

The Time Travelling Emperor: Hadrian's Mobility as Mirrored in Ancient and Medieval Historiography¹

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Abstract: The paper aims to study Hadrian's reputation as a ruler on the move in Latin, Greek, Syriac, and Byzantine histories and chronicles from the third to the twelfth century. The paper also assesses how early Roman, late antique and medieval historians' opinions on mobile and sedentary modes of governing influenced Hadrian's portrait. In addition, it will study how his attitudes towards Jews and Christians were depicted in conjunction with his journeys.

Keywords: Hadrian; Early Roman Empire; Late Antiquity; Roman historiography; Syriac historiography; Byzantine historiography; political mobility; Judea under Roman rule

An Early Roman Emperor on Progress

Since Antiquity, memories of Emperor Hadrian (117-138 CE) have frequently been associated with his long administrative and leisure travels throughout the Roman Empire. For this reason, this paper aims to study mainly Hadrian's reputation as a ruler on the move and as a peripatetic individual in Latin, Greek, Syriac, and Byzantine histories and chronicles from the 3rd to the 12th century. This paper also purports to assess how early Roman, late antique and medieval historians' opinions on mobile and sedentary modes of governing influenced or failed to influence the portrait of Hadrian. In addition, I will trace the ways that his attitudes towards Jews and Christians were depicted in conjunction with his journeys.

The speed and distance of Hadrian's travels amazed and even bewildered ancient and modern historians for centuries to the point that one of his recent biographers rightly called him the "the restless emperor."² Hadrian's reign totals 251 months of which 106 to 113 were spent on the road, covering the entire Empire, but focusing more on the

¹ For having emended this paper I want to express my gratitude towards Todd Peterson, Avshalom Laniado and Khaled Marmouri. I would also like to extend my gratitude towards both anonymous reviewers for their useful and helpful suggestions.

² Birley (1997A), 83-92, 113-190, 203-278. In this case and the following mentions, pages refer to comments on the Emperor's journeys. Biographies dedicated to Hadrian are numerous, among which are worth noting Everitt (2009), 200-261; Blázquez (2008), 179-200; Roman (2008), 168-194; Galimberti (2007), 73-98; Danziger and Purcell (2005), 129-138; Speller (2003), 81-91. A particular mention should be also made of the exhibition held in the British Museum from July to October 2008: Opper (2008), 64-92.

eastern half of the Roman world.³ Thanks to the sources still available, it is now possible to reconstruct the outlines and some details of three major journeys. These three long-distance excursions have almost concealed in historiography the ordinary, short-distance trips that the emperor regularly made. In other words, imperial, macro-mobility attracted much more attention from ancient and modern historians than daily, micro-mobility. Quite often Hadrian's first extended travel is forgotten since it occurred at the very beginning of his reign, between the acclamation as Emperor on August 11th 117 by the legions gathered in Syria and his formal arrival in Rome on July 9th 118. Yet, he did not hastily seek the capital in order to assume the supreme power, which was supposedly bequeathed to him by Emperor Trajan on his deathbed in Selinus on the southern shoreline of Asia Minor. Far from it! Hadrian spent eleven months inspecting the Roman Empire, particularly the eastern provinces, in order to settle a new military, diplomatic and administrative order, which entailed the abandonment of the regions recently conquered by Trajan in the East beyond the Euphrates River as well as in Europe between the Carpathian Mountains and the Black Sea. Today uncertainty plagues our understanding of the European part of the travel. Despite this, even in outline it clearly proves Hadrian's eagerness to take control of key sectors before returning to Rome (fig. 1). Just as Trajan did before him for the very first time in Roman history, Hadrian assumed power during a time of peace from outside the capital city and considered Rome as the destination and not the source of his authority. Acclamation and designation, which took place outside Rome, and his unhurried march to the city show that the military and dynastic legitimacy of Hadrian made his presence in Rome a non-priority.

However, it is important not to anticipate the political evolution of the Roman Empire, and one should not consider Hadrian as the initiator of the "decapitalising" process that Rome underwent from the mid-3rd century onwards. If Hadrian spent 106 to 113 months inspecting provinces, he stayed between 138 and 145 months in Rome and its vicinity, particularly Tivoli where he spent the latter years of his reign.⁴ The increasing and finally overwhelming burden of diseases and years forced him to retire to his villa from 132 to his death in Baiae in 138. He made two other long stays in Rome and its metropolitan area that lasted two years each and were interrupted by two four-year travels. Tracking these itineraries is now possible through the evidence provided by ancient writers, inscriptions, coins and papyri. The second major trip, from 121 to 125, led Hadrian to travel throughout the Empire, from the northern borders of Britain to the banks of the Euphrates. He then paid visits to several cities in western Asia Minor and continental Greece (fig. 2a-b). From 128 to 132 Hadrian made a third journey in Northern Africa, the Near East and the Balkans (fig. 3a-b). These travels reveal a strong fondness for the East, particularly the Greek speaking provinces where the local, vivid

³ See the seminal book of Halfmann (1986) 40-47 and 188-210 for the discussion, chronology and evidence of Hadrian's voyages. See also the remarks of Syme (1988); Barnes (1989); Baker (2012), 4-6; Kienast, Eck and Heil (2017), 122-123.

⁴ Among many recent publications, see MacDonald and Pinto (2001), 199-205; Gros (2002), 44-48; Chiappetta (2008), 21-31; De Franceschini and Veneziano (2011), 84-99; Cinque (2013), 105-118. See also catalogues of several exhibitions held at *Villa Adriana*: Giuliani (2000); Mari (2010).

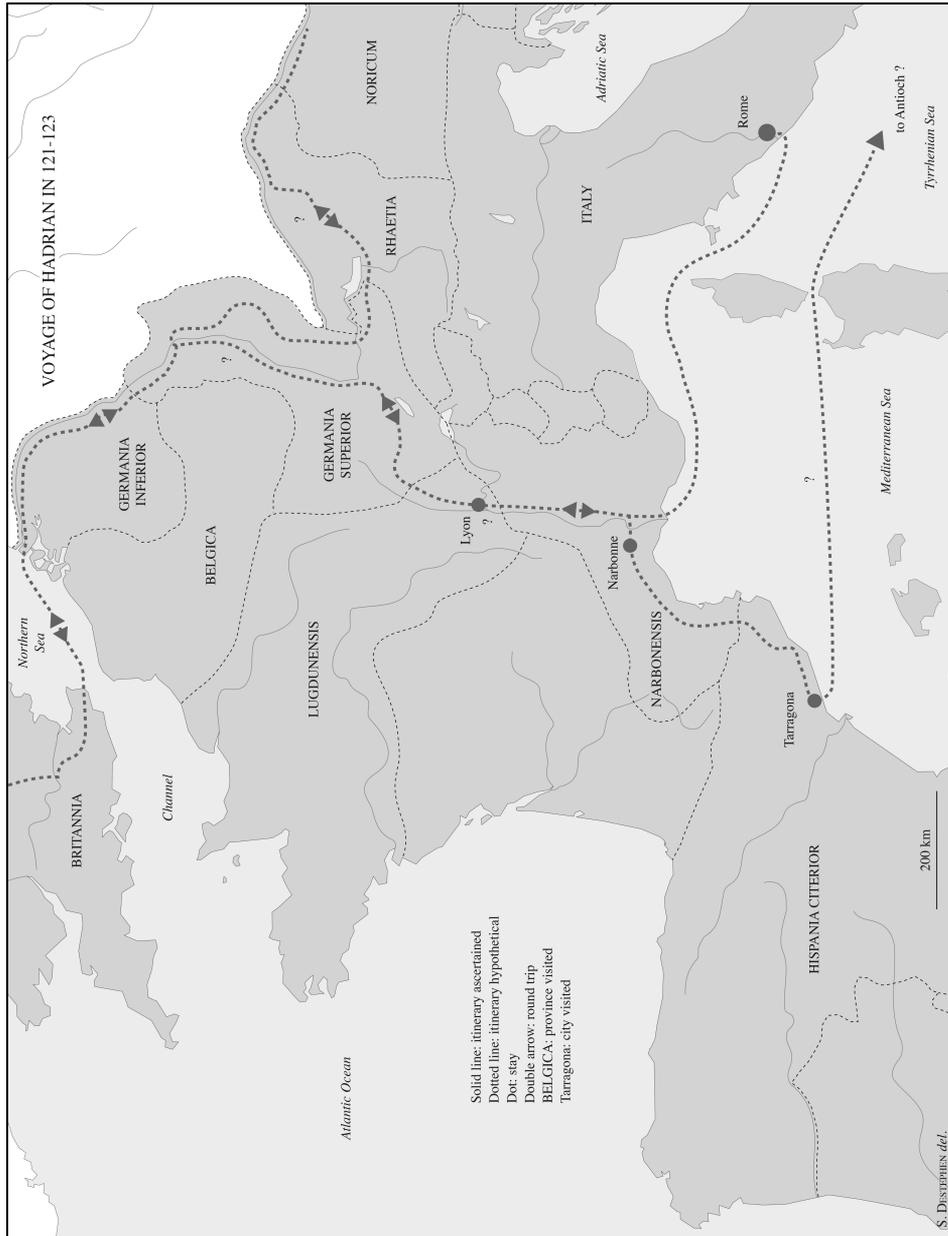


fig. 2a

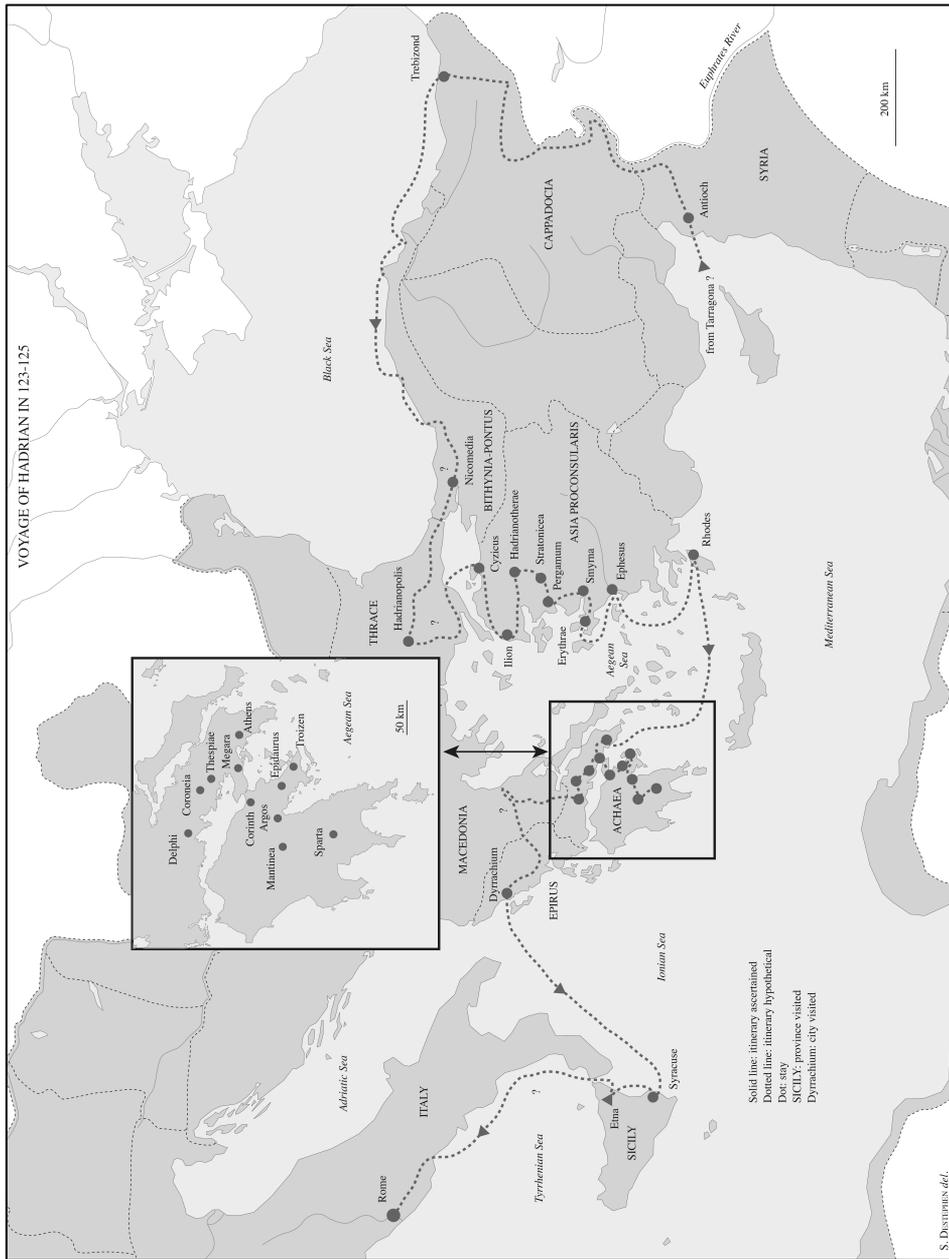


fig. 2b

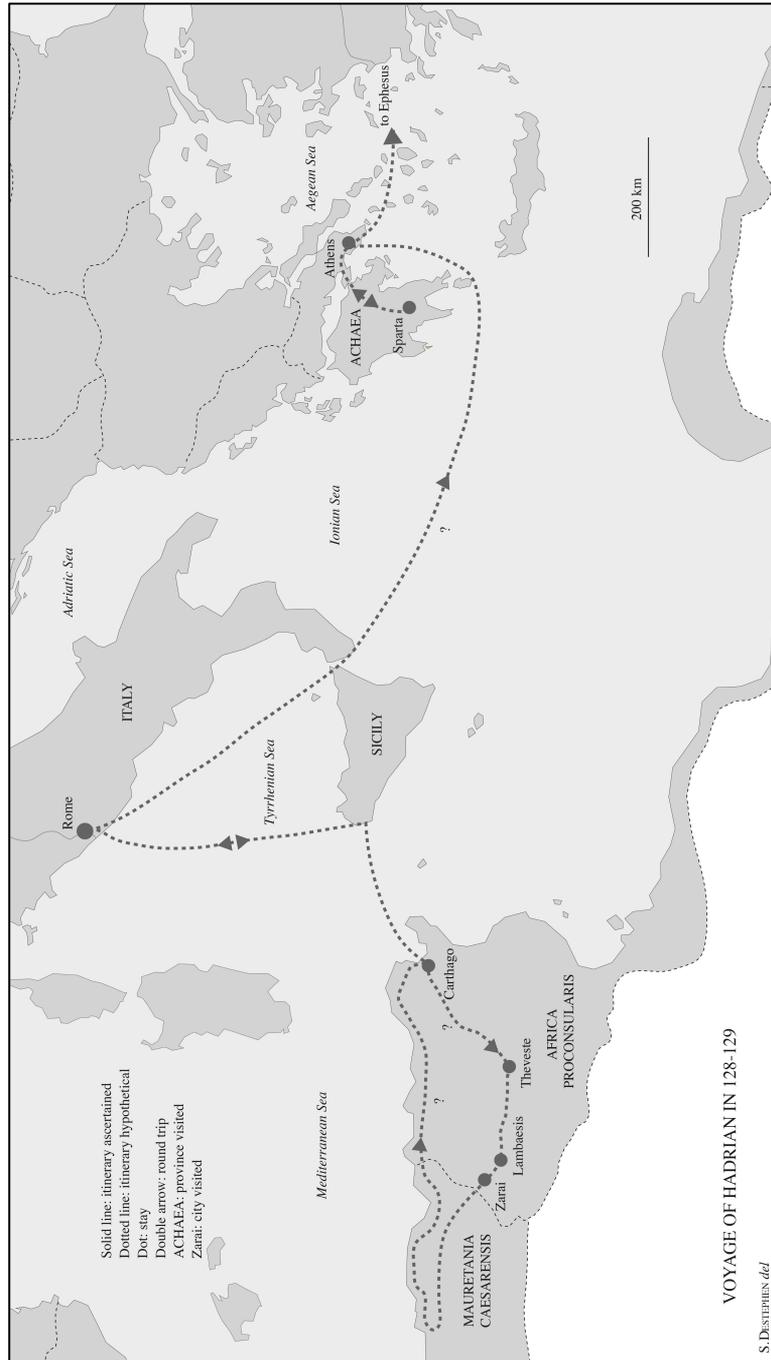


fig. 3a

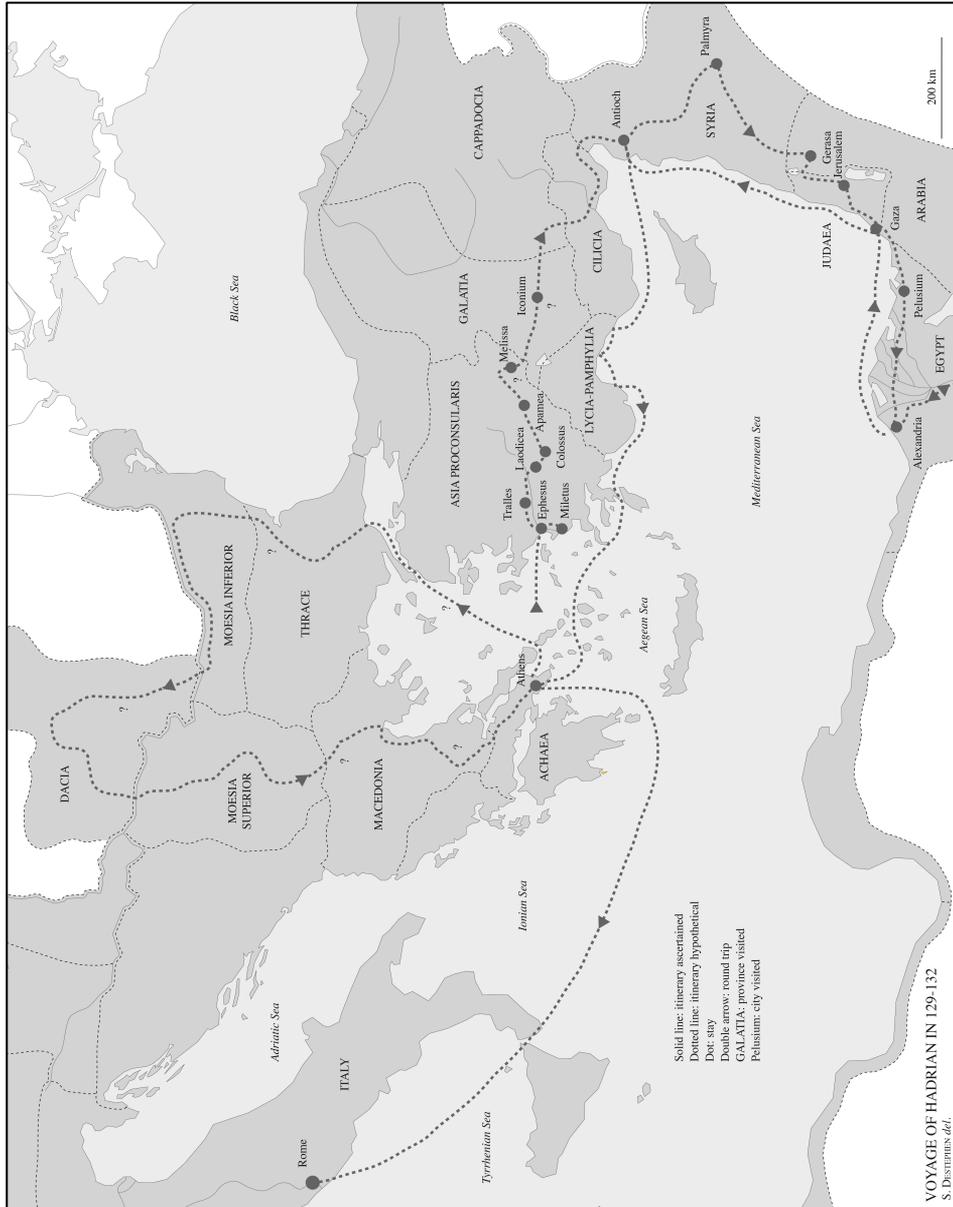


fig. 3b

epigraphic tradition handed down many testimonies of Hadrian's presence. But even in these areas, localising and dating his stays and itineraries is arduous work. One cannot know the precise timeline of Hadrian's trips, and following his steps for a few days is possible in only four cases: from October 12th to 18th 117 Hadrian was on the trans-Anatolian highway between Cilicia and Cappadocia; from late October to November 11th 117 he followed the road from Ancyra to Juliopolis in Galatia; from July 1st to 7th 128 he circulated between Lambaesis and Zarai in Africa Proconsularis; and finally from November 18th to 21st 130 he paid several visits with his party to the colossus of Memnon in Egypt.⁵ Only inscriptions have been able to provide such chronological and geographical details. We find an imbalance in the sources related to Italy where little is known about Hadrian's sojourns and trips. Only the Fasti of Ostia, although incomplete, recount that Hadrian visited the Po Valley for five months during the spring and summer 127.⁶ As no literary sources mention his movements on the Italian peninsula, we must extrapolate from the testimony of the Fasti. We can assume the existence of several unattested journeys and stays of the emperor in Italy that effectively reduced his presence in the capital. Since these regular and short trips were part of the administrative routine and daily life of a Roman emperor, they did not merit the attention of their contemporaries and were not recorded by ancient historians.

Whereas inscriptions and papyri give detailed and punctual evidence of imperial journeys outside Italy, literary sources, for different reasons, provide broader, albeit vague information on these travels. The first and main reason is probably the strong rhetorical flavour that seasoned the conception and writing of history in Rome: a strong didactic purpose emphasising events instead of continuity, and narration rather than analysis, had a deep impact on Greek and Latin historiography of the early Roman Empire. The second reason is due to the social background of Roman historians, who were often members of the Senate, and always of the upper class, and who consequently wrote political histories focusing on the relations between emperors and senators in Rome. Under these circumstances, Emperors' sojourns outside of the capital mainly played a minor and episodic role within the historical and political narrative. Moreover, due to the chance and hectic transmission of ancient sources, historians contemporary to the Antonine dynasty (96-192) and Hadrian's reign like Granius Licinianus are lost or little has survived. When complete works have survived, such as the histories written by Florus or Appian, they relate periods prior to the Antonines.⁷

⁵ *CIL* VI, 5076 (between Tarsus and Andabalis from October 12nd to 18th 117); *IGR* III, 208 and IV, 349 (between Ancyra and Juliopolis from late October to November 11th 117); *ILS* 2487 (between Lambaesis and Zarai from July 1st to 7th 128); Bernard and Bernard (1960), 80-100, nos 28-32 (in Thebes and its outskirts from November 18th to 21st 130). The inscription found in Lambaesis has generated several editions and copious comments. For the text itself, see Berthet *et alii* (2003), 81; Speidel (2006), 7.

⁶ Vidman (1982), 49, l. 14: *V non. Mart. Augustus profectus ad Italiam circum[circa]*, and emendation suggested by Syme (1985), 28-29 (*circum [Padanam]*).

⁷ On Granius Licinianus and Florus, see the brief presentation of their lives and work in Sallmann (2000), 370-381. On the historians Granius Licinianus, Appian of Alexandria and also Florus, see Osgood (2005), 31-39; Kuhn-Chen (2002), 80-96; Hose (1994), 110-118, 247-253, 454-462.

Chronologically speaking, the closest historians to Hadrian's rule who mentioned his travels are Marius Maximus and Cassius Dio, both of whom were senators whose *floruit* took place under the Severan dynasty (193-238): the first author was consul in 199 and 223, and the second in 205 and 229. Within the impressive and tantalising eighty books of *Roman History*, Cassius Dio dedicated his sixty-ninth book to Hadrian's time and rule. The term "book" is probably misleading and inappropriate since the modern edition only counts some 4000 words.⁸ In reality, the text is a version of the sixty-ninth book abbreviated by a Byzantine monk and intellectual, John Xiphilinus, who was active in the second half of the eleventh century in Constantinople. According to the abbreviated text, Cassius Dio focused on the Emperor's ambiguous personality and his complicated relations with senators. The version handed down by John Xiphilinus does not pay much attention to any imperial journeys, and only one sentence refers to the visits that Hadrian made to cities and troops located in the provinces and to his hostile relations with the Jews. Putting together clues, hints and allusions scattered here and there throughout the text, Cassius Dio mentions Hadrian's presence in one western area, namely Germany, and in five eastern regions, that is Egypt, Judaea, Syria, Mysia, and Greece.⁹ One passage proves that Hadrian would often visit friends in their country houses. In other words, he stayed in aristocratic mansions located in the metropolitan area of Rome, the so-called *suburbium*, and the countryside of Latium and Campania.¹⁰ The passage, even if allusive, represents a remarkable testimony on imperial micro-mobility that ancient historians often disregarded or discarded as irrelevant to the "great history" they were supposed to write.¹¹

Consequently, Cassius Dio's books narrating and depicting the Antonine period are abbreviated, and a few remnants have survived from the collection of imperial biographies composed by Marius Maximus: out of some thirty quotations, only seven would originate from the *Life of Hadrian*.¹² The long tradition in Greek and Roman historiography of summarising previous, copious and sometimes tedious narratives to make them more manageable, explains why abbreviators were valued by contemporary and later readers and writers. In any case it would be wrong to associate abridged texts only with the late Roman Empire, and consider them as proof of literary decline and more broadly of intellectual decay, since Florus and Granius Licinianus, both living under Antonine rule, abbreviated the huge Roman history written by Livy in the age of Augustus.

⁸ Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 69, ed. U.-P. Boissevain, vol. III, 222-242. See also Millar (1999), 61-72; Hose (1994), 364-373; Kuhn-Chen (2002), 187-209; Berbessou-Broustet (2016); Neville (2018), 147-149.

⁹ Cassius Dio 69.9.1 (voyages); 9.4 (Germany and Egypt); 10.2 (Mysia); 11.1-2 (Judea and Egypt); 12.1-2 (Judea and Syria); 16.1 (Athens). Hadrian's conflict with the Jews is mentioned in 12.2 and more thoroughly narrated in 13 and 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 69.7.4. The same anecdote is related to Trajan by Eutropius *Abridgement of Roman History* 8.4.

¹¹ The imperial micro-mobility has been recently underlined and investigated by quite a few modern historians, such as Chausson (2012), 21-24; Ricci (2019).

¹² Birley (1997B), 2727-2731; Callu (2002), xiv-xxii.

The Settling Down of Emperors in Late Antiquity

Sources were scarce from the second half of the third century to the early fourth century.¹³ By chance, an Egyptian papyrus dated to the third century has preserved a scholarly exercise for learning Latin that deals with two sojourns of Hadrian in Lycaonia and Cologne. Even though the narrative is partly fictitious, both sojourns are plausible and the anonymous author gave two interesting details on Hadrian's voyages: the Emperor asked permission from the Senate and people of Rome to travel throughout the world, and he travelled on a cart.¹⁴ The documentary situation greatly improves from the second half of the fourth century onwards, but we can rue the loss of the books of Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res gestae*, which focused on the Antonine period, and henceforth we must be satisfied with a series of abbreviated histories and imperial biographies written in the 360-400s. Their authors tended to copy each other more or less slavishly or got information from common and now lost historiographical sources. The first of them is Aurelius Victor, who went on to a long and great senatorial career under several emperors and in 360 published the *Book of Caesars*. The second author is Festus, whose precise identity is still a matter of debates among scholars. At any rate, he was contemporary to Emperor Valens, to whom he dedicated a *Summary of the Roman History*. The third, Eutropius, who held the office of *magister memoriae* that gave him access to imperial archives, also dedicated another less concise historical compendium to Valens. Finally, a fourth historical work, falsely attributed to Aurelius Victor and dated to the 400s, provides short biographical records on the Roman emperors from Augustus to Theodosius I. Slightly prior to the latter work, an anonymous collection of biographies of second and third century Roman emperors and princes, known under the modern title of *Historia Augusta*, is of great interest for the Antonine period, even though it draws its information from the controversial biographer Marius Maximus.

As the five works give an overview of the political history of Rome, they only briefly mention the Antonine dynasty, and quite often references to Hadrian are brief and sometimes imprecise. Regarding the voyages of Hadrian, Aurelius Victor's *Book of Caesars* only mentions his first journey that took place in 117-118, but the rest of the passage discloses hostility to the Emperor, who was depicted as a lecherous, lazy ruler, and a refined, cruel aesthete, and notably harsh to senators.¹⁵ Festus only mentions Hadrian twice to complain about the abandonment of Trajan's conquests and does not say a word about his movements.¹⁶ Eutropius makes the same negative comment on territorial losses and military passivity, but he also briefly refers to Hadrian's mobility and lavishness.¹⁷ Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, more forthcoming regarding the Emperor's

¹³ On the historiography of this period see Baldini (2000), 71-85, and the brief overview provided by Bleckmann and Gross (2016), v-vii. A whole book has been dedicated to the lost historical sources written during the period by Janiszewski (2006), 27-84 on Asinius Quadratus, Dexippus of Athens, Eusebius (of Thessalonica?) and Rufus, a mysterious historian.

¹⁴ Berg (2018), 52, l. 16-18: *petit a senatu populoque Romano ut {in} circumiret orbem terrarum*; 54, l. 1-2: *retinens mularum frenos quibus Hadrianus uehebatur*.

¹⁵ Aurelius Victor *Abridged History* 14, especially 14.1.

¹⁶ Festus *Summary of the History of Rome* 14.3; 20.4.

¹⁷ Eutropius 8.3.

whereabouts, alternates between criticising the man and praising the emperor. Among the merits often attributed to Hadrian, the author mentions his visits through all the Roman Empire.¹⁸ Information provided by the *Historia Augusta* is not as limited in comparison. In the case of his first journey, from Syria to Rome, although these records are rather sparse in detail, the anonymous author refers to Illyricum and Moesia as staging posts. He also mentions a tour of Campania. The information about the second journey made from 121 to 125 is more detailed, and enumerates stays in Gaul, Germany, Britain, Asia Minor, the Aegean Sea, Greece and Sicily. According to these precious records, the third journey, which took place from 128 to 132, is associated with visits to Africa Proconsularis, Asia Minor, Syria, Arabia and Egypt, where his travels and their narrative seem to be interrupted by Antinoos' death.¹⁹ The lack of any transition between the second and third journey wrongly suggests that they formed a single voyage with stays in Rome. The *Historia Augusta*'s author does not provide any specific dates for the three travels and one can only deduce their timeline from the chronological indications given before, during, or after them.

It is clear that Hadrian occupied a small place in fourth century historiography in comparison with emperors such as Augustus, Trajan or Septimius Severus in late fourth-century historiography, and memories of his voyages were limited to a few names of cities and regions, sometimes to diplomatic, personal or episodic events. Aside from the *Historia Augusta*, no single source reports on his travels. However, Eutropius and Pseudo-Aurelius Victor initiate a process of rethinking these travels and relating them to construction or reconstruction work within the cities visited by Hadrian.²⁰ Indeed, his voyages were part of a global policy aimed at inspecting western and, in particular, eastern provinces, and supporting local communities through donations.²¹ Hadrian's long travels did represent a key feature of imperial euergetism, and the same reasons probably motivated some of the poorly evidenced voyages that the ruler made in Italy. For instance, according to the *Historia Augusta*, Hadrian travelled to Campania in order to alleviate cities and the local ruling class from unspecified difficulties.²² In light of the cases evidenced by inscriptions in Italy and other regions, one can assume that some local communities were affected by financial problems, and this situation convinced the emperor to donate money for public work or, more frequently and more economically for the Roman State, to cancel tax arrears. As authors of the late fourth century did not pay attention to the travels occurring in Italy, the mention by the *Historia Augusta* of Hadrian's trip to Campania is quite exceptional. Given his long stay in Tivoli and his

¹⁸ Pseudo Aurelius Victor *Abridgment of the Caesars* 14.

¹⁹ *Historia Augusta, Hadrian* 5.10 and 6.6 to 7.3 (first journey from 117 to 118); 9.6 (journey in Campania); 10.1-2; 11.2; 12.1-3; 12.8 to 13.4 and 22.13 (second journey from 121 to 125); 13.4 to 14.5 and 20.2 (third journey from 128 to 132). A richly annotated comment is provided by Callu (2002), 98-99, n. 60 (first journey); 104-105, n. 92-93 and 100 (second journey); 107-113, n. 114-136 (third journey); see also Benario (1980), 66-67, 69-70 (first journey); 82-83, 87-88, 90 and 93-95 (second journey); 95-100 (third journey); Fündling (2006), vol. 1, 450-474 (first journey); vol. 1, 542-544, vol. 2, 597-602, 616-641 and 935 (second journey); vol. 2, 641-692 (third journey).

²⁰ Eutropius 8.3; Pseudo Aurelius Victor 14.4.

²¹ On this topic see Boatwright (2000), and Fraser (2006).

²² *Historia Augusta, Hadrian* 9.6. See also Boatwright (1989), 242-267.

death at Baiae, in the Gulf of Naples, Hadrian probably made frequent and short trips to Latium and Campania.²³

As previously seen, the administrative journeys of Hadrian seem to have attracted little attention from the Late Antique abbreviators. Nonetheless, they do enable us to trace an unexpected evolution of the emperor's means of transport. Cassius Dio incidentally mentions that Hadrian journeyed on a horse- or more likely a mule-drawn vehicle.²⁴ As confirmed for other emperors by different ancient sources, this small detail would appear quite reliable.²⁵ As for Eutropius, he does not provide such a precise indication of the material aspect of the imperial travels, but he does emphasise the fact that Hadrian visited every part of the Empire. The anonymous author of the *Historia Augusta* adds that Hadrian's moves were not only extensive but also rapid,²⁶ and this seems to be a commonplace among the panegyrics of the Later Roman Empire, whose rulers were regularly on the move.²⁷ Pseudo-Aurelius Victor would also appear to be exaggerating when he describes Hadrian as a walker: according to him he travelled throughout the Empire on foot and not on a cart.²⁸ Here the official image of the emperor is changed into one of an ascetic, a sort of a political missionary, who oversees every place and protects the Roman Empire from any internal or external danger that may threaten its territorial integrity and continuity. The extent, speed, and necessity of Hadrian's travels as mentioned by Eutropius, *Historia Augusta's* author and Pseudo-Aurelius Victor echo those of the journeys made by Emperors Constantius II, Valens or Theodosius I, who were contemporary of these writers.²⁹

The positive value assigned by biographers and abbreviators to the imperial journeys is counterbalanced by their predominantly negative portrait of Hadrian. Territorial losses, conflicts with the Senate, personal inclinations of the emperor arouse criticism among ancient historians and occupy a more central part in their narrative than voyages, and the latter have eventually raised indirect criticism. For instance, in his insipid biography of Antoninus Pius (138-161), Hadrian's successor, much estimated and praised by the later tradition for showing a deep respect to the Senate, the author of the *Historia Augusta* enumerates measures that the new emperor took in order to reduce State expenditure. One of his decisions is of great interest: the emperor, albeit extremely wealthy, was much more sparing than Hadrian with public money, and decided to limit his trips to Latium and Campania. He consequently ceased lengthy, distant voyages, since the imperial retinue represented an excessive burden for the provincial populations who were supposed to supply and billet it.³⁰ In other words, Antoninus Pius abandoned

²³ Aurelius Victor 14.12; Eutropius 8.3; *Historia Augusta, Hadrian* 25.5-6; 26.5.

²⁴ Cassius Dio 69.7.3. See also above n. 14 and 28.

²⁵ Halfmann (1986), 70-72 and 85-88.

²⁶ Eutropius 8.3; *Historia Augusta, Hadrian* 13.5.

²⁷ E.g. *Latin Panegyrics* 3.4.3-4; 3.8.1-3; 3.13.5; 3.14.3 (on Galerius); 4.3.2 (on Constantius Chlorus); 9.22.1-2 (on Constantine); Libanius *Orations* 59.75; 59.96; 59.147; Julian *Orations* 1.15.20C; Themistius *Orations* 4.57A-B (the three authors on Constantius II); *Latin Panegyrics* 11.6.4; 11.7.3; 11.8.3 (on Julian); 12.10.1; 12.22.1 (on Theodosius I).

²⁸ Pseudo Aurelius Victor 14.4.

²⁹ On the chronology, geography and purpose of these emperors' journeys, see Destephen (2016A), 45-52 and 55-81; see also Destephen (2016B).

³⁰ *Historia Augusta, Antoninus Pius* 7.11.

the on-going voyages and favoured a micro-mobility focused on Rome. Two ways of exercising rule are here contrasted: on the one hand, the systemic and expensive moving of Hadrian, on the other hand, the concentric and thrifty sedentariness of Antoninus Pius. Conversely, it is worth noting that one century before the Antonine dynasty, Augustus was praised for having travelled extensively in the provinces whereas his immediate successor Tiberius was blamed for having stayed in Italy.³¹ The model of political moderation and frugality according to Roman historians allowed them to tacitly target Hadrian's personal extravagance and costly splendour. Here, personal inconsistency was caricatured as political instability, but in reality, following the global evolution of the Roman Empire, both political models were praised and criticised in turn. After Theodosius I's demise in 395, successors opted for a more sedentary, albeit still mobile rule: in the East Arcadius (395-408), Theodosius I's elder son, circulated between Bosporus and Anatolia, whereas in the West Honorius (395-421), Theodosius I's younger son, journeyed in Central and Northern Italy. When Arcadius died, Honorius planned to go to Constantinople and hold regency on behalf of his young nephew, but Stilicho, Honorius' general and father-in-law, deterred him from making such an expensive journey: distant ruling was regarded as more sparing than visiting provinces.³²

The information was provided by Zosimus, an official and historian who lived in Constantinople at the turn of the sixth century. At that time, imperial journeys were limited to regions neighbouring Constantinople. Under these circumstances, Hadrian's voyages and mobility were regarded as historically uninteresting and politically irrelevant. Zosimus summarises the Antonine emperors in one single sentence that praises them for having defended the Roman Empire and extended its borders.³³ The attention paid to the territorial unity of the Roman world reflects Zosimus' personal concerns, since he lived through a period of barbarian invasions and political fragmentation. As sedentary emperors had been ruling the eastern half of the Roman Empire in an effective way since the fifth century, ancient historians did not criticise imperial immobility any more.³⁴ More focused on contemporary events, historians of this period did not evoke Hadrian's reign and voyages, and briefly mentioned the official

³¹ Main sources have been collected and discussed by Halfmann (1986), 29-31, especially Velleius Paterculus 2.129.3 and above all Tacitus, ann. 2.26.3 and 3.47.2.

³² Zosimus 5.31.4. Conversely, at the beginning of his reign, Honorius was encouraged to travel over land and sea by the court poet Claudian in his *Panegyric on the Fourth Consulate of Honorius* 434-436, ed. T. Birt, MGH, AA, 10, 166. However, the extreme scarcity of imperial voyages over sea in Late Antiquity proves that Claudian's verse is practically devoid of any reality.

³³ Zosimus 1.7.1. On the author and his relation to the ups and downs of Roman history, see Paschoud (2001), 336; reprinted in Paschoud (2006), 404.

³⁴ See the introduction, edition (borrowed from L. Dindorf), translation and commentary of Blockley (1981-1983). On these historians a conference has been organized and its proceedings edited by Bleckmann and Stickler (2014). To trace the origin of Christian chronicles and their cultural and religious context, see Wallraff *et alii* (2007), xi-xxvi; Adler (2009); Roberto (2011), 78-88. A translation in Italian with lavish comments has been recently edited by Dell'Osso and Roberto (2016).

cult that Hadrian rendered to Trajan in Antioch.³⁵ In the sixth century, Procopius, one of the last representatives of classical historiography, criticised the mainly sedentary Honorius for having sought refuge in Ravenna when barbarians wrought havoc in Northern Italy.³⁶ Procopius possibly alluded to the contemporary, immobile emperor Justinian, who never left Constantinople, except for two short journeys to Thrace and Central Anatolia. Concerning Hadrian, the image of his reign was already fading away, and Procopius only mentions his monumental tomb in Rome since it was turned into an impressive, urban fortress.³⁷ The memory of the travelling emperor did not completely vanish, but it was largely concealed in Late Antique historians' mind by more recent and dramatic events.

A Remote but Beneficent Ruler in Christian Eyes

The universal chronicle was created in order to encompass the history of mankind with a Christian perspective, and so Hadrian, despite being a pagan, was incorporated into the history of Christianity. The version popularised by the Palestinian bishop Eusebius of Caesarea was not the first of its kind, since it is known that Eusebius relied upon the lost chronicle of Julius Africanus, however this version became the model for later Christian historians. The chronicle of Jerome adapted Eusebius' chronicle and extended it to 378. This version mentions Hadrian's generosity towards cities drowning in debt or damaged by earthquakes, his sojourns in Northern Africa (Libya) and Egypt as well as his wintering in Athens from 123 to 124 (in reality from 124 to 125) and from 131 to 132.³⁸ According to this source, Hadrian was doing good deeds during his episodic journeys, where he experienced peaceful relations with the Christians and conflicts with the Jews.³⁹ Christian chroniclers' discourse focused on religious and, more specifically, on apologetic issues. They were particularly interested in the relations between the pagan Hadrian and the monotheistic communities. For instance, the late Gallic chronicler Sulpicius Severus wrote about the Jewish rebellion against Hadrian's rule and the consequential destruction of Jerusalem followed by the expulsion of the Jews from their holy city and its reconstruction as a Roman and pagan city.⁴⁰ In fifth-century Gaul, the chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine, influenced by Jerome's chronicle, discarded almost all secular information, in particular Hadrian's voyages and stays, and concentrated on

³⁵ Eunapius of Sardis frg. 29 Blockley, 2, 46, l. 18-19 (*apud Souda* I 401). See also the references previously given to F. Paschoud and R.C. Blockley's studies.

³⁶ Procopius of Caesarea 3.2.8.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 5.22.12-22; 7.36.17; 8.33.14.

³⁸ Jerome *Chronicle* a. 117-137, ed. R. Helm, GCS 7, 197-201.

³⁹ On these aspects of Hadrian's rule and reception, see Rizzi (2010), especially the homonymous paper offered by the editor at 7-20, and Bazzana (2010); more specifically Kuhlmann (2002), 173-196.

⁴⁰ Sulpicius Severus *Chronicle* 2.31.3-5, ed. C. Halm, CSEL 1, 85, l. 30 - 86, l. 9. In reality, Hadrian paid a visit to Jerusalem in 129 and ordered to undertake rebuilding operations that ignited two years later the Jewish revolt led by Bar Kokhba. On these events and their chronological succession see Baker (2012), 4-7.

his interactions with the Jews and the Christians.⁴¹ Allusions to Hadrian's trips were also omitted by Orosius as well as by Christian scholars such as Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede who composed universal chronicles in the seventh and eighth centuries respectively.⁴² It is quite unsurprising that for both these early medieval clerics, Roman history was relevant only when it pertained to the progress of the Catholic Church.

In the East, the survival of the Roman Empire provided a more favourable social and cultural environment for traditional historiography up to the beginning of the seventh century. Some works only survived in fragments, such as the chronicles written by the Syrian historians Eustathius of Epiphaneia or John of Antioch. It is worth noting that the latter's city was visited by Hadrian and benefitted from his euergetism.⁴³ We have also the almost complete version of the chronicle of John Malalas, likewise from Antioch, at our disposal. The chronicler dedicated eight brief chapters to Hadrian and praised him for being generous towards several major cities like Antioch and founding new towns.⁴⁴ Following John Malalas' narrative, the Emperor's good deeds and constructions were chronicled without the mention of any travel. Consequently, the benevolent ruler is depicted exerting authority from a sedentary position. It is tempting to compare Hadrian's portrait with Justinian's, who lavished a large array of public, religious and military buildings throughout the Empire while staying in Constantinople more or less permanently.⁴⁵ In the eyes of John Malalas, a contemporary of Justinian, the political model embodied by the latter was one of a generous but immobile Emperor. This may explain why John Malalas tried to balance Justinian's policy with previous emperors' good deeds, even at the expense of the historical truth. Reality is further mishandled in the short chapters on Antoninus Pius, whom John Malalas depicted in a positive, albeit partly deceitful light. The Syrian chronicler related his reign to buildings and donations to cities located in Phoenicia, Syria, Egypt and Asia Minor before returning to Rome. He also mentioned how Antoninus Pius stayed in Alexandria and Antioch.⁴⁶ Reading such an inaccurate chronicle is disconcerting, but if we assume some confusion between Antoninus Pius and Hadrian's deeds, John Malalas' narrative regains consistency. The Eastern cities and regions that John Malalas attributed to Antoninus Pius can be credited to the second and third journey made by Hadrian. It has to be noted that, according to the chronicler, the geographical dimension of a Roman Emperor's rule was clearly limited to the Justinianic Empire.

⁴¹ Prosper of Aquitaine *Chronicle* a. 581-626, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH, AA, 9, 422-425. See also, from 378 onwards since till this year Prosper slavishly followed Jerome's chronicle, the new edition with German translation and copious comments by Becker and Kötter (2016).

⁴² Isidore of Seville *Chronicle* a. 268-271, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH, AA, 11, 458-459; Venerable Bede *Chronicle* a. 315-319, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH, AA, 13, 286-287.

⁴³ John of Antioch frg. 206, ed. U. Roberto, TU, 154, 370, l. 20-22.

⁴⁴ John Malalas *Chronicle* 11.13-20, ed. H. Thurn, CFHB, 35, 209, l. 73 - 211, l. 30.

⁴⁵ The emperor made a solemn entrance in Constantinople in 559 (Constantine Porphyrogenitus *Three Military Treatises*, ed. and trans. J. Haldon, CFHB, 28bis, 138, l. 689-706), and he made a pilgrimage to Galatia in 563 (John Malalas 18.148, ed. H. Thurn, 431, l. 25-27, *apud* Cedrenus, ed. I. Bekker, 1, CSHB, 37, 679, l. 19-23).

⁴⁶ John Malalas 11.22-25, ed. H. Thurn, 212, l. 35-53.

In the 630s, the *Chronicon Paschale*, composed in Constantinople by an anonymous contemporary of the Emperor Heraclius (610-641), gives an example of the Byzantine elite's cultural background.⁴⁷ The work also provided a brief overview of Hadrian's reign, but it focused on its earlier part and for the later part only mentioned consuls whose names reckoned years. Information related to Hadrian mostly referred to building and renovation works in the main cities of Western Asia Minor, and a short, well-informed paragraph was dedicated to the reconstruction and reorganisation of Jerusalem. Even better, the anonymous chronicler mentioned Hadrian's travel to Egypt, and even if it was erroneously dated to 122, the Byzantine author accurately related the journey to the founding of Antinoopolis, a city erected on the Nile bank close to the place where Antinoos accidentally drowned in 130. Only the *Chronicon Paschale* specifies that the city was founded in October 30th.⁴⁸ The mention of Hadrian's journey to Egypt is quite surprising, because since Pseudo-Aurelius Victor in the early fifth century, records that the picture of Hadrian as a travelling and building emperor had been superseded in Late Antique historiography, pagan and Christian alike, by the picture of him as a generous but sedentary ruler. According to the anonymous author of the *Chronicon Paschale*, a mobile emperorship represented a form of discontinuous political action as it was related from time to time to buildings or foundations. In other words, in early seventh century Constantinople, moving was regarded less as a way of exerting authority than as a way of episodically expressing imperial generosity.

In the Syriac universal chronicles written in the early Middle Ages, Eusebian tradition still casted its shadow upon Hadrian's portrait: history of the Roman Empire was mainly a chronological, political and geographical framework where Christianity expanded and eventually triumphed over paganism, Judaism and heresy.⁴⁹ Following Eusebius of Caesarea's narrative, a Syriac chronicle completed in 724 associated Hadrian's rule with his conflict with the Jews, building or renovating works in several cities and chronological listings of venerable bishops and hated heresiarchs. It did not say a word about Hadrian's journeys nor give a single, original information on his reign.⁵⁰ At the turn of the eighth century, Jacob of Edessa's chronicle purely and simply omitted Hadrian⁵¹, whereas the chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tell Mahre, also known as the *Zuqnin Chronicle*, provided information already passed on by Eusebius of Caesarea and his Greek followers, but added a few details on ecclesiastical affairs and dogmatic debates. In the view of the anonymous Syriac chronicler, Trajan, Hadrian's predecessor, was found guilty for having persecuted Christians and put to death several

⁴⁷ On the the *Chronicon Paschale*'s end-date, see Zuckerman (2013), 198-201.

⁴⁸ *Chronicon Paschale* a. 116-137, ed. L. Dindorf, 1, CSHB, 7, 473-477. For the right date, see Follet (1968), 54. For an overview of the anonymous chronicle see Whitby and Whitby (1989), ix-xiv; see also as a starting point Neville (2018), 52-55.

⁴⁹ On the influence of the Eusebian model on Syriac historiography see the in-depth study of Debié (2015), 220-225 and 297-310.

⁵⁰ *Chronicle of 724*, trans. J.-B. Chabot, CSCO, 1-6, Scr. Syr., 1-6, 95-96; *ibid.* a. 427, 116. The same information was repeated in the *Chronicle of 846*, trans. J.-B. Chabot, 141-142.

⁵¹ Conversely, Jacob of Edessa mentioned three rulers of the Roman High Empire, namely Lucius Verus, Septimius Severus and Severus Alexander as they launched a war against Parthians. See Jacob of Edessa *Chronicle*, trans. E.W. Brooks, CSCO, 1-6, Scr. Syr., 1-6, 211-212.

preeminent martyrs, whereas Hadrian was not associated with any hostile action against Christians. Once again, following and repeating the Eusebian tradition, Hadrian's rule was linked with two different spheres of action, on one hand conflict with the Jews and the transformation of Jerusalem into a Roman city from where the Jews were expelled and henceforth prohibited to come back and settle, on the other hand manifold donations and constructions for the benefit of major and minor cities belonging to Greek speaking provinces.⁵² According to the Syriac chronicles, Hadrian was a pagan, generous Roman emperor, but an immobile and remote one.

At the end of Antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages, in the West as well in the East, universal chronicles written in Latin, Greek and Syriac endlessly handed down more or less the same perspective on Hadrian, and bequeathed a stereotyped, albeit positive portrait. The traditional picture of the travelling emperor faded away, while his generosity was still recorded, but above all Christian chroniclers underlined his hostility to the Jews.

Political Immobility and Religious Issues in Byzantium

Eusebius of Caesarea's Christian chronicle and theological purpose continued to exert a strong and enduring influence upon the Byzantine world whose history, language and religion were related to the cultural legacy of the Later Eastern Roman Empire. Under these circumstances, Hadrian's picture as a moving emperor kept up the image created by the Eusebian tradition, which was much more interested in apologetic and ecclesiastical issues.⁵³ One should not be surprised that after a hiatus of recording from the mid-seventh to the end of the eighth century, historiographical works are once again documented in Byzantium in the form of universal chronicles written by clerics and monks.⁵⁴ In the early ninth century, the Byzantine monk George the Syncellus combined excerpts hand-picked from the Jewish Roman historian Josephus, the apostolic Fathers, Julius Africanus and most prominently of all Eusebius of Caesarea. Consequently, there is no hint of any kind of originality in George the Syncellus' passage regarding Hadrian.⁵⁵ Belonging to the next generation, the Byzantine monk Theophanes the Confessor and the patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople also composed chronicles: the first writer continued George the Syncellus' work recording events from 284 to 813,⁵⁶ and the second briefly narrated history from Adam and Eve to 829 in the form of chronological tables, listings of religious and political rulers, and a few other extracts. For these reasons, patriarch Nicephorus only mentioned Hadrian in one, single sentence

⁵² Pseudo Dionysius of Tell Mahre *Chronicle* a. 2132-2152, trans. J.-B. Chabot, CSCO, 121, Scr. Syr., 66, 92-94.

⁵³ See in particular Kuhlmann (2002), 182-186.

⁵⁴ As an introduction see Croke (2007), 34-42; Efthymiadis (2013), 74-76; Treadgold (2013), 26-77.

⁵⁵ George the Syncellus *Chronicle* a.m. 5609-5621, ed. W. Dindorf, CSHB, 10, 658-661. See also the more recent edition by Mosshammer (1984), 425, l. 22 - 428, l. 8, and the translation of Adler and Tuffin (2002), 502-505; Neville (2018), 56-60.

⁵⁶ Theophanes the Confessor *Chronicle*, ed. C. de Boor, 1; Neville (2018), 61-71. It is noted that Theophanes the Confessor should be distinguished from Theophanes the Chronicler according to Zuckerman (2015), 51-52.

that indicated his reign, his death at Baiae and the destruction of Jerusalem.⁵⁷ Similarly, George the Monk, whose *floruit* took place in the mid-ninth century, composed a universal history which spanned from the Creation to 842. This chronicle was a successful and well-spread work, first in the Byzantine world, where it was continued, and then in the Slavic countries, where it was translated. It added little to George the Syncellus and Theophanes the Confessor's chronicles, but it disclosed a greater concern for theological debates and often made use of patristic and hagiographical sources. It changed nothing about the memory of Hadrian, which was related again to a few well-known events (war against the Jews, rebuilding of Jerusalem, good deeds) and figures (Christian heresiarchs).⁵⁸

At first sight, all these Byzantine chronicles could be considered only as poor compilations written by amateur historians and barely educated monks. However, a closer look reveals some information showing a literary evolution and, more broadly, a cultural shift of the Byzantine world. Completed in 1013 but mentioning only events up to 948, the universal chronicle attributed to the so-called Leo the Grammarian, an author about whose very existence some specialists express doubts, is currently regarded as a mediocre historical compilation. Nonetheless, Hadrian was praised for his intellectual gifts and moral virtues, the foundation of cities in Mysia and Thrace and the destruction of Jewish Jerusalem, but he was also criticised for his harsh behaviour towards high civil servants. Regarding this, the author mentioned Servius Sulpicius, the Praetorian prefect, who eagerly wanted to retire on his estate, after a life spent serving the Emperor Hadrian.⁵⁹ As the anecdote was borrowed from the Roman historian Cassius Dio and not found in the Byzantine chronicles of George the Syncellus or George the Monk, the so-called Leo the Grammarian reveals that he also relied upon non-Christian sources. Interest in the ancient sources, particularly classical historiography, was not a new phenomenon in the tenth and eleventh centuries since it was a characteristic of the Byzantine intellectual renewal which took place under the Macedonian emperors (867-1056) and the Comnenian dynasty (1081-1185).⁶⁰

Skilled in homiletics, theology, canon law and hagiography, John Zonaras was also proficient in history, and in the second half of the twelfth century he wrote a universal chronicle from the Creation to the year 1118. This long work was composed after the author joined a monastery where he spent the rest of his life. Concerned with precision and clarity, John Zonaras did not want to be original, and he dedicated two chapters to Hadrian and the bishops and heresiarchs contemporary to him.⁶¹ As he was a reader of pagan and Christian literature alike, Zonaras used for these chapters material found in book 69 of Cassius Dio's *Roman History* and passages from book 4 of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*. Combining different kinds of sources and traditions was not original, since it already appeared in the case of Leo the Grammarian, and simply reveals the double aspect of the Byzantine cultural elite, influenced by both the

⁵⁷ Nicephorus the Patriarch *Chronicle*, ed. W. Dindorf, CSHB, 10, 747; Neville (2018), 72-77.

⁵⁸ George the Monk *Chronicle*, ed. C. de Boor, 2, 450-451, edition emended by P. Wirth, *ibid.* See also Detoraki (2015), 126-128; Neville (2018), 87-92.

⁵⁹ Leo the Grammarian *Chronicle*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, 31, 68-69.

⁶⁰ See Tocci (2014), 61-65; Neville (2018), 137-146.

⁶¹ Zonaras *Annals* 11.23-24, ed. L. Dindorf, 3, 71-78; Neville (2018), 191-199.

classical heritage and by Christianity. In a positive way, we should be grateful to Zonaras for having read and used so many ancient sources now lost, fragmentary or abridged, but this assessment cannot prevent us from a more critical point of view. Faithful to the principles he mentioned in his prologue, Zonaras did not pretend to be a genuine historian but more simply a broker of information. Regarding the history of the Roman High Empire, particularly Hadrian's reign, Zonaras is merely a compiler and an abbreviator who worked conscientiously, maybe too conscientiously. For instance, the version of book 69 of Cassius Dio's *Roman History* transmitted by Zonaras represents only 40% of the version of the same book that John Xiphilinus had already abridged in the previous century. Although less extended and detailed, Zonaras' version mentions that Hadrian visited provinces one after another in order to inspect the cities and the countryside as well and provide them with some assistance.⁶² Zonaras decided to put aside Cassius Dio's criticism of Hadrian, and depicted Hadrian's journeys as a form of a good ruling and concern for local populations.

Information provided by other Byzantine historians and chroniclers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, such as George Cedrenus, Michael Glycas and Joel, continued repeating more or less the same reliable or erroneous data handed down by Byzantine historiography for centuries. A careful examination exposes minor differences here and there indicating that authors could focus on distinct topics and also express concern for contemporary events. Unsurprisingly, in Cedrenus' eyes, Hadrian was still viewed as a building emperor who founded cities and a pagan ruler who fought and defeated the Jews.⁶³ In the short notice he dedicated to Hadrian's reign, the chronicler Joel mentioned three martyrs, two heresiarchs and two Montanist prophetesses: in this case, the history of Christianity has patently erased the history of Rome.⁶⁴ At the extreme, in the *Annals* composed by Michael Glycas, who died shortly before the catastrophe of 1204, the author gave a particular importance to Hadrian's confrontation with the Jews, the destruction of Jerusalem, as it had been foreseen by the Gospel, and the reconstruction of the city renamed Aelia (Capitolina). He evoked the figure of Aquila of Sinope, Hadrian's relative responsible for the building work, who was mentioned in the fourth century by bishop Epiphanius of Salamis and in the seventh century by the *Chronicon Paschale*. Aquila converted to Christianity but was excommunicated from the local Christian community for being heavily influenced by astrology. Consequently, he decided to join the ranks of the Jewish community, learnt its language, translated the Bible into Greek and altered all the passages mentioning Christ's life and teaching.⁶⁵ However, it is hard to relate Glycas' interest for Jerusalem and anti-Jewish polemic with the crusades and the conquest of the Holy Land of which the chronicler was contemporary.

As a conclusion, it is worth mentioning the chronicle written by Constantine Manasses, metropolitan of Naupactus, on the Gulf of Corinth. Manasses' chronicle

⁶² *Ibid.* 11.23, 73, l. 5-7.

⁶³ Cedrenus *Concise History*, ed. I. Bekker, 1, CSHB, 26, 437-438, ed. L. Tartaglia, 1, 443-444; Neville (2018), 162-168.

⁶⁴ Joel *Chronography*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, 29, 30, ed. and Italian trans. Iadevaia (1979), 80, l. 673-678; Neville (2018), 217-218.

⁶⁵ Michael Glycas *Annals* 3, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, 27, 447-449; Neville (2018), 205-209.

spans Adam and Eve to the year 1081 and differs from previous Byzantine chronicles as it was composed in verse and not in prose. For this reason, the author felt the necessity to rearrange or readapt historical material, and he did not merely transcribe or adapt available information as most of the previous and contemporary chroniclers did. In the case of Hadrian, the Emperor was depicted as an intellectual and a benefactor, cherished by the Senate and his people, who fought the “malevolent” Jews and was compelled to destroy a Jewish Jerusalem and rebuild a Jerusalem freed from Judaism and more favourable to Christianity.⁶⁶ In order to highlight his benevolent action, Manasses evoked the travelling emperor's figure: “He took with him learned men who accompanied him to military camps, places of leisure and all his journeys, and he enriched the whole earth by his disinterested donations”.⁶⁷ Around 1200, Hadrian was still pictured as a benevolent Emperor whose trips gave him the opportunity to show that he was strongly committed to his grateful subjects, with the exception of the Jews. Devoted, cultivated ruler and man, he made countless efforts and donations in order to encourage prosperity of cities and countryside and experienced conflict only with the Jews since they rejected his benevolent supremacy. For centuries, Hadrian has embodied a model of a good Emperor pictured and transmitted by generations of Byzantine historians and chroniclers. Nonetheless, as his way of exerting authority required frequent journeys, it did not match with the reality of the Byzantine Middle Ages.

To sum up, it is quite astonishing to see how deeply the presentation of Hadrian's voyages varied from one period to another, even among sources originating from the same chronological frame and cultural context. In early Roman sources, Greek and Latin alike, the main concern was the relation between imperial rule, Roman Senate and provincial cities, and Hadrian's peripatetic way of exerting authority throughout the Roman Empire was frequently appraised or at least noticed. As the later Roman emperors progressively ceased to do long-distance travels, especially in the East where they used Constantinople as a hub, late antique sources rapidly mirrored this important political evolution, and consequently paid less attention to Hadrian's voyages. Mobile emperorship was not regarded anymore as a requirement for being a good ruler. Conversely, for the very first time expenditure incurred in imperial journeys aroused criticism in a few sources such as the *Historia Augusta*. In late antique and early medieval Christian chronicles written in Greek, Latin or Syriac, the political meaning of imperial mobility rapidly receded and the religious dimension became an essential component in their interpretation and assessment of Hadrian's voyages. The religious bias explains why medieval Christian historians, mostly clerics and monks, focused on Hadrian's conflict with the Jews and more peaceful relation with Christians, though they disconnected them from any imperial journey. As Byzantine chronicles were deeply indebted to late antique Christian historiography, Hadrian's journeys were still mainly related to religious issues and, for this reason, continued to be worth noting. From the

⁶⁶ Constantine Manasses *Chronicle*, ed. I. Bekker, v. 2175-2191, CSHB, 36, 94-95, v. 2157-2172a, ed. O. Lampsides, CFHB, 36a, 117-119; Neville (2018), 200-204.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* ed. I. Bekker, 95, v. 2179-2181, ed. O. Lampsides, 117, v. 2161-2163: ἄνδρας δ' ἐπήγετο σοφοὺς αὐτῷ συνεπομένους / ἐν στρατοπέδοις, ἐν σχολαῖς, ἐν πάσαις ἐκδημίαις, / καὶ πᾶσαν γῆν ἐπίανεν ἀφθόνοις χορηγίας.

second to the thirteenth century, the peripatetic dimension of Hadrian's rule did not vanish in ancient and medieval sources, but its importance obviously varied according to historians' personal and historical perspective. In any case, from the early Byzantine times onwards, the religious dimension of Hadrian's voyages definitively superseded any other aspect, even though his memory, plagued by controversies since his own lifetime, continued to be a volatile matter for historians. As the Pseudo Aurelius Victor rightly noticed in the late fourth or early fifth century, Hadrian was definitely *uarius, multiplex, multiformis*.⁶⁸

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⁶⁸ Pseudo Aurelius Victor *Abridgment of the Caesars* 14.6.

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