

## On The Presence of Jews in Ancient Latium

Heikki Solin

It is easier to make an approximate guess than to give a complete report on the presence of Jews and the spread of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman world. In this short contribution, I shall deal with the question of the dispersion of Jews in ancient Latium outside Rome. I hope that Hannah Cotton will accept this homage as a token of a long standing friendship.<sup>1</sup>

The history of the spread of Jews and Judaism in antiquity is not limited to the narrow confines of the Holy Land. Jewish communities of greater or lesser size and significance had settled in almost every part of the then civilized world. The reasons for the Jewish emigration and for the birth of Jewish diaspora were various. In earlier periods, Jews were forcibly deported in large numbers to both the eastern and the western parts of the Mediterranean; for example, when Pompey carried off hundreds of Jews to Rome as prisoners of war. But of greater significance — in the Hellenistic and Roman age — was the voluntary migration of Jews to all the major cities of the civilized world.

Our knowledge about the history of the spread of Judaism has increased considerably during the last century due to the extensive excavations carried out in the western part of the Mediterranean. Let us only take as example the sensational discovery of the synagogue in Ostia, which dates from the second half of the first century AD, the first certain case of an archaeologically attested synagogue on Italian soil in antiquity;<sup>2</sup> then later, in the eighties of the previous century, another synagogue was discovered at Bova Marina near Reggio Calabria in the southern tip of Italy.<sup>3</sup>

Already in the first century BC (as it seems), the Sibyl could declare that every land and every sea was filled with the Jewish people: *πᾶσα δὲ γαῖα σέθεν πλήρης καὶ πᾶσα θάλασσα* (Or. Sib. 3.271). And Strabo states (when relating to Sulla's crossing over to Greece) that at that time 'the habitable world was filled with Jews ... This people has already made its way into every city, and it is not easy to find any place in the habitable world which has not received this nation and in which it has not made its power felt' (*FGrHist* 91 F 7, from Joseph. *AJ* 14.115). Josephus and Philo express themselves in similar terms. But the extent of the Jewish dispersion is described best in King Agrippa I's letter to Caligula as reported by Philo, where Agrippa lists numerous places. 'Jerusalem', it states, 'is the mother city, not of one country, Judaea, but of most of the others in virtue of the colonies sent out at diverse times into the neighbouring lands of Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, and into the more distant Pamphylia and Cilicia, most of Asia

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks go to Alison Cooley and Alexander Peck for checking the English of my paper.

<sup>2</sup> The latest publication is that by Olsson et al. (2001).

<sup>3</sup> See Lattanzi (1985), 135-136. One should point out here that the basilica of Monastero in Aquileia, excavated in 1948-1950, is not a synagogue as originally thought, but a Christian church, as I hope to have shown elsewhere: See Solin (1983), 739.

up to Bithynia and the corners of Pontus; similarly to Europe' (Philo *Legat.* 281-283). Acts 2: 9-11 also mentions Jews and proselytes from many cities in Asia, Crete, Egypt, and Cyrenaica, and, according to the common interpretation of Luke's statement, Rome as well. Now, the presence of Rome in the list is not without problems, and I have tried to show elsewhere that the ἐπιδημοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι included in the list of peoples in the Pentecost miracle are not inhabitants of Rome who had emigrated to Jerusalem, but people from other places, who had been granted Roman citizenship.<sup>4</sup>

Now, it is striking that in these testimonies, no region or city of the Latin-speaking West, except for the city of Rome, has so far been mentioned. And this is no coincidence. The diffusion of the Jewish diaspora in the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire differs greatly; Jews were present in the western part during the Republican period and the three first centuries of the Empire to a much lesser degree. I cannot investigate the possible causes of these differences more thoroughly here.<sup>5</sup> But the analysis of the documentation from one region of Italy, viz. Latium, will show how thin the testimonies about Jewish presence really are, and this in spite of the vicinity to Rome, the capital of the world.

The only town in Latium that has provided us with a certain number of ancient Jewish inscriptions is Ostia (with Porto). This fact should not be surprising, as Ostia was a port city, bursting with people originating from the oriental part of the ancient world. The Jewish inscriptions of Ostia have been recently published by David Noy,<sup>6</sup> and there is not much to be added to his edition. I have myself published a few small revisions to Noy's text.<sup>7</sup> I only add that the Greek inscription *IGI Porto* 92 does not seem to be Jewish, as the editor Giulia Sacco would have it, albeit hesitantly.<sup>8</sup> Finally, I mention a recent discovery: at the end of a funerary inscription discovered in 2006 and published in 2007 (*AE* 2009, 193) we find the word *Iudaei*, but without a clear context; surely, the inscription itself is not Jewish.

Besides Ostia's synagogue and inscriptions, the only other evidence for the presence of Jews in Latium (excluding Fundi) is found in the Schol. Iuv. 4.117, where a group of Jews is mentioned at Aricia at the time of Juvenal. Juvenal's words are: *Dignus Aricinos qui mendicaret ad axes* ('Well-fitted to beg at the wheels of Arician chariots'). The scholiast adds the following explication: *Qui ad portam Aricinam sive ad clivum mendicaret inter Iudaeos, qui ad Ariciam transierant ex urbe missi* ('Who should go abegging at the Arician gate or at the hill among the Jews, who passed over to Aricia after they had been expelled from Rome'). However, it is very difficult to determine anything definite about an eventual Jewish settlement at Aricia or its characteristics, let alone about a hypothetical expulsion from the scholiast's passage.<sup>9</sup> There are also very few explicit references to Syrians in general in Latium (beyond Ostia); the only pieces of

<sup>4</sup> Solin (1983), 610.

<sup>5</sup> See more in Solin (1983), *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> *JJWE* I 22-34 nn. 13-18. The inscriptions considered earlier as Jewish, but by Noy as non Jewish, are listed on pp. 287-294 nn. 205-214.

<sup>7</sup> Solin (2002), 63-65.

<sup>8</sup> The inscription is mentioned by Noy, *JJWE* I, 293-294. Cf. Solin (1998), 285 sg. 407.

<sup>9</sup> See my observations about the text's form and its explanation in Solin (1983), 726-727.

evidence known to me are a fragmentary inscription from Bovillae (*AE* 1979, 123), where an (unknown) person is recorded *de gente Syrum*, and the epitaph of a *veter(anus) Aug(usti) nat(ione) Syr(us)* at Antium (*CIL* X 6669); presumably, therefore, he settled in the harbour-town after his discharge. More frequently, but still rarely, Semitic names appear, like *Barnaesus* at Minturnae (*CIL* X 6045), *Barsemias* at Tarracina (*CIL* X 6404), *Beles* at Casinum (*RendLincei* 1971, 435 n. 14; the Semitic attribution is not certain), *Gadia* at Albanum (*CIL* XIV 2313a = XV 7866), *Gora* at Antium (*CIL* X 6638 c, 3, 16, 49 d.C.), *Iocimus* at Formiae (*AE* 1996, 389), *Malchio* at Lanuvium (*CIL* XIV 2144) and at Nomentum (Audollent, *Defix. tab.* 135); *Malch[---]* at Minturnae (*CIL* X 6045), *Malchus* at Velitrae (*CIL* X 6577) and *Malchius* (the corrupt name is transmitted M·ALCHIVS) at Minturnae (*CIL* X 6045a), *Martha* at Aquinum (*RendLincei* 1969, 81 n. 36), *Marthana* in the ager Albanus (*CIL* XIV 2328. *AE* 1968, 106. 1991, 386 *Martana*), *Sabbio* at Bovillae (*AE* 1979, 129), *Sabbis* at Formiae (*AE* 1995, 273) and at Tibur (*Inscr. It.* IV 1, 498), *Sabb[---]* at Velitrae (*CIL* X 6572), *Sabb(---)* at Cora (*CIL* X 6512), *Zabda* at Signia (*CIL* X 5972) and at Tarracina (*CIL* X 6397), with *Sabda* at Atina (*CIL* X 5114), *Zora* at Antium (*CIL* X 6638 c, 3, 7, 49 d.C.) and at Roccagiovine (ancient Fanum Vacunae; *AE* 1928, 109). A group of servile Semitic names should be added from Republican Minturnae, which appear on the well-known *stelae* published in *CIL* I<sup>2</sup> 2678-2708 (of them, *Bargates* and *Salama* are not listed above).<sup>10</sup>

This leaves Fondi.<sup>11</sup> Three inscriptions have survived, which are very different from each other. Let us analyse them one by one:

1. *CIL* X 6299 = *CIJ* I 552 = *JIVE* I 19. The inscription, which has long been lost, was seen by Mommsen in 1876 at Fondi *apud Petrum Izzi*. He published it in *CIL*. The shape of the text as given by Mommsen ought to be the starting-point for any attempt to decipher it, and it should be said that neither Frey nor Noy, whose work relies exclusively on Mommsen's copy, convey the text in an exemplary fashion, as far as the first fragmentary line is concerned. With regard to the inscription's language, it seems obvious to me that it is drawn up in Latin and I do not understand Noy's hesitation about this. It is doubtless an epitaph. Its dating is an unresolved problem. Colafemmina dates the inscription to the fifth/sixth centuries, without presenting convincing arguments to corroborate his contention.<sup>12</sup> It would be better to agree with Noy and to leave the question of the date open. I would like, however, to mention what Mommsen said about the question of the Hebrew word *šalom*, in citing the famous linguist Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, with the following words: *Elementa quoque primum quartumque vetustam admodum formam in hoc titulo prae se ferunt*; but it is not clear to me whether what is presumably an ancient version of the word *šalom* can have any implication on the Latin inscription's date.

Let us now check the text line by line to see what can be made out of the muddle of letters. In the first line, both Frey and Noy give, without any hesitation, *[---]CIAE*, but in Mommsen's copy it emerges that the upper part of the letters stood on a break, and so *[--*

<sup>10</sup> See Zucker (1943), 200-204.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Colafemmina (2002), 307-336.

<sup>12</sup> Colafemmina (1983), 200. But in Colafemmina (2002), 307, he dates the inscription to the fourth/fifth century.

-]CTAE is also possible. [---]ciae could represent the end of a *gentilicium*, and [---]ctae that of a cognomen. The second line remains very unclear. If the inscription were fairly ancient, one could perhaps imagine a *C. Canio* or *C. Canic[ius]*, but that would also remain highly hypothetical. It should be noted that *Canicius* is a pretty rare *gentilicium*, attested only in Africa.<sup>13</sup> In line 3 [Mac]edonio comes to mind, which Frey had already proposed. It would continue *se [vivo]*, as Noy suggested. At the beginning of line 4 Colafemmina (2002, 308) proposes [arch]on, but does not explain to what the nominative would belong. But all this remains at the level of a very tentative conjecture. *Non liquet*. At the centre of the inscription a menorah is carved, and on the lower right part of the stone the word *šalôm*, ‘peace’, is inscribed in Hebrew letters — a common feature in late antique Jewish inscriptions in Rome and in the West in general.

2. Fragment of a white marble slab. Unpublished. Rough rear. (33) x (34) x 5.5; letter heights 4-5; menorah 8. Seen by Mika Kajava and myself in 1988 at Fondi, in the garden of a house on Via Marzabotto 8. The owner said that it came from the harbour of Fondi, in other words, the beach at Sperlonga. I have a strong suspicion that it comes from Rome and is a poor quality forgery. Although unpublished, it can be found in my reviews of *JWE* (Solin [1995], 316 and [2003] 431). Following my review, it also found its place in *SEG LIII* 1045.<sup>14</sup>

ἐνθάδε  
κεῖται  
Ἰούδας  
menorah

In the coastal area of Sperlonga we have found some other epigraphic evidence that appears to come from Rome. In the vicinity of the villa Sansone some epigraphic fragments are preserved whose provenance from the city of Rome is confirmed by their owner.<sup>15</sup> One of them seems to be a forgery, beginning with *P. Aelio Hadriano* (although the black colouring of the letters impedes their being examined). An epitaph with the opening *P. Aelio Hadriano* would be too good to be true; naturally, by beginning the text with the name of the emperor Hadrian, the forger wanted to link his work with significant Roman history. He was probably thinking of Hadrian himself, inasmuch as he attempted in the second line to produce the title *Parthicus*, without success; note though that Hadrian rejected this title, which appears only at the beginning of his rule.

As far as the authenticity of the piece from Fondi is concerned, it is apparent, already at a glance, that the letters are modern. It is not difficult to trace models for this kind of forgery; even in Jewish inscriptions from Rome the same combination of the formula ἐνθάδε κεῖται / κεῖνται with the name Ἰούδας appears (*JWE* II 124. 231. 262), and the formula itself is found hundreds of times in the Greek epitaphs from the Jewish

<sup>13</sup> *CIL*VIII 817 = 12359 = 23949 *Canicia Secunda*. 19201 *Canicius Geminius*; *AE* 1942/43, 64 (Sitifis) *Canicius Agentius*. Cf. in addition *ILAlg* II 3770 *Sex. Iul(ius) Africanus Canicianus*.

<sup>14</sup> One ought to refer to what Carnevale (1997), 12, wrote about this piece, that ‘some years ago’ in the area of Olmo Perino, a small stone came to light with an inscription in Greek ‘Here lies a Jew’. He also adds: ‘Some thought it a joke, which illustrates, however, the interest in the history of Jews at Fondi’.

<sup>15</sup> Published by Longo (1995) 45-6; reconsidered by us in 1991.

catacombs in Rome. It is not at all difficult to understand the decision of the forger to complete the last word with a sigma in the form of a C which would be known from his models. It is also plausible that the forger, possibly revealing anti-Jewish feelings, has chosen precisely the name of Judas.

3. Slab of Luna marble, broken on the right, found on 10 September 1958 in one of the basins in front of Tiberius' cave at Sperlonga. 2.6 x 21 x 1. The marble had been reused, and a text consisting of Latin letters (height between 1.5 and 3 mm) was written above in ink. It was in the Museo Nazionale Romano (inv. no. 6812), where it was seen by Guarducci. Unfortunately the text is lost and there are no traces even of the photo published by Guarducci:

*Qui s[ubberti]sti libra puerum Elissei, ita subber[te]  
domum B[1]r[1-2]tis; qui subbertisti Sodomam e[st] Go-]  
morra, ita subberte domum et a[ni]mam [---]  
natis; qui apparuisti populo in d[eserto, ita]  
5 appare c[u(m)] opera tua super istas +[---]  
++[--- s]ubberte [---]*

'You who have confounded with leprosy the slave of Elisha, in the same way confound the house of B[-]r[-]s; you who have confounded Sodom and Gomorra, in the same way confound the house and soul of [---]nas; you who appeared to the people in the desert, so you appear with your work on this [---] confound [---]' (Guarducci [1960], 3-7 with translation and photo and drawing reproduced here; see figures 1 and 2).

Although the letters, especially on the right side of the slab, are very worn out and difficult to read in the photograph, it is rather easy to understand the text, and is clear in broad outlines, as is the shape of the text given by Guarducci, with only the name of the owner of the *domus* in line 2 remaining uncertain; Guarducci wanted to detect a name beginning with *Ber-* and ending with *-as* but there are no definite traces of the E and the A (neither in the drawing nor in the reproduction of the photograph in the *editio princeps*).

There are four phrases in which the unknown author addresses God. The first two invoke the ruin of two people whose names were expressed in the genitive at the end of the actual phrases; the third phrase is a pray to God to show himself to his believers; the fourth returns to the theme of the curse. For the person's name, on whom the first phrase wants to direct God's wrath, it seems that the genitive is used with the ending *-tis*; this is why the name itself must have ended in *-s* or *-tes* (as already stated, there are no traces of an A, which Guarducci wanted to detect, therefore, the name could not end in *-as*). However that may be, the name cannot be reconstructed, and the same is true of the second person who is being cursed (which must end with *-nas* like *Leonas*).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Guarducci would have liked to attribute the two names to a single individual, against whom the curse is hurled, but that remains rather improbable. The name of the second person could also have ended with *-nates*, but names with this ending were not in use in imperial period onomastics.

The first phrase is inspired by a well-known passage in the Bible,<sup>17</sup> the punishment of the slave Gehazi of Elisha in Reg. IV 5: 26-27: in the Vulgata *ille* (sc. Heliseus) *ait* ‘... *lepra Naaman adherebit tibi* (sc. Giezi) *et semini tuo in sempiternum*. *Et egressus est leprosus quasi nix* (‘Elisha said to him (Gehazi): “... the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you, and to your descendants forever”. So he left his presence leprous, as white as snow’). Although the author of the passage does not state this explicitly, it is clear that the prophet accomplishes the punishment by making use of divine omnipotence and that the author of our curse turns to God. Note the spelling of *libra* for *lepra* (if this is the correct reading; nothing is gained from the photograph); cf. *lebra* in *ILCV* 1293 and sometimes in the manuscripts of Latin authors, and also Italian *lebbra*. Note also the spelling of *Elissei* without the initial *h* and with a double *-ss-*; cf. *Tract. in Luc.* (fourth century) 5.1 *Helisseus*; 6.9 *Helisseo*.

The second phrase contains a very interesting and powerful image: just as God has destroyed Sodom and Gomorra (Gen. 19: 24-25), so may he destroy the house and soul of the hated enemy.<sup>18</sup> These two damned cities are mentioned in the Roman world in a Pompeian graffito (*CIL* IV 4976) which states *Sodoma / Gomora*, probably written by a Jew<sup>19</sup> — one of the very few pieces of Jewish evidence from the Vesuvian area.<sup>20</sup> Usually the graffito is related either to the devastation caused by the earthquake of AD 62 or to the destruction of the town in the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, but it is not necessary to link the writing to a specific event — the writer simply wanted to bring ruin upon the house on whose wall he wrote the words, or to curse, in general, the sinful life of Pompeii. The use of the verb *subvertere* is worth noting; it also appears in the Vulgate in the account of Gen. 19: 25 as well as in other biblical references to the destruction of the two cities (Gen. 13: 10; Is. 13: 19; Jer. 49: 18; Am. 4: 11). Inspired by this passage, the writer, however, used the same verb *subvertere* also in referring to leprosy with a result that this is not very felicitous from the semantic point of view.

The third phrase is a prayer to God asking him to show himself to his believers. The writer could have been inspired by the biblical story in which the march of the Israelites from Egypt is narrated: Vulg. Exod. 16: 10 *cum loqueretur Aaron ad omnem coetum Israhel, respexerunt ad solitudinem, et ecce gloria Domini apparuit in nube* (‘While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud’). The restoration *in d[eserto]* by Guarducci is plausible; it is true that in Exodus the term *solitudo* is used, but the expression *in deserto/um* was very common in Christian literature. Already in the

<sup>17</sup> An echo of the biblical passage can also be found in *ILCV* 3858A (Rome) *aveat anathema GEIITI [---]*; *CIL* X 1276\* (Carales, no doubt genuine) *habeat partem cum Gezi*; *AE* 1999, 806 (Peninsula of Sinis in Sardinia) *abeat parte c[um] Iuda et lebra Gezi*; *ILCV* 1293 (Emerita) *percussus lebra Gezie perfruatur*; add *ILCV* 3866 (Roma) *anathema abeat de Iuda et repra* (= *lepram*) *Naman Syri*. Cf. Perraymond (1981), 115-152, esp. 121.

<sup>18</sup> Guarducci (1960), 5, thinks that the term *anima* is mentioned here in the more specific sense of ‘life and spiritual welfare’. In view of the document’s character, I consider such a meaning superfluous to the writer’s reasoning.

<sup>19</sup> Full references to the explanation of this graffito will be found in the supplement of *CIL* IV (graffiti), which is hoped to appear soon.

<sup>20</sup> These are assembled by Solin (1983), 725-727, and Noy (1993) 38-41.

prelude to the account in Exod. 16: 1 it is stated *venit omnis multitudo filiorum Israhel in desertum Sin*;<sup>21</sup> besides, Num. 27: 14; 33: 11 (Num. 33: 36); Ioh. 6: 49 (cf. Aug. *in euang. Ioh.* 26: 11).<sup>22</sup> After *istas* Guarducci provides *s[edes]*, a possible restoration, but naturally uncertain. Besides, according to Guarducci, ‘la brevissima lacuna fra *in d[eserto]* e *appare* si adatterebbe assai bene al supplemento *Sin*’. It may be the case, but it is not necessary to explain the name of the desert. Comparing lines 1 and 2, in which the supplements are more or less certain, there is no need, in my view, to add anything extra between *in d[eserto]* and *[ita]*; on the other hand, one could ask how much the writer has taken account, in a text of this type, of the exact centring of the lines; in other words, we are not able to calculate the exact length of the lacuna, for which the restoration or not of *Sin* is insignificant. In itself the name *Sin* could be added on the basis of 16: 1 to make clear that it is dealing precisely with that event (in the biblical text, in 16: 10, *Sin* was unnecessary, since it had already appeared in 16: 1).

In the fourth phrase, the writer turned to call upon God to ruin his enemies. And yet, because of its fragmentary state, nothing other than the verb *[su]bbert[e]* can be deciphered (this reading by Guarducci seems self-evident to me).

Whoever wrote the text had a distinct familiarity with the Old Testament. But was he a Jew or a Christian?<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to decide. Personally, I would prefer to regard him as a Jew. He refers to two decisive moments in the history of the people of Israel, without mentioning events narrated in the New Testament (it seems that in the last line there was only a brief summary of the wish: you, Omnipotent God, confound my enemies). But in a curse (we are also permitted to talk of a *defixio*) written by a Christian, it would be strange if the supernatural powers of Jesus were not mentioned. At least, we would expect the name of Jesus to be mentioned. Indeed, from late Christian *defixiones* we see how important it was to make use of Jesus’ name in curses of this type (see for example the famous curse from Tragurium in Dalmatia *CIL* III p. 961).<sup>24</sup> Whatever the case, our text shows a notable familiarity with the Bible, confined precisely to the Hebrew canon. One should particularly note the use of the word *populus* with the meaning, *par excellence*, of a chosen people, the people of Israel, an exclamation more fitting for a Jew than a Christian.

The handwriting is representative of the new Roman cursive in a fairly developed form, which cannot be assigned to a period earlier than the sixth century. The great experts in Roman palaeography, Giorgio Cencetti and Giulio Battelli, consulted by Guarducci, date the document between the sixth and ninth century. One should perhaps prefer a period closer to the earlier date.

4. I present yet another fragment said to have come from somewhere along the *via Appia* a little to the north of Terracina. We saw and photographed it on June 7, 1987, in

<sup>21</sup> Then immediately afterwards (16: 3): *in desertum istud*.

<sup>22</sup> There are numerous references in Christian literature: for example, Ps. Vigil. Thaps. *Trin.* 12.55; Ambr. *Part.* 3.39; Ambr. *in psalm.* 36.58.5; 118.27 *serm*; 18.27.2; 18.29.3; Rufin. *Orig. in num.* 16.11 p. 271, 25; Aug. *epist.* 186.8; Isid. *expos. in num.* 33.1.

<sup>23</sup> It is missing in *JWE*.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Audollent (1904), CXXVIII, who regards the document as an amulet; in fact it is not a simple *defixio*, but is halfway between *defixio* and amulet. See too Solin (1968), 24.

a private house at Sabaudia. White marble fragment; fine grained. The right side seems to be intact. Rear smooth. Guiding lines (notwithstanding, the second letter of the first line does not reach up to the guiding line). Interpunct at the end of the first line. (16.5) x (11.5) x 2.5-2.8; letters height 3.2 (line 1), 4 (line 2), 2-3.8 (line 3).<sup>25</sup>

[- -]IC  
 [- -]ΦH  
 [- -]ΙΟΥΔΑΙΕΙC

The inscription seems to mention the word Jews in the nominative plural in the form Ἰουδαίῃς, a form not found elsewhere. But there are examples in Greek of other similar secondary forms, above all in the imperial period. Alternatively it could simply be a case of a secondary form in bad Greek; in the Greek of lower social classes in the imperial era, such variations are not rare. Granted that the right side is not entirely intact in this line, in which case the last letter could also be an *omega*, we might get a dative singular written mistakenly as Ἰουδαίῃ. In any case, I would want a sigma in the first place. In the second line there could be lurking, for example, a title like ἀδελφή or a name like Νύμφη, or perhaps rather something else, which would go well with the plural Ἰουδαίῃς. The inscription is datable, on basis of its letter forms, perhaps to the third century AD, but it could be a bit earlier or a bit later.

If our interpretation is correct, then the fragment clearly points to the presence of Jews in the Pontine area of Lower Latium in the mid-imperial period. The question remains open, though, whether the inscription was commissioned by a Jew or by a Jewish community.

Besides the material discussed above, we also have the letter of Gregory the Great (*epist.* 2. 6) in which he refers to a dispute with the Jews at Fundi.

There is a scarcity of evidence about Jews in the whole of Latium with the exception of Rome and Ostia. This lack of source material could, of course, reflect the actual state of affairs; yet, it seems quite improbable that there was no Jewish presence whatsoever in southern Latium. Above all, one may presume that they were present in coastal centres like Formiae or Minturnae. The lack of evidence depends, on the one hand, on chance, but on the other hand, on the fact that in earlier times, at the beginning of the imperial era, Jews did not have cemeteries of their own, but were buried with non-Jews. This, I believe, probably holds true for Rome as well, where Jewish inscriptions begin to appear only from the third century AD onwards. And if, for example, at Minturnae there is evidence of people originating in Syrian regions, there is no reason why Jews could not have also settled alongside them. Yet it is not always possible to distinguish, solely by the names of these people, between Syrians in general and Jews in particular, because names like *Martha* / *Marthana*, which we have already met for example at Aquinum, belong to a common Semitic strand and cannot be exclusively Jewish, as the onomastic documentation from the city of Rome demonstrates, where *Martha* often appears in

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<sup>25</sup> Mentioned in Solin (1995), 316, and (2003), 431.



evidently non-Jewish contexts.<sup>26</sup> The lack of evidence containing characteristics typical of Jewish epigraphy is a common feature of documents concerning Jews in Italy, including Rome, during the early imperial era. This lack is largely due to the fact that up until the first century AD the spread of Jewish settlements in Italy outside Rome – and in the western part of the Roman empire as a whole — was still limited; and epigraphic documentation begins to flow only later.<sup>27</sup> It is unlikely that there was no presence of Jewish individuals in Italian towns (for example, Jewish slaves certainly came into Italy, as can be concluded from the fact that they were part of the slave trade in the Hellenistic period — as is shown by the manumission documents from Delphi), but if they lived in isolation outside Jewish communities, they easily lost their religious identity. This brings with it two consequences of great significance: in funerary inscriptions of such individuals symbols and characteristics of Judaism do not appear, and practically without exception they lack any indication of origin as *Iudaeus*, which had become a religious rather than an ethnic indicator.<sup>28</sup> We would expect a slave, native of Judaea, to be counted among Syrian slaves in the Romans' normal linguistic practice. In fact, the term *Iudaeus* does not appear in Roman inscriptions, alongside very many cases in which slaves bear the ethnic *Syrus* or something similar, with a few exceptions: the well-known inscription from Aquileia of *L. Aiadius P.l. Dama Iudaeus port(it)or* of the late Republican era (*CIL* I<sup>2</sup> 3422 = *JJWE* 17), and another from Carnuntum of the third century (*AE* 2009, 1051), mentioning a [-] *Mulvius* [--] *domo Iudaeus [ne]gotians*. It is not impossible that both these individuals were originally from Judaea, and did not profess the Jewish faith. If this is the case, then *Iudaeus* took on here, exceptionally in the linguistic usage of non-Jews, a meaning that was purely geographical (we note that Jews were connected in the common opinion very closely with the land of Judaea. Dio 37.16.5-7, 1, calls the inhabitants of Palestine Ἰουδαῖοι and includes in this also the ἄλλοεθνεῖς).<sup>29</sup> If later *Iudaeus* is often added in epitaphs after the name, it denotes belonging to the Jewish religious community, only seldom an origin from Judaea.

It is rather evident from Roman literature that the treatment of Near Eastern ethnics was careless and superficial. Typical in this respect are the rhetorical words of Cicero (*prov. cons.* 10): *Iudaeis et Syris, nationibus natis servituti* (Cicero renounces a clear differentiation between the various nationalities of the Syrian provinces). And a good example of how the Romans did not perceive the fine distinctions between various tribes in the Syrian regions, is offered by the giant Eleazar, a Jew whom Artabanus III gave to Tiberius (*Joseph. AJ* 18.103);<sup>30</sup> very probably the same man is mentioned by Pliny (*NH*

<sup>26</sup> See for example Solin (1983), 678, 681-2. Add to the list presented there *CIL* VI 856\* (genuine inscription). The same is true for many slave-trade centres in the Greek world, as Delos: see Masson (1971), 66-67.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. my discussion in Solin (1983), 610-613.

<sup>28</sup> On the concept *Iudaeus* cf. Solin (1983), 647-651.

<sup>29</sup> See Solin (1983) 612 sg. and (2002a), 170-171 (with bibliography). For another *domo Iudaeus* from Carnuntum see now Beutler and Kremer (2013).

<sup>30</sup> Ἀρτάβανος πέμπει Τιβερίῳ ... μετὰ πολλῶν δώρων, ἐν οἷς καὶ ἄνδρα ἐπτάπηχυν τὸ μέγεθος Ἰουδαῖον τὸ γένος Ἐλεάζαρον ὄνομα· διὰ μέντοι τὸ μέγεθος Γίγας ἐκαλεῖτο ('Artabanus sent to Tiberius ..., together with many gifts, among which he included a man seven cubits

7.74), who describes him as *procerissimum hominem Claudio principe Gabbaram nomine ex Arabia advectum* (*gabbārā* means 'large' in Aramaic, Pliny expression is therefore, inaccurate.<sup>31</sup> No surprise then that in Roman literature the phrases *Judaeus Syrus* and *Palaestinus Syrus* appear connected (Ov. *Ars Am.* 1.76 and 416 in an identical context).<sup>32</sup>

Since everywhere in the Hellenistic-Roman world the Jews used the Greek and Latin names that were common among the rest of the population, and — to a lesser extent — Semitic names, we are not in a position to distinguish between individuals whose origins lay in Judaea and those who professed the Jewish religion in the great corpus of Roman epigraphy (in both Greek and Latin). Then, from the third century, the situation changes: at Rome Jews begin to use the catacombs, which provide many funerary inscriptions with symbols and concepts that are characteristic of Judaism; and, in general, for the survival in Italy, it became essential to practice Judaism in a manner which was closely oriented towards that in Palestine. This was especially true after the catastrophe of the years AD 115-117, when the liberal Alexandrian Judaism stopped being a determining factor for the spiritual history, thus facilitating the isolation of the Jews, in whose communities shared funerary practices now began to spread, noticeable also in the content and symbolism of funerary inscriptions.

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tall, a Jew by race, named Eleazar, who on account of his size was called the Giant'). In the old Latin translation, the name of the man has received the form *Lazarum*.

<sup>31</sup> On this instance see Cichorius (1922), 421-2; Solin, (1983), 601-2.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. also cases like *CIL X 3546* (Misenum) *P. Babbius Maturus Syrus nation(e) Arabus*; *IGUR 590* Ἰαμουρ Ἀσαμου Σύρος Ἀσκαλωνεΐτης Παλαιστεινή.



Fig. 1: The inscription from Sperlonga (photo).

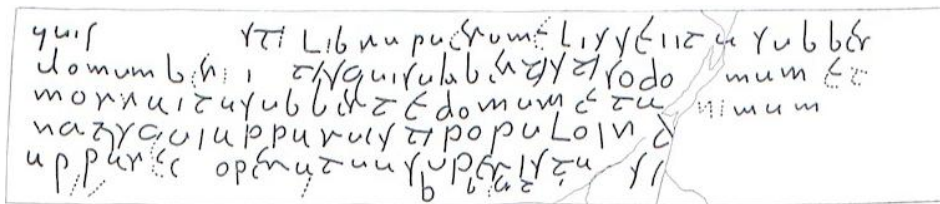


Fig. 2: The inscription from Sperlonga (drawing).

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University of Helsinki