

Diversity and Rabbinization

Jewish Texts and Societies
Between 400 and 1,000 CE

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8. THE *DIDASCALUS* ANNAS: A JEWISH POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL FIGURE FROM THE WEST

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The territory of the Romans has been occupied by foreign peoples and rebels and handed over to those who have surrendered themselves under the guise of peace. We see barbarian nations, and particularly the Jews, living among us, mixed into our armies, our cities, and our provinces, but they do not adopt our customs. And the prophets proclaim that these events are the last days.

Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* 2.3¹

On 10 March 418, the consistory of the imperial palace at Ravenna decided to expel the Jews from the army (*militia armata*). They had to remove their military belt—the *cingulum militiae* which distinguished members of the imperial bureaucracy from the civilians—and no previous merit would plead in their favour. In other words, since the exclusion was not a disciplinary measure, its lawfulness could not be contested. The Jews in the palatine administration (*militia palatina*) were also targeted, as were those who served as *agentes in rebus*, a powerful and fearful body of provincial inspectors whose members, serving directly under the responsibility of the *magister militiae*, enjoyed immunity.

1 Sulpicius Severus, *Chroniques*, ed. by Ghislaine de Senneville-Grave (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1999), 228–29.

The entrance to the State Service shall be closed from now on to those living in the Jewish superstition who attempt to enter it. We concede therefore to all those who took the oath of the Service, either among the Executive Agents or among the Palatines, the opportunity to terminate their service on its statutory term, suffering the deed rather than encouraging it, though what we wish to be alleviated at present to a few shall not be permitted in the future. As for those, however, who are subjected to the perversity of this nation and are proven to have entered the Military Service, we decree that their military belt shall be removed without any hesitation, and that they shall not derive any help or protection from their former merits. Nevertheless, we do not exclude Jews educated in the liberal studies from the freedom of practicing as advocates, and we permit them to enjoy the honor of the curial liturgies, which they possess by right of their birth's prerogative and their family's splendor. Since they ought to be satisfied with these, they should not consider the interdiction concerning the State Service as a mark of infamy (*Codex Theodosianus* 16.8.24).²

Apparently, some Jews affected by this imperial constitution protested. The text of the constitution shows some trace of these protests. The debate in the consistory, in the presence of Emperor Honorius—or, rather, before the *de facto* ruler of the empire, General Flavius Constantinus—and of the *praefectus praetorio* Palladius, resulted in the following decisions: the Jews “should not consider the interdiction concerning the State Service as a mark of infamy” affecting their civic rights;³ the Jewish aristocracies in the cities were thereafter permitted to pursue municipal careers, holding positions in the curias and working as lawyers; at the imperial level, the Jewish palatine obtained a reprieve from these exclusionary measures: they could continue to serve in civil militias until their *stipendium* (service) expired.

2 *Theodosiani libri XVI: cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*, ed. by Theodor Mommsen, 2 vols. (Berlin, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1905); translation by Amnon Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 281–82.

3 Ibid

It is difficult to assess the number of people affected by these exclusions. Outside the legal sources, the literary and epigraphic sources from the Western Roman Empire rarely mention Jewish military or administrative staff.⁴ The scarcity of the sources tends to show that Jewish staff members were relatively few in number compared to pagan and Christian staff.⁵ Nevertheless, there must have been a sufficiently large number of them, since they held both imperial and civic responsibilities.⁶

The blow delivered by the March 418 constitution was harsher than previous measures of exclusion. In our opinion, this harshness can be explained by two events in particular.

A month before, from 2–9 February 418, the Jewish aristocracy of the city of Magona in Minorca had suffered a serious humiliation, revealing the vulnerability of the community on the island.⁷ Bishop Severus had sent a Christian mob from the city of Jamona to attack the synagogue where the Jews had taken refuge. The crowd, spurred by the arrival of the relics of Stephen the Protomartyr, which had been transported from

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- 4 Jerome, an anonymous anti-Jewish polemic, and Pope Gelasius mention Jewish *clarissimi*. It means that these Jews were (or had been) high-ranking officials. See Jerome, *Commentarium in Isaiam* 66.20 (*Patrologia Latina* 24.698); Pseudo-Augustine, *De Altercatione Synagogae et Ecclesiae Dialogus* (*Patrologia Latina* 42.1131–40); *Canones Gelasio ascripti* (*Patrologia Latina* 59.146). The passage from the *Chronica* of the Aquitanian nobleman Sulpicius Severus (cited above), despite its polemical tone, provides evidence that there were Jews in the Western *militia armata*, i.e., soldiers, typically described as 'barbarians'.
 - 5 See Raban Von Haehling, *Die Religionszugehörigkeit der hohen Amtsträger des Römischen Reiches seit Constantins I* (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1978); Timothy D. Barnes, 'Statistics and the Conversion of Roman Aristocracy', *Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995): 135–47.
 - 6 Capucine Nemo-Pekelman, 'The Involvement of Jews in Municipal Life during the Late Roman Empire', in *In the Crucible of Empire: The Impact of Roman Citizenship upon Greeks, Jews and Christians*, ed. by Katell Berthelot and Jonathan Price (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 249–65.
 - 7 Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, ed. by Scott Bradbury (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 4–5.

Jerusalem by the Spaniard Orosius, violently forced the Jews to abjure Judaism.⁸ No doubt Ravenna knew of these unprecedented events. The official from the synagogue, Theodorus, was also the patron of Magona. One of his brothers, Caecilianus, had been elected *defensor civitatis*. In addition, another brother, Meletius, was married to Litorius' daughter Artemisia. Litorius was the former governor (*praeses*) of *Hispania Tarraconensis*. In March–April 418, when Severus wrote the letter relating the events in Minorca, Litorius had just been promoted by the chancery, as he had become count (*comes esse dicitur*).⁹ The fate of this converted Hispanic Jewish family may have weakened the position of the Jews in the imperial administration and the army who did not convert.

There is a second factor that may explain the purge of 418. In 415 and 416, synagogue communities had won significant judicial and legal victories in Ravenna. These victories were all the more remarkable because their opponents were Nicene Christians and because the lawsuits involved conversion, a burning issue since the time of Constantine. One name stands out in particular: the *didascalus* Annas, who appears as the principal actor in these Jewish victories. To properly measure the importance of Annas's victories, I will describe them in detail. Then I will hypothesize about his political career, his place in the Jewish community, and his cultural and intellectual profile.

8 Victoria Leonard, 'The Origin of Zealous Intolerance: Paulus Orosius and Violent Religious Conflict in the Early Fifth Century', *Vigiliae Christianae* 71 (2017): 261–84; Carlo Ginzburg, 'The Conversion of the Jews of Minorca (AD. 417–418)', in *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 25–33; Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 103–05.

9 Severus, *Letter*, 115 (*Epistula* 24.2).

1.0 Annas's Victories in Ravenna on the Issue of Conversion

Annas's name appears for the first time in an imperial constitution of 6 November 415 (*Cod. Theod.* 16.9.3), which is addressed directly to him, in support of leaders (elders) of one or more synagogue communities.

In 415, one or more synagogue communities complained of what they considered to be judicial harassment, for which they accused members of the Nicene clergy. The ecclesiastics accused Jewish property owners of converting slaves who had been placed under their *mancipium* to Judaism. However, as Annas argued before the chancellery in Ravenna, these accusations were slander:

The two emperors and *augusti* Honorius and Theodosius to the *didascalus* Annas and to the Elders of the Jews.

We command that, with no slanderous accusations, the Jewish masters be permitted to possess Christian slaves, on condition, however, that they allow them to observe their religion. Provincial judges should therefore know that after having investigated the legality of the confiscations, they must stamp out the insolence of those who, with the appropriate supplications, have acted in such a way that they [the Jews] have been falsely accused. We also command that all surreptitious rescripts that have been or should in future be obtained by fraud be considered invalid. Anyone who acts against this law will suffer chastisement as if it were sacrilege (*Cod. Theod.* 16.9.3).¹⁰

To understand this imperial constitution, we must go back to the sources of the restrictive regime imposed upon Jews regarding the possession of slaves.¹¹ Since the era of Constantine, there had been significant production of legislation, Christian in inspiration,

¹⁰ My translation. See Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, 272–74.

¹¹ Giovanni de Bonfils, *Gli schiavi degli ebrei nella legislazione del IV secolo* (Bari: Facoltà giuridica dell'Università, 1992); Capucine Nemo-Pekelman, *Rome et ses citoyens juifs* (Paris: Champion, 2010), 141–55.

against Jewish *mancipium* over Christians and in particular over slaves. The insistence upon this subject throughout the fourth century (a century later, the Theodosian Code even dedicated a special title to it) leads us to believe that Jewish property owners considered slaves a potential pool of new converts to Judaism. These measures permitted the confiscation of slaves, Christian or not, who had undergone circumcision, as well as Christian slaves who had recently been purchased or obtained as a donation. The law of Constantius II of 13 August 339 returned to the traditional solution and proclaimed that slaves would be confiscated by the state.

This legislation therefore offered slaves the hope of escaping their masters to become slaves of the state. The conditions that they had to meet in order to benefit from these measures were broad, since they concerned not only those who had undergone circumcision, but also those who asserted that they had recently been purchased by a Jew while they were Christian, even if they had not been converted, and those who said that they had undergone conversion to Judaism with or without being circumcised, even if they had long been part of the property of the Jewish *dominus*.

Therefore, slaves were required only to denounce their masters, which was tempting! According to Annas, the legislation of Constantine led to numerous illicit confiscations on the basis of false accusations. Using the rescript procedure, public and ecclesiastical accusers had requested that slaves be confiscated.

It should be noted how the rescript procedure worked.¹² Under this procedure, rather than presenting a *libellus* of accusation to the offices of the provincial governor, an accuser would instead submit his case to the imperial chancellery. He explained the nature of the lawsuit through supplication or prayer. Only the legal matter was presented; verifying the truth of the facts was reserved for a later examination by the provincial judge. Assuming that they obtained a favourable rescript, supplicants then had to initiate court proceedings by means of the *editio rescripti*.

12 Edouard Andt, *La procédure par rescrit* (Paris: Sirey, 1920).

The governor of the province had to verify the accuracy of the allegations in the supplication and, if these facts were verified, would hand down a sentence known as *ex sanctione rescripti*.

The chancellery, convinced by Annas's arguments, judged that the favourable rescripts that had been obtained were surreptitious, i.e., they had been granted based on deceitful information. Provincial governors were accused of not verifying whether the conversions had actually taken place and of being guilty, therefore, of perverting justice. The constitution of 6 November 415 thus decreed the annulment of such surreptitiously obtained rescripts. Even if the fight against slander was always a state priority,¹³ Annas obtained a remarkable victory on a subject as crucial for the Church as the struggle against converting pagans and Christians to Judaism.

The following year, Annas won a new lawsuit against ecclesiastical adversaries.

The same two *augusti* to the *didascalus* Annas and the Elders of the Jews.

It has been established both by previous constitutions and our own that, if we learned that in order to escape criminal accusations or various other charges, men of the Jewish religion desired to associate themselves with the assembly of the Church, this would not be done out of devotion to the faith, but by dissimulation. Consequently, judges in the provinces where such acts are reported to have been committed should know that they must respect our rules, such that those for whom it has been established that they adhere to this cult without persisting in the profession of their religion and without being filled with the faith and the mysteries of venerable baptism, it is permitted to return to their own faith, as this is of greater value for Christianity (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8.23).¹⁴

Jewish individuals used the right of asylum in churches to escape criminal accusations. We do not know whether the accusers were

13 Yann Rivière, *Les délateurs sous l'Empire romain* (Rome: École française, 2002), 355–81.

14 My translation. See Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, 275–76.

Jews or not. In any case, Annas supported community leaders in the synagogue in requesting Ravenna to ask governors to use public force to extradite refugee Jews. This was another success, as the chancellery condemned the practice and ordered the removal of those who sought refuge in a church.

Certainly, since the reign of Emperor Theodosius I (r. 379–395), imperial authority tended to restrict the scope of the Christian right of asylum, and the constitution could be explained in this way. It is nevertheless true that this decision could not be taken for granted, as it involved returning Jews who had converted to Christianity to their communities of origin, even if they had already received the sacrament of baptism.

Therefore, Annas won two victories involving the Nicene clergy on the matter of conversion to Judaism. He certainly benefited from a new political and religious climate in Ravenna following the fall of the *magister officiorum* Olympius. In August 408, after the assassination of Stilicho, Olympius, a staunch Nicene Roman, enacted a hostile policy against barbarians in the court of Ravenna and in the army. On 14 November 408, he had a constitution issued to purge the civil militias in the imperial palace of all staff “who disagree with us in faith and religion” (*Cod. Theod.* 16.5.42). A law of 15 February 409 targeted the local non-Nicene elites in the cities, forbidding them from serving as *defensores civitatis* (*Codex Justinianus* 1.55.8). However, after the fall of Olympius in 410, Emperor Honorius decided to pursue a more balanced policy towards Arians and pagans and returned non-Catholics to their positions, as the pagan Zosimus testifies:

Generidus was a barbarian by birth but of noble character, disposed to every virtue and quite above bribery. This man was still an adherent of the ancestral religion and would not hear of abandoning the worship of the gods. Now, a law had been introduced forbidding non-Christians to hold imperial office, and since, at the time it was passed, Generidus held military office in Rome, he resigned and remained at home. When his turn came, as one of the enrolled officers, to be summoned by the emperor to the palace, he said that there was a law which prevented him from holding office and anyone at all not respecting the Christian religion from being enrolled among

the officers. The emperor replied that, although the law applied to everyone else, it did not apply to one who had borne the brunt of so many dangers for the state, but Generidus replied that he could not accept this privilege, which was an insult to all those who had been unable to hold office because of the law. And he would not resume his office until the emperor was forced by a combination of shame and necessity to repeal the law and allow everyone to hold civil and military office regardless of his religious opinions (*Historia Nova*, 5.46.2–4).¹⁵

Beyond this immediate context, Annas's success leads us to believe that he benefited from powerful connections in the palace and chancellery of Ravenna, and that he himself held a certain amount of power. This is what I will show below.

2.0 Annas: Patron, *Didascalus*, and Author of the *Letter of Annas to Seneca*?

We must avoid trying to identify the geographic origin of the *didascalus* Annas using epigraphic sources. According to the survey conducted by David Noy, the name appears in the West only in Venosa (in the province of Apulia), in one or maybe two Greek epitaphs: on the fifth-century tomb of an "officer for life" (δία βίου) named Ana and on the fifth-century or early sixth-century tomb of Faustina, daughter of Ana (if this does not mean Anastasius).¹⁶ As for the title *didascalus*, it is found in Venosa on the early fifth-century tomb of a certain Jacob, father of the deceased Severa, but also in Rome and in Tarragona (province of *Hispania Tarragonensis*).¹⁷ In reality, the *didascalus* Annas is likely to have been from any city that was home to a Jewish community in Suburbicarian or Annonarian Italy, Illyria, Africa,

15 Zosimus, *New History*, trans. by Ronald T. Ridley (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1982), 123–24.

16 David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe, Volume 1: Italy (excluding the City of Rome), Spain and Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), no. 72 and no. 65 (hereafter *JWE* I).

17 *JWE* I, no. 48.

Hispania, or even Gaul—and epigraphic evidence shows that there were numerous Jewish households.¹⁸ The use of Greek cannot be used as evidence, since it is also found, although very rarely, on inscriptions in northern Italy.

On the other hand, we can state with certainty that Annas was staying in Ravenna in the years 415–416. By all appearances, he seems to have been a patron of the synagogue communities involved in the lawsuits. He personally supported the requests (supplications, prayers) of the officials of the synagogues to the chancellery, as the imperial responses were addressed specifically to him. The search for a patron was an absolute necessity for those involved in a lawsuit. Jewish epigraphy shows that synagogue communities sought a patron to defend their interests before palatine, provincial or civil authorities.¹⁹

In Augustine's *Confessions* (6.14), we find a progression that might have resembled the course followed by Annas and the officials in the synagogue. In the 380s, Augustine had left Africa to follow his protector Romanianus, "whom the grievous perplexities of his affairs had brought up to court" to the imperial capital of Milan. However, their stay was extended for several months. As Augustine's correspondence shows, while there, Romanianus had to count on the support of influential inhabitants of Milan to win his case.²⁰

It might be that Annas was able to find accommodation in Ravenna. There had been a local Jewish community there since the fifth century, as well as one eight kilometers south of the city in Classis. This port, which would become the largest port on

18 I.e., according to the *Notitia dignitatum*, the five dioceses of the praetorian prefect in Italy.

19 David Noy and Tessa Rajak, 'Archisynagogoi: Office, Title and Social Status in the Greco-Jewish Synagogue', *Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993): 75–93; Francesco Grelle, 'Patroni ebrei in città tardoantiche', *Epigrafia e territorio, politica e società. Temi di antichità romane*, ed. by Mario Pani (Bari: Edipuglia, 1994), 139–58.

20 See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), 112.

the Adriatic, opened the doors of Annonarian Italy to the Orient, Africa, and Spain.²¹ We may also suppose that Annas benefited from connections and support among palatine officials. As the March 418 imperial constitution shows, there were Jews in the offices of the chancellery who had probably arrived from Milan with other officials when the imperial court was moved in 402.

How to explain Annas's success in the chancellery in Ravenna? Did he have a political career in a city, like other Jewish patrons? In Minorca, Theodorus chose a municipal career, although as an official from the synagogue, probably an archisynagogue, he could have claimed immunity from *munera civiles*.²² This was certainly why he was successfully elected *defensor civitatis* by the civic community, Christians included. In the era when Severus was writing, i.e., at the beginning of 418, Theodorus then became patron of the city of Magona, and his brother Caecilianus succeeded him as *defensor civitatis*.²³ We can see that these Jews owed their political power to the fact that they had local careers. In the same way, in Venosa in southern Italy, the Jew Marcellus, *pater pateron* of the Jews, was also involved in municipal life. The citizens of Venosa designated him as their *patronus*.²⁴ It is possible that Annas also had a municipal career.

Another possibility is that he had a career in the imperial administration, either at the provincial level or in the imperial palace in Rome, Milan, or Ravenna. When they had the means to do so, citizens of cities preferred to take officials as patrons, even senior officials with *dignitas*, who were in the best position to defend them.²⁵ This second possibility seems less likely, as

21 Lellia Cracco Ruggini, *Gli ebrei in età tardoantica: Presenze, intolleranze, incontri* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2011), 228, no. 103; Michael Toch, *The Economic History of European Jews: Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 39.

22 On the strategies of choice employed by notable men from the synagogue, see Nemo-Pekelman, 'The Involvement of Jews in Municipal Life'.

23 Severus, *Letter*, 84–85 (*Epistula* 6).

24 *JWE* I, nos. 90 and 114.

25 See Francesco Grelle, 'Patroni ebrei in città tardoantiche', 139–58.

it seems that if Annas had been granted *dignitas*, the imperial constitution would have mentioned him with this title and not with the title of *didascalus*.²⁶

It is quite interesting to note that Annas presented himself to the authorities as a *didascalus*, literally, 'a teacher'. In fourth-century Rome, the title was also used by Christians. In western Jewish inscriptions, the titles *mathetes*, *mathetes sophon*, *nomomathes*, and *nomodidaskalos* are also found. The last is the exact equivalent of the title of Theodorus of Minorca, whom Severus called a *doctor legis*. As Scott Bradbury explains: "The variety of titles referring to teachers and students of the Law attests that study of the Law was a central activity for Diaspora Jews."²⁷ We know that, in the West, there were experts in the Law who did not carry the title of rabbi and who were totally foreign to the Talmudic scholars coming from the schools of Palestine.

Was he an official from the synagogue, just as Theodorus was the archisynagogue of the community in Magona? The addresses of the imperial constitutions of 415 and 416 are ambiguous. They may signify that Annas intervened as archisynagogue, along with the elders of his community, or that he was an outsider patron whose assistance was requested by the synagogue community.

In any case, among the teachers of the Law and the officials from the synagogue, Annas probably had a specific profile insofar as he belonged both to the Jewish world and apparently had the cultural, economic, and social capital to move successfully through the upper echelons of the imperial chancellery in Ravenna. This expert in Mosaic Law was therefore a member of the elite of the synagogue while at the same time he was, in a certain way, also a member of the political elite.

This conclusion leads me to associate Annas with the Jewish milieu that produced the famous *Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum*. It appears to be an apologetic work defending Jewish

26 In other constitutions, Jewish authorities (patriarchs in Palestine) are mentioned with the titles of their dignities. Cf. *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.8 and 16.8.22 (Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, 187 and 269).

27 Severus, *Letter*, 30–31.

religious practices against pagan and Christian critics: it stresses the great antiquity of Mosaic Law (from the Pentateuch) and emphasizes its conformity to the Roman legal system. Ever since its publication by Eduardo Volterra in 1930, numerous scholars have attributed this Western work, written in Latin, to a Jewish author.²⁸ Leonard Rutgers proves this in a particularly interesting manner by placing the work within the larger framework of Jewish and Christian attitudes towards the Torah from the end of the fourth century.²⁹

We can also associate Annas with the milieu that produced the *Incipit Epistola Anne ad Senecam de superbia et idolis*. This letter, the end of which is missing, begins with a panegyric to God, continues with an attack against those who believe that they can understand the mysteries of the world without God, and ends with a condemnation of the cult of idols. For this reason, it should be regarded as a treatise designed to carry the sympathy and favour of a pagan audience. Bernhard Bischoff, who discovered the letter and published the *editio princeps*, regards it as a "Jewish-apologetic missionary treatise" of the fourth century. The author may be Jewish, because he refers neither to Jesus nor to Christian theological ideas. The dating is taken from its linguistic characteristics. According to Bischoff, it was written before 325, as from the laws of Constantine onwards, Jewish missionary activities were banned.³⁰ Rutgers thinks it was possibly composed after 325, because some of the issues it addresses had previously been addressed by Lactantius in his *Divinarum Institutionum*, written at the beginning of the fourth century. Rutgers emphasizes that the biblical passages included in the letter address issues that are not typically Jewish,

28 Edoardo Volterra, *Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum* (Rome: Bardi, 1930).

29 Leonard V. Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 219–53. See also Cracco Ruggini, *Gli ebrei in età tardoantica*, 301–25.

30 Bernhard Bischoff, *Anecdota Novissima: Texte des vierten bis sechzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1984), 1–9.

but rather raise questions recognizable to non-Jews interested in popular philosophic discourse.³¹

The author of the work may have been a cultivated Jew who travelled in mixed intellectual circles. Peter Brown shows how, in cities such as Carthage, Rome, and Milan, the elites from the generation of Augustine shared a common discourse linked by the Greek ideal of *paideia*. The representatives of the Roman traditional religion debated philosophical and religious themes with Neoplatonists, Manicheans, and Christians.³²

The incipit of the letter refers to the name of Annas. According to Bischoff, the title does not designate the true author of the work, who is anonymous. In fact, this incipit would seem to indicate that Annas was a contemporary of Seneca and thus a man of the first century CE, either the first high priest of the newly formed Roman province of Judaea, who died around 40, or the Annas who was high priest from 62–68. However, Rutgers hypothesizes that only the name of the Stoic philosopher is apocryphal. Annas could therefore be the true author of the work. This Annas, who lived in the fourth century, chose to write a fictitious dialogue with the philosopher. Rutgers identifies him with the man mentioned in the imperial constitutions of 415 and 416.³³

In a certain sense, what I have said about Annas in the preceding lines may add to this hypothesis. His social and cultural profile seems to match. According to Rutgers, the work may be of uncertain Roman origin, and the Annas mentioned in the imperial constitutions may well have originated from the very important Jewish community in Rome. In particular, it seems that the concerns noted in the letter and in the imperial constitutions are similar. The letter talks about a pagan audience in an apologetic and missionary sense, and the matter leading to both imperial constitutions of 415 and 416 concerns cases of conversion.

31 Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome*, 255.

32 Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, chap. 7.

33 Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome*, 254.

Even if this identification depends on rather weak evidence, it is nevertheless likely that the authors of the *Collatio* and the *Epistola Anne ad Senecam* came from a western Jewish literary and political elite, to which the Annas of the imperial constitutions also belonged, a patron of the community, teacher of the Law, and a skilled politician.

In any case, what interests us in terms of the theme of this volume is that the events of 415–418 cast an unexpected light on the sociological and intellectual profile of Jewish elites from the western part of the Mediterranean, who appear as Romanized Jews “instructed in the liberal arts” (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8.24). Thus, as Rutgers notes, the difference between the political and social situation of western Jewish populations and the Jewish populations of Constantinople and the Hellenistic cities of the East—still very powerful in the fifth century, as we know from renewed archaeological research—may not have been as wide as we usually think.³⁴

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³⁴ Ibid., 256.

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