

Titus' visit to Memphis*

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Abstract

This paper deals with the visit of Titus to Egypt, especially the city of Memphis, the temple of Ptah and the Serapeum, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 69/70 AD, in light of the accounts of classical historians such as the Roman historian "Suetonius" as the most important sources that dealt with this visit. This article also aims to explain the importance of this visit to Roman religious policy towards Egyptian beliefs and deities, and its change from rejection during the reign of Emperor Augustus to acceptance during the reign of the Flavian dynasty. Titus' visit to Memphis is similar to that of his father, Emperor Vespasian, to Alexandria, where they both went to visit the main temple in both cities; The Temple of Serapis in Alexandria and the Temple of Ptah in Memphis. The visit of Titus also bears a clear indication of the passion of the emperors of the Flavian dynasty for Alexander the Great and their great desire to take advantage of any occasion to imitate him.

Keywords

Titus, Memphis, Egypt, Serapeum, Apis Bull, Suetonius.

Introduction

Titus passed through Egypt on his return from the Jewish war; he embarked at Alexandria for Rome (Josephus, BJ. VII. 5. 3), on his way to Alexandria, he stopped in Memphis (Suetonius, Titus, 5). Titus' campaign to Jerusalem received great attention from researchers in Roman history, but Titus' visit to Egypt did not receive the same amount of attention, except for some papers that shed light on his return to the city of Alexandria after the destruction of the city of Jerusalem (Miller, 1978), or the one that linked his visit to the visit of Emperor Vespasian to Alexandria after assuming the position of emperor (Henrichs, 1968), but his presence in the ancient city of Memphis did not shed light on it, meaning that the

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visit of Titus and his stay in Egypt after his return from Jerusalem were not dealt with separately.

The Military campaign against Jerusalem

In 70 A.D the Prince Titus succeeded in crushing the revolt of the Jews and destroying the Temple of Solomon after his father the Emperor Vespasian assigned to him the responsibility for the leadership of the military campaign against the Jews of Jerusalem 69/70 A.D. (Ali, 1988). The *Praefectus* (governor) of Egypt "Tiberius Julius Alexander" (Turner, 1954; Reinmuth, 1967), "Haterius Fronto" the leader of the Roman forces in Egypt (Mason, 2016), besides "Josephus", were among his assistants in this campaign. This campaign; which began about the middle of April and ended on (probably) September 8, has achieved overwhelming success (Murison, 2016).

Titus' visit to Memphis

In Roman period, the ancient buildings of Memphis began to be abandoned and partially decayed, becoming mere landmarks, especially the Apis bull, which attracted travelers even emperors such as the visit of Germanicus and Titus (RE 15. 1, 1931). Suetonius mentioned that Titus passed through Memphis on his way back to Alexandria from the East. Titus' bypassing coincided with the city's celebrations concerning the selection of a new Apis bull; so Titus wore the royal crown (*Diadema*) in accordance with the ancient Egyptian religious traditions (Suetonius, Titus, 5). What Titus did can be explained, that perhaps he wanted to be friendlier and closer to the Egyptians (Ali, 1988).

It is also certain that these religious ceremonies for selection a new Apis bull and the coronation of kings as pharaohs were taking place in the temple of the god Ptah in Memphis, as it was the custom during the Ptolemaic period, and as it is known through historical accounts of Alexander the Great that he entered the temple of Ptah and made offerings to Apis bull (Noshy, 1987; Foertmeyer, 1989).

According to Suetonius, Titus' behavior was interpreted by some of his contemporaries as evidence of high aspirations and ambitions to reach the throne of the empire (Suetonius, Gavorse, 1931). They assumed that Titus attended to become the ruler of the East; however, this conclusion is definitely wrong, despite the existence of an undeniable relationship between this behavior and the pursuit of power. Titus, on the other hand, was already coregent with his father at that time, but this behavior can be explained by the fact that Titus was forced to perform some of the king's duties according to the rituals of the Egyptian religion (Henrichs, 1968).

Titus accepted the invitation to attend a selection ceremonial for a new Apis bull, which the Emperor Augustus had previously rejected (Dio, LI, 16, 3-5). The

Titus' visit to Memphis

Flavians imitated Alexander the Great, perhaps Titus wanted to imitate Alexander the Great, as they both entered Egypt from the east as victors, When Alexander the Great entered Egypt to Pelusium, he led his infantry by the right bank of the Pelusian branch to Heliopolis, while his fleet sailed up the river to Memphis (Gomaa, 2009), Alexander the Great also visited Memphis and the temple of Ptah, where Alexander was enthroned as a Pharaoh according to the Egyptian traditions (Henrichs, 1968).

It can be claimed that Titus' behavior was the beginning of a major change in the empire's view towards the religions of its subjects and a shift from contempt to respect (Al Nasiry, 1995). Titus's visit to Egypt is considered one of the inspection visits mixed with a religious character, and it is very similar to the visit of his father "Vespasian" in religious terms (Henrichs, 1968; Derchain and Hubaux, 1953).

Conclusion

What was mentioned by the historian Suetonius is the most important source about Titus' visit to Memphis, as evidenced by this visit, the passion of the Flavians for Alexander the Great; It is known that the Flavians often imitate Alexander the Great, and it is not excluded here that Titus tried to imitate Alexander the Great after his victory in the war on Jerusalem, especially since then they came (Alexander the Great, Titus) from the east victorious, as Titus wanted to imitate Alexander the Great Visit Memphis and attend the city's celebrations of the Apis bull.

Abbreviations

JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies (London).</i>
BASP	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists. Columbia Univ. (New York).</i>
RE	<i>Pauly (A.), Wissowa (G.) (Kroll (W.), Mittelhaus (K.)), Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, 1893-1980 (Stuttgart, Munich).</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik (Bonn).</i>

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