches' as standing on, and hence collectively marking out, the triumphal route. Indeed, beyond that, once an arch had been built on the route, did the procession literally pass through it (as a relief on the surviving 'Arch of Titus' in fact suggests, see below and Fig. 2)? It remains puzzling that neither of the two standard treatments of the Circus Maximus discusses its (apparent) role as a viewpoint for the procession.⁵

Returning to Josephus' account of the triumph of 71, most of the rest of it concentrates on the displays offered by the procession itself, including pictures representing episodes from the War (*BJ* 7. 142–7). But a particular importance attaches to Josephus' description of the spoils taken from the Temple (7. 148–50, Loeb trans.):

The spoils in general were borne in promiscuous heaps; but conspicuous above all stood out those captured in the temple of Jerusalem. These consisted of a golden table, many talents in weight, and a lampstand, likewise made of gold, but constructed on a different pattern from those which we use in ordinary life. Affixed to a pedestal was a central shaft, from which there extended slender branches, arranged trident-fashion, a wrought lamp being attached to the extremity of each branch; of these there were seven, indicating the honour paid to that number among the Jews. After these, and last of all the spoils, was carried a copy of the Jewish Law.

These details are important, firstly because of the well-known relief from the Arch of Titus showing them being borne in procession (Fig. 2); and secondly because of what Josephus goes on to say about their ultimate destination. For, whatever was or was not recalled in the following centuries about the relevance of the War to major monuments in the centre of Rome, it is certain that some at least of these spoils were still known and identified as such in the fifth and sixth centuries (p. 128 below).

After he has concluded his account of the procession and the festivities which followed, Josephus turns to describing where **(p.108)**

(p.109) the various spoils from the Temple were deposited (*BJ* 7. 158–62, Loeb trans.):

The triumphal ceremonies being concluded and the empire of the Romans established on the firmest foundation, Vespasian decided to erect a temple of Peace. This was very speedily completed and in a style surpassing all human conception. For, besides having prodigious resources

of wealth on which to draw he also embellished it with ancient masterpieces of painting and sculpture; indeed, into that shrine were accumulated and stored all objects for the sight of which men had once wandered over the whole world, eager to see them severally while they lay in various countries. Here, too, he laid up the vessels of gold from the temple of the Jews, on which he prided himself; but their Law and the purple hangings of the sanctuary he ordered to be deposited and kept in the palace.

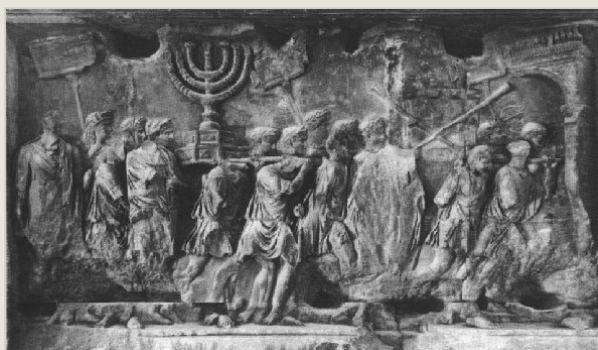


Fig. 2. Arch of Titus, Sacra Via, Rome: relief with triumphal procession

By 'in the palace' (ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις) Josephus must mean primarily the complex of Imperial residences on the Palatine. (How much remained of Nero's Golden House at this moment is not known.) Whether these vessels and the Torah were subsequently on display there is not made clear. But other evidence (largely, again, from Pliny the Elder) mentions major works of art to be found in imperial properties and gardens (*horti*), with an apparent implication that they might be viewed there by the public; under what conditions is not known (Millar 1977: 114–16). The question of public access, which is not clearly answerable as regards other locations, but is beyond dispute in the case of the Temple of Peace, is potentially important for understanding how long such items retained a known identity and origin.

By contrast, what Josephus records of the building of the Temple of Peace (*Templum Pacis*) is of the utmost importance. First, there is a clear indication that the decision to create this major new public building was taken at once, and the primary intended message must have been that peace had been reestablished after a period of civil war, and the Jewish War itself. The rapidity of construction is confirmed by Cassius Dio's invaluable report that it was dedicated already in 75 CE (66. 15. 1, Loeb trans.):

In the sixth consulship of Vespasian and the fourth of Titus the precinct of Pax was dedicated and the 'Colossus' was set up on the Sacred Way. This statue is said to have been one hundred feet in height and to **(p.110)** have borne the features of Nero, according to some, or those of Titus, according to others.

Whether the 'Colossus', already referred to above, was really set up for the first time in this year, or was merely remodelled to remove the identification with Nero, is not clear (M. Bergmann 1993; Lega 1993). But the fact that the Temple of Peace could be dedicated as early as this is highly important; for Pliny's *Natural History*, presented to Titus in 77, already provides ample evidence, to which we will come in a moment, to confirm Josephus' statement that the temple was filled with major works of art from all over the world, which were now to be on display in a single location. Building must, therefore, have commenced at the very beginning of Vespasian's reign.

What was known as the 'Templum Pacis' was in fact something more extensive than that, a large, rectangular, forum-like space of some 140 by 150 metres, constructed exactly parallel to the Forum of Augustus, and to the south-east (Fig. 3); the space between them would soon be filled by the Forum Transitorium (D'Ambra 1993). Archaeologically, it is very little known, though some excavations are currently in progress (La Rocca 2001: 195–207), since most of it lies under Mussolini's Via dei Fori Imperiali. But its design is known from the Forma Urbis—namely a porticoed square with the actual *templum* set into one side, and with six sequences of four oblong boxes marked as occupying the centre (Fig. 4). These are generally interpreted as flower beds, but may perhaps rather have been stands on which statuary could be displayed; or they may have been fountain basins.⁶

It is very striking that Pliny's *Natural History*, presented to Titus only two years after the dedication of the Templum Pacis, so vividly reflects its role as a public museum or art-gallery. One aspect of the proclaimed public role of the temple is immediately apparent: the contrast between the self-centred acquisition of works of art by Nero, and their location in a newly-constructed public place (or indeed various places) by Vespasian (NH 34. 84, Loeb trans.):

Several artists have represented the battles of Attalus and Eumenes against the Gauls, Isigonus, Pyromachus, Stratonicus, and Antigonus, who wrote books about his art. Boëthus did a Child Strangling a **(p.111)** Goose by hugging it, although he is better in silver. And among the list of works I have referred to all the most celebrated have now been dedicated by the emperor Vespasian in the Temple of Peace and his other public buildings; they had been looted by Nero, who conveyed them all to Rome and

arranged them in the sitting-rooms of his Golden Mansion (*sellariis domus aureae*).

This deliberate contrast, between private gratification and public benefit, will appear again when we look at the 'Colosseum', and the values associated with it (p. 116 below).

Elsewhere Pliny—apart from comparing it with the Circus Maximus, the Basilica Pauli,⁷ and the Forum of Augustus, 'buildings the most beautiful the world has ever seen' (36. 102)—lists a whole series of other works of art as now to be seen in the Templum Pacis: a hero by Timanthes (35. 74), an Ialysus by Protogenes (35. 101–2), a Scylla by Nicomachus (35. 108–9), an anonymous Venus (36. 27), and a massive representation of the river-god Nile, with sixteen of his children playing around him (36. 58).⁸ There were also evidently other valuables, as well as the spoils from the Temple in Jerusalem, on display there: Vespasian, so Pliny says (12. 94), was the first to dedicate *coronae* of cinnamon, embossed with gold, both in the temple (evidently that of Jupiter) on the Capitol and in the Temple of Peace.

A century later, Pausanias (2. 9. 3) adds to the list of works to be seen in the Temple of Peace a statue of an Olympic victor, Cheimon, which he believed to be by Naucydes, while Aulus Gellius reveals that the precinct also contained a library, where rare books could be found (NA 5. 11. 9; 16. 8. 2–3). Very significantly, recent excavations have revealed inscribed statue-bases with the names of famous Greek artists: [Prax]ite[les], Ceph[isidorus], and Parthenocles (La Rocca 2001: 196–201).

There is more to say on the history of this great monument, but enough has been recorded to indicate that this was both a major building-project of the new regime, undertaken and completed at the first possible moment, and a deliberate demonstration of the will to make great artworks accessible to the public. **(p.112)**

It is, however, Josephus alone who records that among the works which the visitor could see were gold vessels or fittings (κατασκευάσματα) from the Temple in Jerusalem. The name of the Temple, 'Peace', could not fail to be a reference to the Jewish War, one of the most demanding and costly military enterprises of the Imperial period. But the new structure, as a spectacular public monument, had other associations also.

Neither Pliny nor Josephus, in the *Jewish War*, refers to the **(p.113)** three other major monuments which were, in one way or another, to commemorate the War. Pliny hardly could have, since he was to die in 79; and Josephus, though he continued to live and write in Rome until the 90s, does not return to the topic of Flavian building. Two of the monuments in question were completed, or partially completed, in the reign of Titus (79–81 CE): the 'Colosseum' in 80, and the Arch of Titus in the Circus Maximus early in 81; while the third, the surviving Arch of Titus, was **(p.114)**

completed only after his death later in 81. As regards the 'Colosseum' it is absolutely certain, and in the case of both arches very probable, that construction had begun before Vespasian's death in 79—in the case of the Colosseum surely from the very beginning of his reign (since what is remarkable is that it could have been ready for opening as early as 80; see Suet. *Vesp.* 9. 1). The Chronographer of 354 in fact records that when Vespasian dedicated the Amphitheatrum it had three *gradus*, Titus added two more, and Domitian completed it (*Chron. Min.* 1. 146). In the case of the two arches therefore, the inscriptions reflect the moment of completion, not that of conception.

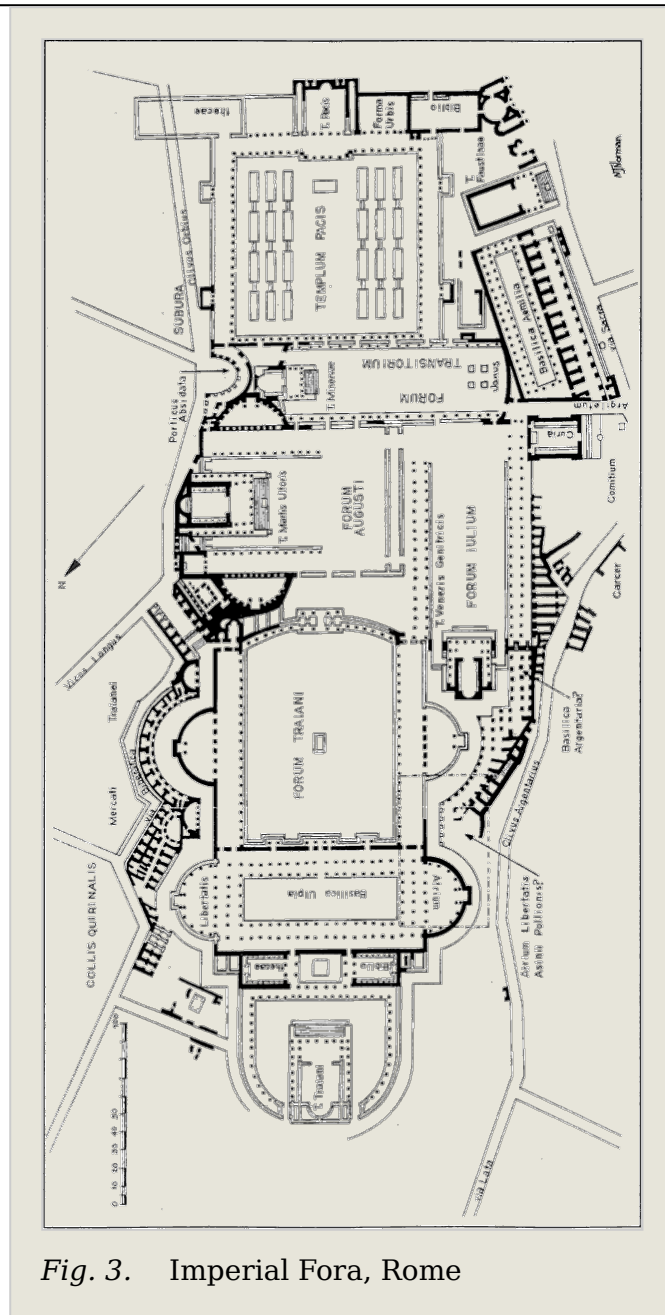


Fig. 3. Imperial Fora, Rome

Given the scale of the Colosseum, and the impact which the process of constructing it must have had in Rome, either Pliny or Josephus (in the *Jewish War*) might indeed have referred to it as a prospective major monument which was in the course being offered to the public by Vespasian. But in the event neither does, and the earliest allusions to it in literature are to the first shows to be given there, by Titus in 80. There is no need to rehearse in detail the well-known evidence. Cassius Dio (66. 25. 1) records the dedication of the 'hunting-theatre' (τὸ δὲ δὴ θέατρον τὸ κυνηγετικόν—another example of *theatron* being used for any large building for public viewing) and the 'baths named after him'—the *Thermae Titi* or *Titianae*, which lay close by on the Oppian (Caruso 1999). More important, the opening of the new amphitheatre, and the shows given there, were the occasion of Martial's *On the Spectacles* (*De spectaculis*) of 80. While we await the major new commentary on this work by K. M. Coleman, any remarks will have to be elementary and provisional.⁹

Martial's conceptions are of the greatest importance. The first poem of his collection makes the comparison with the great historic public works, from the pyramids to Babylonia to the Mausoleum, and identifies the new building as the 'Amphitheatrum Caesareum' (*Spect.* 1. 7).¹⁰ But it is the second poem which is the most revealing for our purposes, and in this case we need **(p.115)**

(p.116) both the Latin and the translation in the Loeb edition by D. R. Shackleton Bailey:

hic ubi sidereus
propius videt astra
colossus
et crescunt media
pegmata celsa via,
invidiosa feri radiabant
atria regis
unaque iam tota stabat
in urbe domus.
hic ubi conspicui
venerabilis
Amphitheatri
erigitur moles, stagna
Neronis erant.
hic ubi miramur velocia
munera thermas,
abstulerat miseris tecta
superbus ager.
Claudia diffusas ubi
porticus explicat
umbras,
ultima pars aulae
deficientis erat.

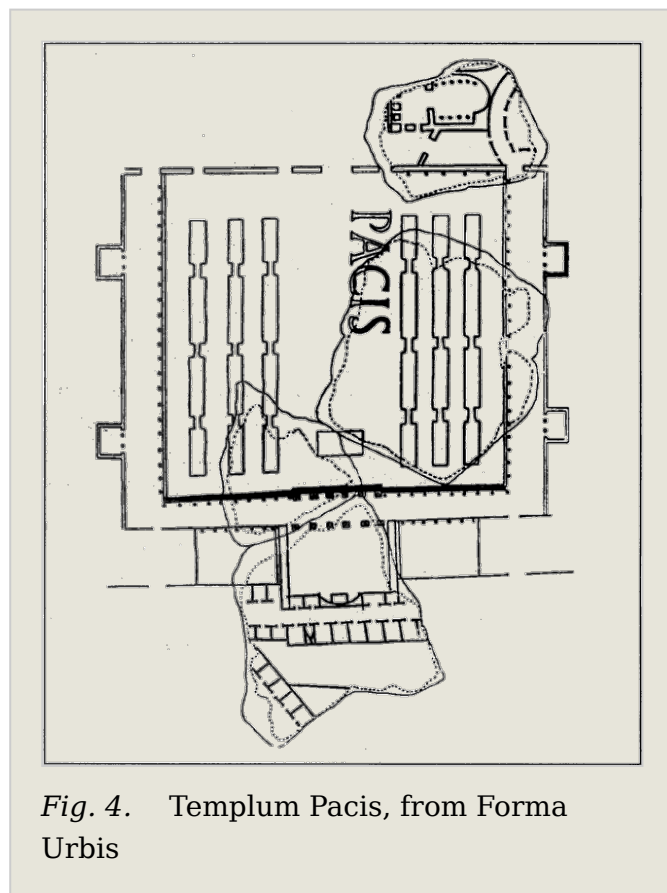


Fig. 4. Templum Pacis, from Forma Urbis

reddita Roma sibi est et sunt te praeside, Caesar,
deliciae populi, quae fuerant domini. (Mart. *Spect.* 2)

Where the starry colossus sees the constellations at close range and lofty scaffolding rises in the middle of the road, once gleamed the odious halls of a cruel monarch, and in all Rome there stood a single house. Where rises before our eyes the august pile of the Amphitheater, was once Nero's lake. Where we admire the warm baths, a speedy gift, a haughty tract of land had robbed the poor of their dwellings. Where the Claudian colonnade unfolds its wide-spread shade, was the outermost part of the palace's end. Rome has been restored to herself, and under your rule, Caesar, the pleasures that belonged to a master now belong to the people.

The major themes are immediately apparent: first the construction of the Amphitheatrum just where a lake had been, as a feature of Nero's pleasure-garden. Then the Baths of Titus as a gift, or gifts (*munera*), to the people. Suetonius' *Life* of Titus reinforces the point by recording that the Emperor sometimes used the baths himself, at a time when the *plebs* were also allowed in (*Tit.* 8). The populist motif is then emphasized again at the end of the poem: Rome has been restored to herself, and the delights which had once been private to a *dominus* are now shared by the people. We need here to recall the expression of the same motif by Pliny the Elder (*NH* 34. 84) in relation to the Templum Pacis (discussed above, p. 111).

The same motif also appears at the beginning of the poem, in the reference back to the *domus* (the Golden House) which had once occupied the whole of the city (or at least this part of **(p.117)** it). This was where the Colossus stood, on the Sacra Via as Dio records (pp. 109–10 above), while scaffolding arose *media via* (surely also the Sacra Via): not, presumably, still in 80, a question of re-modelling the Colossus, so perhaps scaffolding for the construction of the Arch of Titus?¹¹

It would be only under Hadrian (117–38), with the construction of the Temple of Venus and Roma on its massive podium (Cassatella 1999), that the Imperial monumentalization of this area of Rome would be almost complete, and that the Colossus would be moved down from the Sacra Via to stand next to the Amphitheatre, to which it finally, in the Middle Ages, seems to have lent the nickname 'Colosseum' (Canter 1930, with some doubts about this identification). A medallion of Gordian III shows the Amphitheatre flanked by the Colossus on the one side and the Meta Sudans, erected by Domitian, on the other.¹² It remained only for the Arch 'of' Constantine to be erected close to the Meta Sudans (and presumably straddling the triumphal route) (Capodiferro 1993). However close was the association in the monuments of this area with the Jewish War, they were also part of a long process of monumentalization which completely transformed this part of Rome.

So far, we have seen nothing to associate the Amphitheatre with the Jewish War, except the evident fact that construction must have started at the very beginning of Vespasian's reign. But I owe to Margareta Steinby the suggestion that the structure visible to the right of the Amphitheatre on a *sestertius* of Titus (*RIC* 2. 129 no. 110; *LTUR* 1. 365, fig. 16) may be a triumphal arch. If so (and irrespective of whether an actual arch is being represented), the association is suggestive. However, we also have from Martial an absolutely unambiguous expression of what meaning, in his view, this massive new feature of the Roman landscape was intended to have: a construction to rival the most spectacular ever recorded (as indeed it was) and a benefaction from Emperor to people as a place for the communal enjoyment of 'gifts' (*munera*) in the form of shows given by the Emperor.

It was, therefore, a complete surprise when in 1995 Géza **(p.118)**

Alföldy, by brilliant detective-work on the holes for the nails holding the bronze letters of a Flavian inscription from the Amphitheatre, established, first, that the construction had been paid for *ex manubi(i)s*, 'from the spoils of war'; and, second, that the

inscription had originally recorded Vespasian as the initiator, with a T being added later to transform the name into that of Titus (Fig. 5).¹³ The final text thus read (*CIL* 6. 40454a = *AE* 1995, 111b):

I[mp(erator)] T(itus) Caes(ar) Vespasi[anus Aug(ustus)]
amphitheatru[m novum ?]
[ex] manubi(i)s (vac.) [fieri iussit ?]

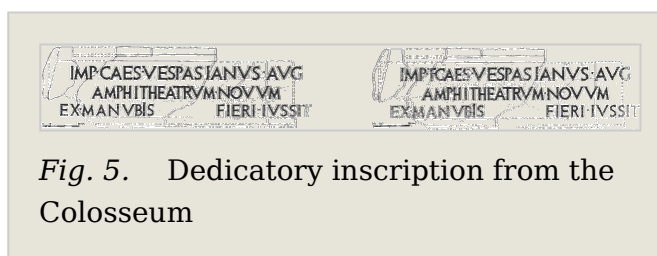


Fig. 5. Dedicatory inscription from the Colosseum

The validity of this reading has not been challenged, so we can accept that an inscription with the name of Vespasian was already in place during his lifetime (construction of the ground floor of the Amphitheatre must in any case have been completed long before 79: see p. 114 above), then to be re-modelled to name Titus, presumably before the opening in 80. There was also an unambiguous reference to the fact that construction had been financed out of the spoils of war. Even here of course, as the surviving text stands, there is no reference to Judaea; whether there could have been such a reference, after the gap in the middle of the third line, is not certain. However, there had surely been no other war fought by the Flavian house which had been comparable to the Jewish War, or had led to destruction on such a scale; and no other triumph had been celebrated since 71. It must be accepted that the words *ex manubi(i)s* carried an implied reference **(p.119)** to the Jewish War. In that sense the Amphitheatre, by far the greatest single monument of Imperial Rome, both was and is a memorial to the War. But, if we follow Martial, as we should, when it came to be opened ten years after the destruction of the Temple, it was not that

but the relationship of Emperor and people, and the contrast with Nero, which was explicitly celebrated.

That did not mean that Titus' role in the capture of Jerusalem was due now to be downplayed.¹⁴ On the contrary, the most emphatic and detailed of all public proclamations of Titus' role in the capture of Jerusalem was to be found in the inscription on the 'Arch of Titus' which was erected in the centre of the hemicycle at the south-east end of the Circus Maximus. Pliny the Elder had probably been exaggerating when a few years earlier, in the same passage as that in which he celebrated the magnificence of the Templum Pacis, he had claimed that the Circus seated 250,000 spectators (*NH* 36. 102, see p. 111 above). The true figure was perhaps more like 150,000 (Humphrey 1986: 126). But even at that total, it remains to this day one of the largest arenas ever created for massed spectators to watch sporting events. The first and most salient feature of the arch dedicated in early 81 was, therefore, its exceptional prominence, a visible reminder to over 100,000 people at a time of the capture of Jerusalem. But the second thing to stress is that both it, and the surviving Arch 'of' Titus on the Velia, are examples of the pattern made clear in a classic article by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (1990 *a*). What we persistently call the arches of Emperors or **(p.120)** members of their families were in fact, in all known cases, arches *to* them, dedicated by the Senate and the People of Rome. The same was to be true of the Arch 'of' Constantine, as its dedicatory inscription made clear (*CIL* 6. 1139 = *ILS* 694; see also p. 117 above). Cassius Dio, as so often, gets this right, saying that arches and other honours were voted *to* Vespasian and Titus in celebration of the Jewish War (66. 7.2). That in fact made all the difference, for it left the way open for grandiloquent and flattering descriptions of the dedicatee's achievements.

How soon construction of the Arch had begun is not known; but, as we will see from the text of the inscription, it was dedicated in early 81. The Arch stood at least until the ninth century, when the author of the manuscript known as the Anonymus Einsiedlensis copied the inscription. It is clearly represented on the Severan Marble Plan (Fig. 6), and appears on a *sestertius* of Trajan showing the Circus as seen from the north-west end (looking over the *carceres*). Excavations on the site have also revealed part of the foundations (Ciancio Rossetto 1993 *a*). What matters in this context however is the precise form of the claims made in the inscription placed on it by Senate and People (*CIL* 6. 944 = *ILS* 264; the original layout of the lines is not preserved):

Senatus Populusq(ue) Romanus Imp(eratori) Tito Caesari divi Vespasiani
f(ilio) Vespasian[o] Augusto, pontif(ici) max(imo), trib(unicia) pot(estate) X,
imp(eratori) XVII, [c]o(n)s(uli) VIII, p(atri) p(atriciae), principi suo, quod
praeceptis patr[is] consiliisq(ue) et auspiciis gentem Iudaeorum domuit et

urbem Hierusolymam omnibus ante se ducibus, regibus, gentibus aut frustra petitam aut omnino intemptatam delevit.

The Senate and People of Rome to Imp(erator) Titus Caesar Vespasianus, son of the Deified Vespasianus, pontifex maximus, with *tribunicia potestas* for the tenth time, (hailed as) Imp(erator) for the seventeenth time, consul for the eighth time, their princeps, because on the instructions and advice of his father, and under his auspices, he subdued the race of the Jews and destroyed the city of Jerusalem, which by all generals, kings, or races previous to himself had either been attacked in vain or not even attempted at all.

As has always been noted, this claim was extraordinary in being blatantly false. Even if the Romans might have been excused for ignorance of Biblical history (and Book 5 of Tacitus' *Histories*, written a quarter of a century later, does indeed show **(p.121)**

(p.122) almost complete incomprehension), Josephus' *Jewish War*, written in Rome only a few years before, under the patronage of the Flavians, had clearly recorded the capture of the city both by Pompey in 63 BCE (*BJ* 1. 141–54) and by Sosius in 37 BCE (*BJ* 1. 345–57), not to speak of the list of five previous captures which he attaches in Book 6 to his account of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 (*BJ* 6. 435–7). Sosius had celebrated a triumph *ex Iudaea* in 34 BCE and had built the temple near the Theatre of Marcellus sometimes referred to as that of 'Apollo Sosianus' (Viscogliosi 1993 *a*). So the claim was a simple and demonstrable falsehood. However, what is significant about it is, first, its straightforward celebration of the subjugation of the Jewish people and of the destruction of Jerusalem (there was no room in this context for the attempts which Josephus alleged had been made by Titus to prevent the final disaster: *BJ* 7. 254–355; see Yavetz 1975; Barnes, Rives, and Mason, Chs. 6, 7, and 12 below). Secondly, there is the very careful emphasis on the fact that Titus, in conducting the siege, had been acting under the auspices and subject to the instructions of his father.

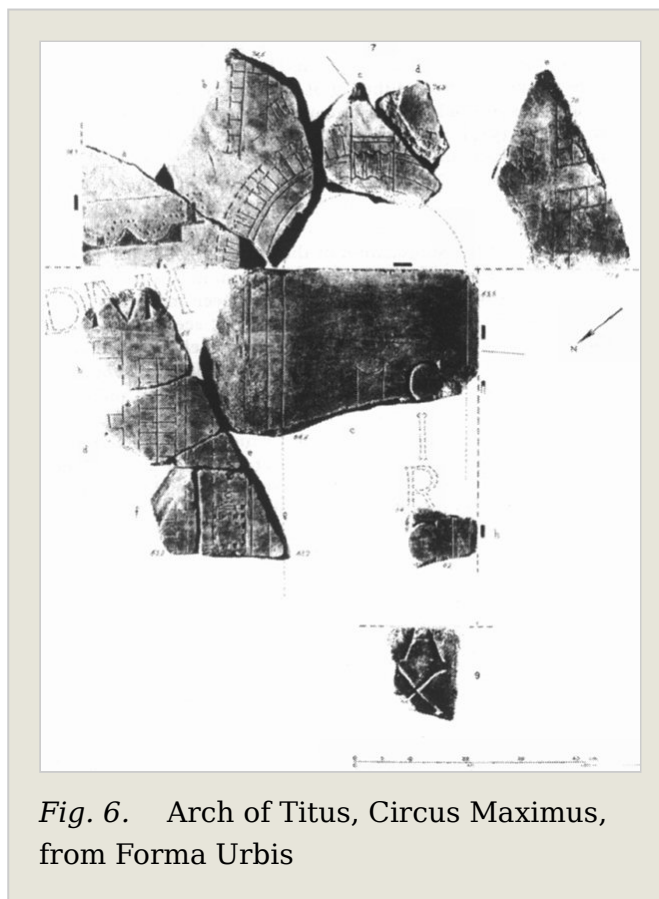


Fig. 6. Arch of Titus, Circus Maximus, from Forma Urbis

It is not known whether the panels which will have adorned the arch contained any visual representations of the siege, of the sort which had been carried along in the triumphal procession (p. 107 above), or images of the triumphal procession itself, such as are found on the surviving arch on the Velia (Fig. 2). All that we know of the arch is its uniquely prominent and visible location, and the extravagant claims which were made in the name of Senate and People in its inscription.

Titus died not long after the inscription was put in place, but even our fragmentary and indirect knowledge of this arch allows us to see it as one of the major monuments of his brief reign. By contrast, the surviving arch which still stands on the Velia must have been completed after his death. The fact that it is posthumous has led Michael Pfanner, the author of the standard work on it, to suggest that it should be categorized as a consecration-monument rather than as a triumphal arch (Pfanner 1983: 103–4; see also Arce 1993). It is also true that its inscription contains no reference to war, victory, or any other achievements. But the famous relief representing the triumph of 71, with its unmistakable representation of the vessels from the Temple (Fig. 2), is surely enough to allow us to include it in **(p.123)** the category of triumphal arches. So also, it appears (see p. 125 below), does the fact that it seems to have stood directly over the triumphal route, and indeed the fact that future triumphal processions will have passed under it. If we doubted whether the relatively narrow passage-way (some 2.5 m wide) can have been adequate for the purpose, the much-reproduced relief-panel showing the triumph of 71 (Fig. 2) actually shows the procession passing through an arch; whether any particular arch is meant, and if so which, is a matter of speculation.

In this case too, and even more clearly, given its posthumous character, the arch was not ‘of’ but ‘to’ Titus, now already deified (‘divus’), as the classically simple inscription shows (*CIL* 6. 945 = *ILS* 265):

Senatus
Populusque Romanus
Divo Tito Divi Vespasiani f(ilio)
Vespasiano Augusto

The Senate and the Roman People to the Deified Titus Vespasianus
Augustus, son of the Deified Vespasianus

Here too, we are concerned with a very prominent location, as is graphically shown by a photograph of the east side of the arch, with the inscription, looking down through it to the Forum Romanum (Fig. 7). It stands on the crown of the Velia, the spur which projects north from the side of the Palatine, at almost exactly the point where the roadway called by moderns the *clivus Palatinus*, for someone coming up from the Forum, led off to the right to ascend to the Palatine. Whether the point on which the Arch stands actually lies on the Sacra

Via itself is now uncertain, given fundamental debates as to where, and how far, that ran. It will be recalled that Dio states (66, 15. 1) that the Colossus originally stood on the Sacra Via (see above, p. 109)—and that on the interpretation of Martial offered above (p. 117), the Arch and the Colossus were originally close to each other; but no literary source refers to the Arch.

Even more striking, now, after the publication of the new inscription from the Amphitheatre, is the view looking east from the west side of the arch, down the eastern slope of the Velia to the ‘Colosseum’ (Fig. 8). Now that we know that the
(p.124)

(p.125) Amphitheatrum was financed, in the first instance by Vespasian, from the spoils of a war which must be the Jewish War, the connection between the two monuments becomes infinitely more powerful.

Here again, as with the progressive monumentalization of the ‘Valle del Colosseo’, discussed above, we can see the two arches dedicated to Titus by Senate and People as elements in a series stretching from Augustus to Constantine. In briefly recalling this series, I confine myself to those arches where we have specific evidence that they were dedicated communally, by Senate and People. There are various other possible

examples, but to survey them here would both require disproportionate space and be entirely dependent on Margareta Steinby's *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*. So we may simply note the most salient cases. First, there is the arch in the Forum Romanum, voted to ‘Octavian’ (properly ‘Imperator Caesar Divi filius’) in 30 BCE (Dio 51. 19. 1). If John Rich's powerful arguments (1998) are accepted, this was the one which stood on the south side of the temple of Divus Iulius, and was the only arch ‘of Augustus’ in the Forum. Then there is the Arch of Septimius Severus, on the west side of the Forum below the Capitol, also voted by Senate and People (Brilliant 1993). Finally, there is the Arch of Constantine, again equipped with an inscribed dedication by Senate and People, and located, as we have noted, just in front of the Meta Sudans, where the triumphal route, leading from the hemicycle of the Circus Maximus and the first

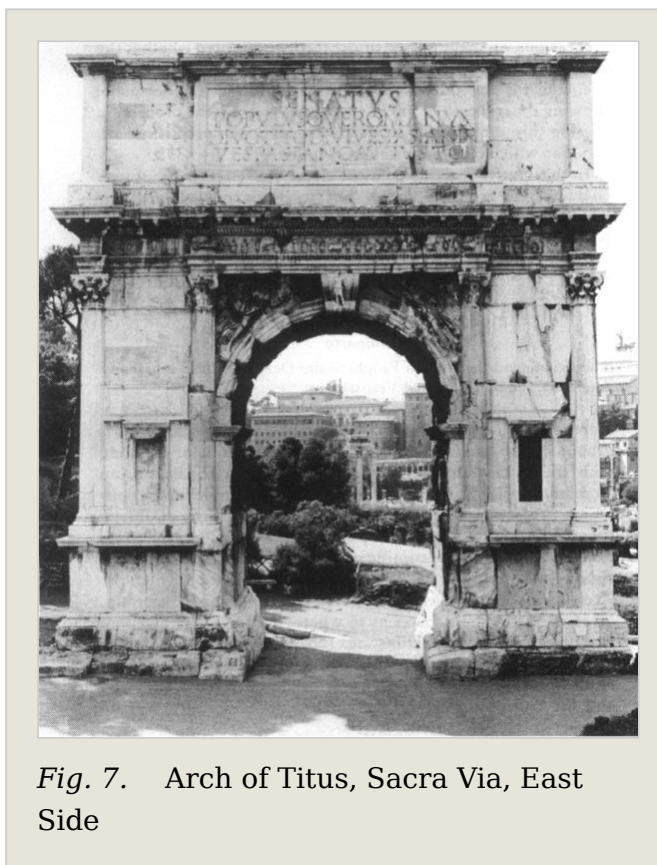


Fig. 7. Arch of Titus, Sacra Via, East Side

'Arch of Titus', turned up the slope of the Velia towards the second 'Arch of Titus' (p. 117 above).

For the second half of the triumphal route, therefore, from the hemicycle of the Circus to the Capitol, we can immediately understand how the two 'Arches of Titus' took a very prominent place in a process of monumentalization, and of glorification of Emperors, which evolved from Augustus to Constantine. The message as to what it was that the first arch dedicated to Titus was intended to commemorate was spelled out explicitly in words, and was accessible all through the Empire, late Antiquity, and the early Middle Ages to anyone who could read Latin. The message of the second, still surviving, arch, depended on historical knowledge, or on recognition of the vessels from the Temple which were portrayed there as they were carried in the **(p.126)**

(p.127) triumphal procession. These were the two explicit monuments of the War. The Temple, or Forum, of Peace, which Constantius II was to admire when he visited Rome in 357 (Amm. Marc. 16. 10. 14), was also a monument to the War, though not only that. So also was the 'Colosseum', though there is nothing to show that later viewers, any more than ourselves until only a few years ago, were aware of it. On any interpretation, the theme of the defeat of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem, coinciding with the need for self-assertion on the part of a new dynasty, and with the need to establish an emphatic public contrast with Nero, left a remarkable imprint on the evolution of public monuments in Imperial Rome.

In this context, we should note a very suggestive recent attempt to read the *Epistle to the Hebrews* as an immediate response to Flavian triumphalism (Aitken 2001). In its ceremonial and monumental legacy, the Jewish War contrasts markedly with the Bar Kochba War, which was equally a major event in Roman military history, but which left no known reflection in Rome at all.¹⁵ The monumental legacy of that war was

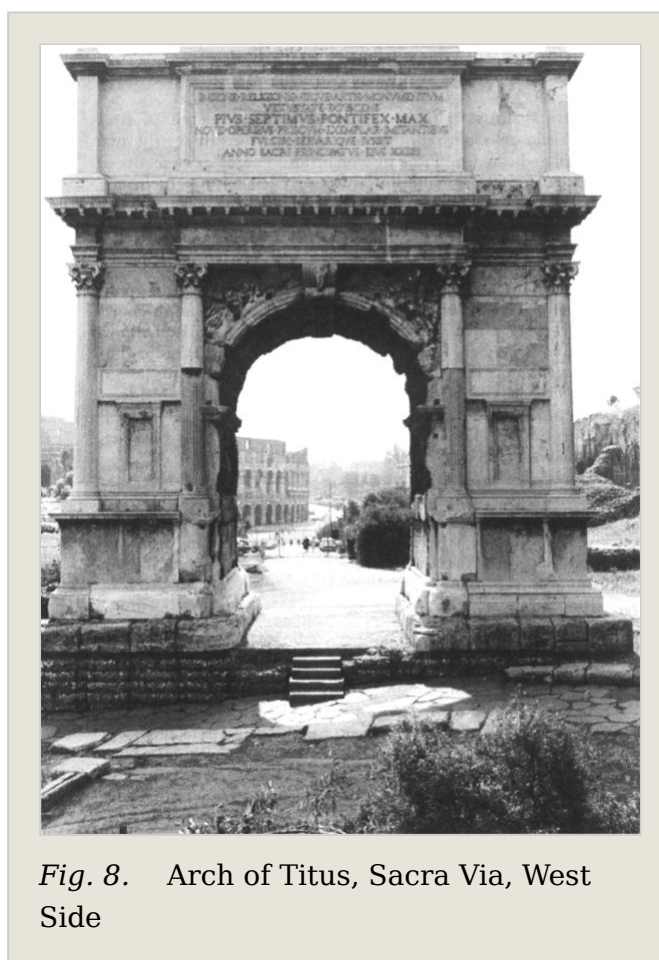


Fig. 8. Arch of Titus, Sacra Via, West Side

elsewhere, in the *colonia* of Aelia Capitolina, founded on the site of Jerusalem (Eck 1999 a).

But, whatever efforts were made by the Flavian Emperors or by the Senate and People of their time, was the Jewish War in fact remembered in Rome? Both Tacitus in the early second century and, a century later, Cassius Dio, recorded the War in great detail.¹⁶ Even more significantly, for a Christian educated public, Josephus' narrative of the war, and his interpretation of its meaning, apparently ignored by pagans, was taken up by Christians, and eventually earned extensive quotation in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (3. 5–10). Though Eusebius does not speak of the triumph itself, or still less of any buildings commemorating the War, any informed Christian in the following centuries, whether living in Rome or elsewhere, will have been aware of the great turning-point which the War had represented. Even more significant, two allusions in rabbinic texts of different (p.128) dates record that treasures from the Temple could still be seen in Rome (Yarden 1991: 64).

But that is not quite all. For Procopius, writing in the sixth century under Justinian, records, first, that in 455 the Vandal king Gaiseric, from his base in Africa, had reconquered and sacked Rome (*Vand.* 3. 5. 3–4). In Justinian's time, however, Africa was recaptured by an expeditionary force from Constantinople under Belisarius. At the 'triumph', or triumphal procession, which Belisarius celebrated in Constantinople in 534 Procopius relates, second, that there were carried 'the ornaments of the Jews' (4. 9. 5–7: τὰ Ἰουδαίων κειμήλια) which Titus had brought to Rome after the capture of Jerusalem and had been taken by Gaiseric from Rome.¹⁷ If any of these ornaments could still be identified as such, they must surely have been those put on public display by Vespasian in the Temple of Peace. Christians at least—including the Vandals—still knew what they were. So the effort of commemoration bore some long-term fruit, even if in unintended ways. As for Justinian, according to Procopius (4. 9. 9), his view of the right destination for the ornaments was to send them back to Jerusalem—but to the Christian community there. If we return to Rome, for all the vicissitudes of the last two millennia, the monumental centre of the city still offers extraordinarily vivid testimony to the significance of the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

Notes:

(1) This paper was first given at a meeting in the Hebrew University in memory of Adi Wasserstein, and since then versions of it have been presented on a number of occasions, including at Margareta Steinby's seminar in Oxford in 2000 and at Harvard in Spring 2001. I am very grateful to many colleagues for comments, but above all to Paul Zanker, Margareta Steinby, and Kathleen Coleman, as well as to the editors of this volume.

- (2) See Ciotti 1950. I owe my knowledge of this relief to Prof. Paul Zanker, who also very kindly supplied photographs of it.
- (3) See Makin 1921; Coarelli 1968; 1988: 363–437. For the Porta Triumphalis, see Coarelli 1996, placing it close to the Capitol.
- (4) I owe to Margareta Steinby the reference to Athenaeus, and support for the view that the Circus Maximus did form an element in the route of the triumphal procession.
- (5) Humphrey 1986; Ciancio Rossetto 1993 *b*. For a vivid evocation of the evolution of the Circus, and of the spectacles offered there (but not the triumph), see Coleman 2000: 210–17.
- (6) I owe a report on this latest interpretation to K. M. Coleman.
- (7) I do not enter here into the complex and much-debated question of the identification of major Republican basilicas on the Forum; see the revolutionary proposals by Steinby 1989.
- (8) For some of the bases, with inscriptions, for these statues, see La Rocca 2001: 196–201.
- (9) On the Amphitheatrum ('Colosseum'), see Rea 1993; further bibliography in *LTUR* 5, 1999: 223; on the shows, as a foretaste, Coleman 1998 and Coleman 2000: 227–35.
- (10) I was tempted to take 'Amphitheatrum Caesareum' as its official name. But I owe to K. M. Coleman the indication that 'Caesareus' is used only in poetry, and cannot have formed part of its regular name.
- (11) I owe this suggestion (once again) to K. M. Coleman.
- (12) For a photo, see *LTUR* 1. 365, fig. 17; Coleman 2000: 230, fig. 9.10. For the Meta Sudans and its context, see Panella 1996.
- (13) Alföldy 1995; see also Barnes, Ch. 6 below.
- (14) For this, see further Barnes, Ch. 6 below.
- (15) No monument recording the Bar Kochba War is listed in Boatwright 1987 on Hadrian's buildings in Rome.
- (16) Tac. *Hist.* 5. 1–13, on which see Stern at *GLAJJ* 2. 17–63, as well as Barnes and Rives, Chs. 6 and 7 below. The rest of his account is missing. Dio 63–6 (*passim*), with commentary by Stern at *GLAJJ* 2. 369–78.

(17) For a brief discussion of the fate of these spoils, see *HJP* 510 n. 133; Yarden 1991: 64–5. For possible indications that the Table of the Presence might have been brought to Spain after an earlier barbarian sack of Rome, by Alaric in 410, see Yarden 1991: 84–6.