Of Audience and Meaning: Reading Josephus’ *Bellum Iudaicum* in the Context of a Flavian Audience

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Abstract

Applies research on ancient 'publication', as a local and social affair, to the question of Josephus' most immediate audiences -- those he envisaged meeting and reaching above all -- in Flavian Rome. Examines various kinds of evidence for his manner of producing the *Bellum* and encountering his audiences.
Josephus mentioned the Pharisees more often in the Antiquities-Life both to make amends with this group and perhaps also to commend the new Pharisaic-rabbinic leadership to some vaguely conceived "Roman authorities." The influential scholars who sponsored this view were Morton Smith, Jacob Neusner, Harold Attridge, and Shaye Cohen, among others. The other part of the explanation as to how Josephus could have been a Pharisee but failed to support them, or even maligned them (e.g., at AJ 13.400-32; 17.41-45): he borrowed, with allegedly typical cloddishness, material that was actually.

Actually, insofar as he is writing for a Roman audience, Josephus may provide us with similar access to Roman elite perspectives. As to the account of Titus’ war council, I agree that it does not literally mirror reality, but similar to Mattern’s argument concerning Herodian’s report of Commodus’ war council, I suggest that Josephus’ report, in a more general sense, may reveal patterns of thought among Titus and his commanders.

On this, compare the views of, for example, S. Mason, “Of Audience and Meaning: Reading Josephus’ Bellum Iudaicum in the Context of a Flavian Audience,” in Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome and Beyond ed.