

## Scalping in Roman Palestine —‘*minime Romanum sacrum*’?<sup>1</sup>

Guy D. Stiebel

*no head, no loot ...*<sup>2</sup>

The act of scalping involves the avulsion of the scalp from the skull. Scission with a knife roughly follows the outlines of the hair.<sup>3</sup> Other than the frontalis, temporalis and occipital muscles, the scalp lacks muscular tissues and therefore cutting along this line would have made possible easy defleshing.<sup>4</sup> This could have been carried out on dead or living opponents, as there are indications of successful healing from this trauma. North American native tribes had grades for scalps, the most desirable of all being that taken from ‘the place where the hair radiates from a point’.<sup>5</sup> Scalping ranks among the acts directed at the head of the enemy, such as beheading, the latter being widely considered as the ultimate evidence of killing an enemy.<sup>6</sup> Customarily, the removal of the scalp is similarly regarded as a proof of kill.<sup>7</sup> Among the Scythians, the more scalps possessed by a warrior, the greater the prestige he enjoyed.<sup>8</sup> Behind this behaviour stood a whole range of cultural implications. It is apparent that these spoils of war were of significance to their owner, either contributing to his social status or enhancing his powers as a warrior. On the other hand, there are societies in which the very act of mutilating the foe’s corpse is more significant, since it is intended to affect the fate of the victim’s soul or merely to humiliate him, thus establishing the scalper’s superiority. Clearly, these two motivations were often combined. As on modern battlefields, atrocities were at times simply the result of savage acts of revenge. Scalps also had ritual and magical significance which was important for social circles wider than that of the warriors, as discussed below.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Nothing could be less Roman’ Livy, 22.57.6 (trans. after Balsdon 1979, 247).

<sup>2</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, 4.64 (trans. de Selincourt), Hammondsworth, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> In North America the natives used a special knife for scalping, manufactured in Sheffield, UK, and provided by the Europeans (Ortner and Putschar 1985, 93). Much earlier evidence indicates that in prehistoric Arizona bifacially flaked stone tools were used for scalping (Allen, Merbs and Birkby 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Cut-marks characteristic of scalping have been revealed on the frontal bone of a neolithic cranium from Sweden (3000 BC) (During and Nilsson 1991). These authors note that there are Indian skulls with well-documented scalping cut marks in the Smithsonian Institution (*ibid.*, 115). For the treatment following the defleshing, see the passage of Herodotus quoted below, n. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Ortner and Putschar 1985, 93; Merbs 1989, 177-8.

<sup>6</sup> Proof of a kill: Yadin 1963, 260.

<sup>7</sup> Ortner and Putschar 1985, 94.

<sup>8</sup> See below.

The practice of skull defleshing is recorded for a cranium dated as early as the Middle Pleistocene (0.5–0.2 million years BP).<sup>9</sup> Scalping is attested in the Old and New Worlds, both pathologically and historically, from the mid-first millennium BC.<sup>10</sup> Pathological occurrences have been attributed to both accidents and intentional violence. Here we shall focus upon the latter, as attested in the Graeco-Roman world. This analysis is based on historical data, since, to date, no physical evidence, aside from one instance in Germany, can be assigned to a Graeco-Roman context.

Scalping was not alien to the classical Levant. During the Hellenistic period in Palestine, we read in 2 Maccabees of the martyrdom of a Jewish mother and her seven sons.<sup>11</sup> Refusing to eat pork, her first and second sons were quickly doomed:

The king in his rage orders that pans and cauldrons be heated red hot. They were heated at once, and he ordered that the tongue of the spokesman should be cut out, and that they should scalp him in the Scythian manner and cut off his extremities, while the rest of his brothers and his mother were looking on. ... When the first one had died in this way, they brought the second to be mocked. Then they tore off his scalp with the hair and asked him: will you eat, or else have your body dismembered limb from limb? He however replied in the mother tongue, and said: Never ...<sup>12</sup>

In this case, it is evident that the scalping was inflicted as an act of punishment. As mentioned above, this practice was inherited from the Scythians. Herodotus elucidates this association, providing us with a detailed account of the motivation for scalping and the way scalps were processed:

The heads of all enemies killed in battle are taken to the king; if he brings a head, a soldier is admitted to his share of the loot; no head, no loot. He strips the skin off the head by making a circular cut round the ears and shaking out the skull; he then scrapes the flesh off the skin with the rib of an ox, and when it is clean works it in his fingers until it is supple, and fit to be used as a sort of handkerchief. He hangs these handkerchiefs on the bridle of his horse, and is very proud of them. The finest fellow is the man who has the greatest number. Many Scythians sew a number of scalps together and make cloaks out of them, like the ones peasants wear, and often, too, they take the skin, nails and all, off the right hands and arms of dead enemies and use it to cover their quivers with — having discovered the fact that human skin is not only tough, but white, as white as almost any skin. Sometimes they flay a whole body, and stretch the skin on a wooden frame which they carry around with them when they ride.

<sup>9</sup> White 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Ortner and Putschar 1985, 92-4.

<sup>11</sup> On the history of the story in Jewish and Christian literature, see Gutman 1949; Kahana 1937, 198-9 (notes). The truth of the story is less relevant to our discussion, as it appears to demonstrate that scalping as a punishment was known to the author (see next note for references in the rabbinical sources and the Apocrypha).

<sup>12</sup> II Maccabees, 7:3-4, 7, trans. S. Tedesche, New York, 1954; for other versions in the Apocrypha, see IV Maccabees 9:28, 10:7; and III Maccabees 7:5 and Josippon, chapter 15. Several traditions of the story are found in rabbinical sources: *bGittin*, 57b; *Eicha Zuta* 21; *Jalkut Shimeoni*, *Eicha* B 1029; *Eicha Raba*, A, chapter 50; *Midrash Eicha* A, 420; *Eliyahu Raba* 30; *Jalkut Shimeoni*, Ki Teze, 26; *Pesikta Rabbati* 49; *Midrash Ten Commandments* 17. When references are made to a Caesar, it appears to be Hadrian.

They have a special way of dealing with the actual skulls — not with all of them, but only those of their worst enemies: they saw off the part below the eyebrows, and after cleaning out what remains stretch a piece of rawhide round it on the outside. If a man is poor, he is content with that, but a rich man goes further and gilds the inside of the skull as well. In either case the skull is then used to drink from. They treat the skulls of their kinsmen in the same way, in cases where quarrels have occurred and a man has been beaten in fight in the presence of the king. When important visitors arrive, these skulls are passed round and the host tells the story of them: how he defeated them — all of which passes for a proof of courage.<sup>13</sup>

Scythian art lavishly illustrates these traditions. A golden plaque from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, excavated in a tumulus tomb near Kerch (Pantikapaion) in 1830, portrays a snake-legged winged goddess grasping a bearded severed head.<sup>14</sup>

With regard to the Roman period, there is not, to the best of my knowledge, a single literary reference to scalping, in either military or civil sources. This is not to say that scalping was unknown in the Roman Empire. Recently, during the excavations of a Roman villa in Regensburg-Harting (Germany), clear evidence of the scalping of the local inhabitants by German warriors was unearthed.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, head-hunting was customary in the ranks of the *auxilia*, and presumably also occurred, though to somewhat lesser extent, among the legions.<sup>16</sup> However, officially, the treatment of the foe's head appears to have been restricted to the act of beheading, for which there seems to be ample evidence. Nonetheless, indirect sources, such as Jewish rabbinical literature, contain several references to Roman soldiers performing scalping which have not yet received appropriate attention. Several rabbinical sources mention, in detail, the process of defleshing of scalps and also provide their version of the motivation underlying this gruesome behaviour.

In Jewish tradition, one of the most traumatic episodes was the dire persecutions following the Bar Kokhba revolt.<sup>17</sup> The Jews, as reflected in the rabbinical sources, saw the religious prohibitions as a deliberate Roman effort to suppress Jewish identity, or, more likely, to restrain Jewish nationalistic spirit. Some of the Romans' severest actions were directed against the leading religious authorities. The Gemara names several Sages who were martyred during Hadrian's persecutions. In the following centuries the names of more Sages are mentioned as martyrs; their collection by the *Merkavah* school gave rise to the late tradition of the Ten Martyrs, which is also to be found in the *Hekhalot*

<sup>13</sup> Herodotus, 4.64-5.

<sup>14</sup> Piotrovsky, Galanina and Grach 1987, Pl. 203. Discussing the Scythian quiver, Vos writes: 'from the top of the larger case there is practically always a flap hanging, made of fur ... or thin leather ... which serves probably only as an ornament' (Vos 1963, 49-50 and 50 n. 1). Vos discusses here artistic representations of the quiver. Hence, this flap may be in fact the flayed human skin noted by Herodotus as used by the Scythians for quiver construction.

<sup>15</sup> Osterhaus 1984; Schröter 1984; Alt, Vach and Pichler 1992. I thank Stefanie Hoss for drawing my attention to these references.

<sup>16</sup> For beheading during battle see Goldsworthy 1996, 271-6. Artistic representations of decapitation are discernible on: Trajan's Column (Scenes XXV, LXXII, CXIII, CXLVII), the Great Trajanic Frieze (Leander Touti 1987, 70-71, Pl. 32, 1-4) and the *Tropaeum Traiani* at Adamklissi (Metopes: VII, XXXI, LI).

<sup>17</sup> On the persecutions, cf. Oppenheimer 1982, 73-4 and note 83.

*Rabbati*.<sup>18</sup> Zeitlin demonstrated that the Ten Martyrs tradition does not correspond to a specific historical incident.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, in Jewish writings, the persecutions that resulted in the execution of the Sages have ever since been a symbol and example of Jewish martyrdom. One of these tales is still read in the service of the holiest day of the Jews — the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*).<sup>20</sup> According to the Gemara, one of the martyrs was Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha — he was scalped to death.<sup>21</sup> Rabbi Ishmael, we are told, was a handsome man, and the daughter of the Caesar lusted for him. Hence, she asked her father to keep him alive for her. Following his refusal, the daughter requested that the attractive face of the rabbi be saved. Consequently, he was scalped. The scalp was thereafter kept in the Imperial repositories at Rome.<sup>22</sup> The late *piyyut* (religious poem) that forms part of the prayers for the Day of Atonement, when describing the act, mentions the spot where the *tefillin* (phylactery) was placed. The head-*tefillin* is strapped to the forehead, a point through which the scalping knife cut. This artistic but faithful description manifests knowledge of the scalping process. It is difficult to assess whether this was based on common knowledge or Jewish folk stories passed down to medieval times.<sup>23</sup>

At any rate, from the Babylonian Talmud we learn that this act of head-hunting was not unique. Scalping appears to have been common in the ranks of the Roman army in Palestine:

Our Rabbis taught: If a [Roman] legion which passes from place to place enters a house, the house is unclean, for there is not a legion that does not have [on its head]<sup>24</sup> several scalps. And be not surprised at this; for R. Ishmael's scalp was placed upon the heads of kings.<sup>25</sup>

The deadly nature of the encounters between Romans and Jews led the Sages to declare unclean any house that has been visited by Roman legionaries. The reason given is straightforward — all legions appear to possess scalps. The scalps were associated with

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<sup>18</sup> Oron discussed the possibility of an early joint source for both the Ten Martyrs and the *Hekhalot Rabbati* (Oron 1980, 82). See also Dan 1980.

<sup>19</sup> Zeitlin 1945.

<sup>20</sup> The Ten Martyrs were included in the *Musaf* prayer of *Yom Kippur* (see below): 'Hearing Rabbi Ishmael lamenting, the tyrant's daughter turned her lecherous gaze upon his beauty and petitioned her father to spare the rabbi's life, but he refused. Rabbi Ishmael was flayed, suffering with great fortitude; he wept only when his executioners reached the place of the tefillin' (Birnbaum 1951, 842).

<sup>21</sup> 'And be not surprised at this; for R. Ishmael's scalp was placed upon the heads of kings' (*bHullin*, 123a, trans. E. Cashdan London, 1948, 685). A synoptic edition of the Legend of the Ten Martyrs contains ten known versions of the story. However, it should be emphasized that all follow the same outlines with minor variations.

<sup>22</sup> The involvement of the emperor's daughter in the story may have been an attempt to provide a rationalization for this unthinkable act, or to demonstrate the demonic and beastly nature of the Romans.

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that medieval Europe provides evidence of Visigothic, Anglo-Saxon and Frankish acts of scalping (Ortner and Putschar 1985, 93).

<sup>24</sup> For the versions בראש/בראשו see Rabinovicz 1897, 166.

<sup>25</sup> *bHullin*, 123a, trans. E. Cashdan, London, 1948, 685 (with modifications).

the heads of the soldiers. The parallel version of the *Tosefta*, which is included in the tractate that discusses the slaughter of animals for secular use, sheds more light on the reason for declaring a house unclean and directly associates the term קרקפלין (*karakeflin*) with human flesh:

... and all of them which one tanned or on which one trampled so that they are fit for use are insusceptible as meat are susceptible as hide. Except for the skin of man, which under all circumstances imparts uncleanness; on this basis they ruled: a legion which is passing from place to place — that which shelters it is unclean. You have no legion in which there are no scalps.<sup>26</sup>

The term used, in both the Babylonian Talmud and the *Tosefta*, to designate a scalp is *karakeflin* or *karakeflon* which was commonly linked by the commentators with the Greek word for head — κεφαλή.<sup>27</sup> Krauss suggested that the origin of the word may have been the Greek combination: *καρακεφαλή*, which is not attested in the Greek literature.<sup>28</sup> If this was the case, this idiom may express the combination of *κάρα* and *κεφαλή* — ‘the top of the head’, or the root *καρ-* (cf. *κείρω*, aor. pass. *ἐκάρην*) and *κεφαλή* — ‘cut off hair of the head’, both accurately reflecting the nature of the scalp.<sup>29</sup>

Still to be explained is the purpose for which the scalps were intended. The Roman soldiers, as attested in the Babylonian Talmud and the *Tosefta*, evidently prized scalps. Rashi commented on the text of the Babylonian Talmud that the cranium skin of a dead man was used by the Roman legionaries for sorcery, or served as a charm against danger in the field of battle.<sup>30</sup> The analysis of the crania from Regensburg-Harting (Germany) indicated that the scalpers favoured skulls of females over those of males, possibly owing to the difference in hair length.<sup>31</sup> Scalps were not merely regarded as trophies, but also appear to have had a more exclusive function in imperial ceremonial activities. The Babylonian Talmud states that scalps adorned the heads of kings.<sup>32</sup> A further and more

<sup>26</sup> *tShehitat Hullin* 8:16, trans. J. Neusner, New York, 179 (modified). For מאהיל, see *γSota* 9:23c; Lewy 1924, I, 35 s.v. אהל; Jastrow 1926, 20, s.v. אהל.

<sup>27</sup> In modern Hebrew, the noun קרקפת (*karkefet*) designates a scalp. For Syriac, see Krauss 1899, 571.

<sup>28</sup> Krauss 1899, 571. See also Lewy 1924, IV, 391, s.v. קרקפלין.

<sup>29</sup> An additional linguistic connection between Hebrew and the classical tongues can be deduced from the act of scalping. In several versions of the Ten Martyrs, we find that a scalp is referred to as קלסטר פניו (*klaster pa'nav*) — the *klaster* of his face. Dispute surrounds the origin of the word קלסטר. It is alleged to designate brightness or glare (זוהר, זוהר); hence the supposed source was the Greek *κρύσταλλος* and Latin *crystallum* (Jastrow 1926, 1379). However, in Mishnaic Hebrew we find קלסטר (*klaster*) as a sack of leather, which hung from the mule's head, a nosebag (or feedbag) (*mKelim*, 20:1). It is claimed to stem from the Greek *κάρταλλος* (Jastrow 1926, 1379-80; basket with pointed bottom, *LSJ*). It is easy to see the resemblance of a leather sack to the human face, which in a figurative sense indeed corresponds to a sack of skin. I should thus like to suggest that both terms originate in the same Greek word, *κάρταλλος*, denoting a sack-like figure (for an opposing view that suggests different origins for the two terms, cf. Krauss 1899, 548-9).

<sup>30</sup> *bHullin*, 123.

<sup>31</sup> Osterhaus 1984, 120.

<sup>32</sup> *bHullin*, 123a, trans. E. Cashdan, London, 1948, 685.

detailed account of such conduct is provided in the tract *'Aboda Zarah* (idolatry) of the Babylonian Talmud:

Said Rab Judah in the name of Samuel: They have yet another festival in Rome [which occurs] once every seventy years. Then a healthy man is brought and made to ride on a lame man; he is dressed in the attire of Adam, **on his head is placed the scalp of R. Ishmael**, and on his neck are huge pieces of fine gold to the weight of four *zuzim* ... and the proclamation is made before him: 'The reckoning of the ruler is wrong. The brother of our lord, the impostor! Let him who will see it see it; he who will not see it now will never see it. Of what avail is the treason to the traitor or deceit to the deceiver!'; and they concluded thus: Woe unto the one when the other will arise.<sup>33</sup>

Rashi interpreted the spectacle as symbolizing the struggle between Jacob, 'the lame man' (Israel), and Esau, 'the healthy man' (Rome).<sup>34</sup> The warning at the end of the citation is addressed to Israel for whom the rising of Rome would be 'fraught with trouble'.<sup>35</sup> However, modern scholars link this account with an actual historical event coinciding with the *Ludi saeculares*, the secular games celebrated in Rome.<sup>36</sup> Lieberman referred the Talmudic reference to a proclamation, validated by independent literary sources, made by a public crier announcing the spectacle.<sup>37</sup> Rapoport offered a specific historical context for the event, correlating it with the spectacle that took place in the late third century AD.<sup>38</sup> According to him

... Samuel here presents an account which reached him of one of the *Ludi Saeculares*, the spectacular carnivals and pompous pageants, of which altogether ten are known to Roman history. This one must have been arranged by the Roman Emperor Philippus, about 247 C.E., who introduced into the pageant the spectacle of a halting dancer ridden upon by a strong man. This was intended to satyrise and discredit P's rival, Decius, who pretended to be a friend and 'brother' of the Emperor, yet had accepted the crown which P. fondly hoped would be handed to his own son. The exclamation 'let him who will see it etc.' alludes to the festivity which occurs but once in a lifetime. The fact that Samuel lived till 3 or 13 years after the date of these Games lends added plausibility to this interpretation.<sup>39</sup>

Rapoport notes that the healthy man, who was carried by a lame man, was dressed in leather garments and his head was adorned with a scalp. The scalp served as a replacement for the masks (*larvae*), which were used by performers during festive occasions.<sup>40</sup> He suggested that this may have been the customary Roman tradition during the *ludi saeculares*, according to which once in seventy years the Romans used flayed head-skins of executed royal personages, which were specially kept for this purpose. The use of the scalp of an important leader of an opposing nation, as described in the Jewish sources, adds another dimension to the function assigned by scholars to the act of scalping. It seems that such special festive occasions gave license to this horrid act, rather like the

<sup>33</sup> *b 'Aboda Zarah*, 11b, trans. A. Mishcon, London, 1935.

<sup>34</sup> Rashi, *bHullin*, 123a.

<sup>35</sup> Mishcon 1935, 58, note 4.

<sup>36</sup> Krauss 1948, 282-3. On the *ludi saeculares*, see *OCD*<sup>3</sup>, 1378, s.v. Secular Games.

<sup>37</sup> Lieberman 1994, 145, note 7; see Suet. *Claud.* 21.2; Herod. 3.8; Zos. 2.5.

<sup>38</sup> Rapoport 1852, 30-33, s.v. ט"א.

<sup>39</sup> This précis of Rapoport's Hebrew discussion follows Mishcon 1935, 58-9, note 4.

<sup>40</sup> Rapoport 1852, 31-2. For the *larvae*, see D&S, s.v. *Larvae*.

executions of enemy leaders during triumphs. The Roman world was certainly accustomed to brutality, as is well known from the bloody arena games. However, the total silence with regard to the act of scalping in the Latin sources takes on a different appearance when external sources are examined. From the texts cited above it emerges that not only did scalping take place as a civic punishment, but the Roman army was directly involved in the practice of scalping.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, and quite surprisingly, according to the Jewish sources, the soldiers who performed these acts were legionaries.

It may be argued that these sources were biased, for demonic presentations of Roman troops do appear elsewhere in rabbinical literature. Such an attitude is a common reaction of inhabitants of an occupied country to their oppressor. In view of the silence of the Latin sources, one might be inclined to dismiss the truth of the Jewish testimony.<sup>42</sup> However, the technical nature of the texts dealing with the scalping procedure seems to reflect actual familiarity with the act. Furthermore, the description of scalping can be added to a long list of brutal punitive acts directed by the Romans against the local population. The ruling relating to scalps falls into the category of 'incidental information'; hence it appears to overcome historiographic reservations such as the 'anti-Roman *Tendenz*' of the Jewish sources:

It goes without saying that rabbis offer us a description of the "legal" procedure in the Roman courts of Palestine, *not* as it ought to have been (according to the Roman laws) but as it was practiced in fact, legally or illegally. They recorded the actual "realia" of the Roman procedure.<sup>43</sup>

Of special interest is the correlation made in rabbinical literature between the Roman army and the act of scalping through the issuing of a specific law. This *halachah* was not intended to judge theoretical circumstances. Its subject is the practical matter of the purity of a house into which Roman soldiers had entered, a common event in Roman Palestine.

Since the Jewish sources specify legionaries as the perpetrators, it is worth determining whether the term לגיון (*legion*) indeed designated a Roman citizen unit, or had a more general meaning, denoting soldiers of no specific identity in the service of Rome — especially as this testimony certainly does not agree with the conventional concept of the relative violence of citizen soldiers and *auxilia* forces. True, in the late *Midrashim* (biblical homilies), put together from the fifth century AD onwards, the word *legion* is used to indicate soldiers in general. However, in the early rabbinical sources, the term *legion* appears to have been used in its original Latin meaning. Thus in the *Mishnah* we find the idiom לגיונות של מעצד (‘pickaxe of legions’), which clearly denotes the *dolabra* —

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<sup>41</sup> For Roman punitive institutions and details of torture in rabbinical literature and *Acta Martyrum*, see Lieberman 1944/5.

<sup>42</sup> Atrocities committed by Jewish rebels in Cyrenaica are described by Cassius Dio. In his account the Jews are accused of defleshing the skin of both Romans and Greeks and were reported to ‘wear their skin for clothing’, much like the Scythian custom cited above (*HR*, LXVIII, 32:1). See Stern 1980, 386 for a discussion and bibliography concerning these events. For martyr-literature as an underground and a resistance literature, see Balsdon 1979, 187-8.

<sup>43</sup> Lieberman 1944/5, 38.

standard legionary equipment.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, in the Babylonian Talmud the composition of the Roman army is given, the term *legion* being followed by *cohortis*. This classification suggests that the word *legion* denotes a unit rather than simply a group of soldiers in general.<sup>45</sup>

The Babylonian Talmud noted that ‘there is not a legion that does not have on its head several scalps’. The explicit mention of the head may shed light on the linkage of the wearing of scalps with the legion. Standard-bearers as well as musicians of the Roman legions wore animal skins that covered their heads and shoulders.<sup>46</sup> According to Vegetius, standard-bearers wore bearskin hoods.<sup>47</sup> Feline pelts are visible on the Louvre ‘Praetorians’ panel and the Great Trajanic Frieze,<sup>48</sup> and possibly also on Trajan’s Column. Was the custom of *pellis*-wearing by citizen soldiers the inspiration for the military donning of scalps?

If scalping was indeed committed by legionaries, it would be intriguing to examine Roman society’s attitude towards harsh violence in combat, particularly as the great majority of descriptions of savage behaviour on the battlefield appear to be linked with the *auxilia* rather than with the citizen soldiers. We may take the act of beheading as a case study. A browse through the artistic presentations mentioned above reveals that only auxiliaries were depicted severing heads. Such uniformity seems to agree with the official propaganda line which linked the *auxilia* with uncivilized behaviour. Roman historians often commented on the unrestrained nature of auxiliary soldiers.<sup>49</sup> There is of course a kernel of truth in this view; nevertheless, the Romans’ conduct was no less barbaric than that of their allied forces. Legionaries did commit acts that would have been considered less than virtuous by Roman standards. During the excavations at Valentia (Valencia), Spain, skeletal remains revealed that the local population was subjected to horrendous tortures and executions by Pompey’s legionaries.<sup>50</sup> Although rare, there are at least two historical references to legionaries decapitating their foes in the course of a battle.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the artistic convention attributing this act exclusively to the *auxilia* appears to be in accord with the biased ancient historical narrative.

Both the representational and the historical sources almost invariably followed the official line of denial of immoral behaviour by the citizen soldiers. The same picture reappears in Balsdon’s discussion of ritual murder in Rome.<sup>52</sup> Roman society was united in its opposition to human sacrifice, practised by some of its neighbours as well as by

<sup>44</sup> *mKelim*, 29:6; about the *dolabra*, see Fuentes 1991, 69, 73-4, 76, 81-2. For a seventh-century *dolabra*, see Stiebel 2003, 157, Pl. I.27:4.

<sup>45</sup> *bBerakoth*, 32b. Another example may be found in *yBerakoth*, 4:8a and *ibid.*, *Taanith*, 2:65c. A lament for destroyed Jerusalem notes that the city was ‘inherited by legions’, which is a faithful description of the conquest of the city by the Roman legions and the habitation of Aelia Capitolina by *Legio X Fretensis* during the second and third centuries AD.

<sup>46</sup> Trajan’s Column — scenes IV-V, X, XXII, XXVI, XXXVI, XLII, XLVIII, L, LI, LIII, LIV, LXI, LXIII, LXXV, XCVIII, CII, CIV, CVI, CXIII, CXXV, CXXXVII.

<sup>47</sup> Veg. II.16.

<sup>48</sup> Leander Touti 1987, Pls. 2, 9:1, 31.

<sup>49</sup> References to Tacitus’s viewpoint are made in Goldsworthy 1996, 272.

<sup>50</sup> Ribera i Lacomba and Calvo Galvez 1995.

<sup>51</sup> *BH* 32; Livy 24.15 – after Goldsworthy 1996, 272-3.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 245-8.



nations under its rule. However, although Pliny related to this practice as 'immanes et barbari mores', stressing the Roman virtues, Balsdon demonstrated convincingly that Roman actions proved the contrary.<sup>53</sup> The behaviour of the *auxilia* was different and often strange to the Romans, featuring several aggressive elements. As we have noted above, this presumably made it convenient for the ancient historians to associate the *auxilia* with acts that did not fit into the framework of reasonable behaviour according to Roman norms. During the siege of Jerusalem, a rumour concerning the swallowing of gold coins by the fleeing Jewish rebels resulted in the disembowelling of 2,000 deserters.<sup>54</sup> Although Josephus initially holds Arab and Syrian soldiers responsible, it becomes evident from the following paragraph that citizen soldiers also took part in this atrocity.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, on the basis of the current evidence, it is difficult to hold the legionaries solely responsible for the act of scalping.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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### Abbreviations

<i>AJPA</i>	<i>American Journal of Physical Anthropology</i>
<i>ASAE</i>	<i>Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte</i>
<i>b</i>	<i>Talmud Babli</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
<i>BH</i>	[Caesar] <i>Spanish Wars</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Midrash Genesis Rabbah</i> (Vilna)
<i>BV</i>	<i>Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter</i>
<i>D&amp;S</i>	Daremberg Ch., Saglio E., Pottier E. and Lafaye G., <i>Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines, d'après les textes et les monuments, contenant l'explication des termes qui se rapportent aux mœurs, aux institutions, à la religion, et en général à la vie publique et privée des anciens</i> , Paris, 1877-1919.
<i>ER</i>	<i>Midrash Eichah Rabbah Eshel Beer-Sheva II</i> – Blidstein G., Bonfil R. and Salmon Y., <i>Eshel Beer-Sheva II</i> , Studies in Jewish Thought, Beer-Sheva, 1980.
Herod.	Herodian
<i>HR</i>	Cassius Dio, <i>Historia Romana</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRMES</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies</i>

<sup>53</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, 30, 13 (4), trans. Jones W.H.S, London, 1963.

<sup>54</sup> *BJ* 5.551-61.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 554, 556-7.

<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
LSJ	Liddell, H.G. and Scott, R., <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie, Oxford, 1940.
<i>m</i>	<i>Mishnah</i>
Macr. Sat.	Macrobius, <i>Saturnalia</i>
NR	<i>Midrash Numbers Rabbah</i>
<i>OCD</i> <sup>3</sup>	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition, Hornblower, S. and Spawforth, A. (eds.), Oxford, 1996
Suet. Claud.	Suetonius, <i>Claudius</i>
<i>t</i>	<i>Tosefta</i>
Veg.	Vegetius, <i>Epitoma Rei Militaris</i>
<i>y</i>	<i>Talmud Yerushalmi</i> (Palestinian Talmud)
Zos.	Zosimus, <i>Historia Nova</i>

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