Between Historiography and Geography: Palestine's Territorial Extent and Political-Administrative Status in Classical through Late Roman sources

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Abstract: This paper examines how Classical, Hellenistic, Roman, and late Roman sources frame Palestine's boundaries and political identity. Close readings of key historiographical and geographical texts trace how ancient authors defined, delimited, and situated Palestine within the eastern Mediterranean. Across these sources, 'Palestine' consistently denotes a geographic designation extending beyond the littoral to substantial inland territories. At times, this continuity was obscured by Roman imperial strategies that installed client entities. The study clarifies the concept's historical development, challenges restrictive interpretations, and reaffirms its broader historical and geographical scope.

Keywords: Palestine; Classical sources; Hellenistic period; Roman period; Historical geography; Political identity

بين التأريخ والجغرافيا: امتداد فلسطين الإقليمي وموقعها السياسي–الإداري في المصادر من الكلاسيكية حتى الرومانية المتأخرة

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الملخص: تتناولُ هذه الورقةُ البحثيةُ كيفية تأطير المصادر الكلاسيكية والهلِّنستية والرومانية والرومانية المتأخرة لحدود فلسطين وهويتها السياسية، وتتتبع من خلال القراءاتِ الدقيقةَ للنصوص التاريخية والجغرافية الرئيسية كيفية تعريف الكُتَّاب القدامى لفلسطين وامتدادها الجغرافي وموضعها في شرق البحر الأبيض المتوسط. في هذه المصادر، تشير كلمة "فلسطين" في أغلب الأحوال إلى تسمية جغرافية تمتد إلى ما وراء الساحل لتشمل مناطق داخلية واسعة، وهي التسمية التي حجبتها أحيانًا استراتيجيات الإمبراطورية الرومانية التي نَصَّبَتْ كياناتٍ تابعةٍ لها. وتوضح الدراسة التطور التاريخي للمفهوم، وتتحدى التفسيرات التقييدية له، وتؤكد على نطاقه التاريخي والجغرافي الأوسع.

الكلمات الدالة: فلسطين؛ المصادر الكلاسيكية؛ العصر الهلنستي؛ العصر الروماني؛ الجغرافيا التاريخية؛ الهوية السياسية.

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Despite the abundance of Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman sources that reference the southern Levant, modern scholarship still lacks a comprehensive, critically grounded examination of Palestine's geographic identity across these eras. This study addresses this gap by asking: how did these sources define and represent 'Palestine' in terms of its geographic boundaries and political character, and how did such representations evolve under shifting imperial and administrative structures, particularly with the creation of client polities such as 'Judaea'? To answer this question, the study adopts a historical-analytical method based on close examination of literary sources and, to a lesser extent, documentary evidence from the relevant periods. The approach involves the systematic translation, contextualization, and interpretation of original Greek and Latin texts from classical historiography and geography, supplemented by documentary materials, particularly papyri.

These sources provide critical insights into the geographic, political, and cultural frameworks of the eastern Mediterranean during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The gathered data were organized chronologically, geographically, and thematically, and then analyzed chronogically to identify discrepancies, challenge inherited assumptions, and expose ideologically driven reinterpretations in both ancient and modern narratives. Through this integrated approach, the study aims to produce a coherent, evidence-based reconstruction of Palestine's historical identity across the Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods.[1]

1. Pre-Classical Conceptions of the Southern Levant: Mapping Early Landscapes

The ancient Egyptians referred to the region encompassing present-day Israeli-occupied territories, the Palestinian territories, and parts of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon as Canaan.[2] The military records of Thutmose III, dated to around 1479 B.C., mention a number of cities located within the geographical area that broadly corresponds to the southern Levant, many of which are later attested in the Old Testament. These include Gaza, Gazru, Jaffa, Ono, Megiddo, Qadesh, and Magdala. Such references confirm that

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[1] The study will trace every occurrence of the name 'Palestine/Syria Palaestina' (Παλαιστίνη/Palestina) in the classical Greek and Latin corpus, from Herodotus through Hellenistic and Roman sources, down to the late-antique administrative divisions. Because the primary aim here is historical geography, not all attestations were treated equally. Only those passages permitting an explicit 'geographical reading' were adopted as evidence, defined as containing one or more of the following indicators: (1) delineation of boundaries, regional adjacency, or orientation; (2) clear topographic references (Jordan, Dead Sea, Gaza, Ashkelon, etc.); (3) road junctions, travel routes, measured distances, or area statements; (4) administrative-fiscal or regional subordination markers (provinces, satrapies, provincial subdivisions); (5) environmental or economic descriptions that can be spatially anchored. References that were purely rhetorical, ethnographic, or narrative in character – without verifiable spatial content – were employed only as interpretive context, not as direct geographical data. Given the differing literary genres, priority was assigned first to 'scientific-cartographic' materials (geographies, itineraries, administrative lists), then to historians where a precise locational determination was possible; authors such as Josephus were read through a critical filter separating ideological identity-claims from the requirements of spatial description.

[2] According to the Old Testament, the region was inhabited by the *Kināḫni* (the Canaanites), or 'people of the lowlands', as early as 1700 B.C., well before the migration of the Israelites into it; see *Genesis* 24:3–7; 38:2; *Exodus* 3:8, 17; 13:3; *Numbers* 14:43–45; 21:1–3; *Judges* 1:1, 5, 17, 28, 29, 30, 32. Moreover, the term *Kināḫni* or *Kināḫḫi* also occurs in the Amarna Letters to refer to the inhabitants of this region; see George Barton, 'Palestine before the Coming of Israel,' *The Biblical World* 28 (1906): 363.

these cities were in existence during that period and fell under Egyptian control.[1] Further valuable insights are provided by the Amarna Letters, which are correspondence sent by rulers of the Levant to Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten), who reigned between 1353/52 and 1336/35 B.C. These letters include reports from Canaanite rulers of several cities within the southern Levant, such as ʿAbdi-Ḫeba, ruler of Jerusalem; Zimredda, ruler of Lachish (Tell el-Duweir); and Yapahu, ruler of Gazru (modern Gezer, northwest of Jerusalem). Particularly significant are the letters written by ʿAbdi-Ḫeba which constitute the earliest known historical account of the city of Jerusalem, which was then governed by a Canaanite ruler operating under Egyptian suzerainty. Jerusalem served as the center of a vast region referred to as the 'Land of Jerusalem', much like other parts of the southern Levant were affiliated with major urban centers such as Gazru and Ashkelon.[2]

In the first year of the reign of Seti I (1294–1279 B.C.), the Egyptian pharaoh led a military campaign into the land of Canaan, during which he seized Yanoam and other cities.[3] When a rebellion broke out in the northern Galilee, he besieged Kadesh and Amurru, contending with the Hittites. His successor, Ramesses II (1279–1213 B.C.), successfully suppressed subsequent uprisings in the southern Levant and maintained Egyptian control and stability over the region throughout his reign.[4] At the beginning of the reign of Merneptah (1213–1203 B.C.), the uprising flared up again across the entire region. The well-known commemorative inscription, the 'Merneptah Stele', records the details of his campaign and lists several major cities in the region, such as Ashkelon, Gazru, and Yanoam. The stele also contains the earliest known mention of 'Israel', from which it can be inferred that this group of people was foreign and nomadic without a settled homeland, political entity, or urban center;[5] since the term 'Israel' appears in the text without a determinative (a classifier for places or peoples), indicating that they were

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[1] Max Müller, *Egyptological Researches, Results of a Journey in 1904* (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1906), 39–40 with plates 44–53; Donald Redford, *The Wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose III* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), passim.

[2] Barton, 'Palestine before the Coming of Israel,' 360–373. Cf. Nadav Naʾaman, 'The Contribution of the Amarna Letters to the Debate on Jerusalem's Political Position in the Tenth Century B.C.E.,' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 304 (1996): 17–27. See also Jacob Lauinger and Tyler Yoder, *The Amarna Letters, The Syro-Levantine Correspondence* (Columbus: Lockwood Press, 2025), and for more information about the Amarna Letters, see the two volumes: William Schniedewind and Zipora Cochavi-Rainey (eds.), *The El-Amarna Correspondence: A New Edition of the Cuneiform Letters from the Site of El- Amarna Based on Collations of All Extant Tablets* (Handbook of Oriental Studies 110) (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

[3] The source of this information is a stele currently housed in the Palestine Museum at Jerusalem. For the text and historical context, see James Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton–New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), 253. The stele was first published in Alan Rowe, 'The Two Royal Stelae of Beth-Shan,' *The Museum Journal, University of Pennsylvania* 20, no. 1 (1929): 88–98.

[4] Barton, 'Palestine before the Coming of Israel,' 370.

[5] Michael Hasel, 'Israel in the Merneptah Stela,' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 296 (1994): 45–61; Barton, 'Palestine before the Coming of Israel,' 372. Some scholars have argued that this group of people was still located in Egypt at the time of the campaign of Merneptah. Nevertheless, they agree that the term 'Israel' referred to a non-urbanized, non-national people; see Larry Bruce, 'The Merneptah Stele and the Biblical Origins of Israel,' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62 (2019): 463–493.

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regarded not as an indigenous nation or city-based society but as outsiders, which means a people without a land. This aligns with the biblical description of the Israelites as 'the sons of Israel', rather than permanent inhabitants of that territory.[1]

Inscriptions on the walls of the mortuary temple of Medinet Habu (on the west bank of the Nile across from Luxor) refer to the people known as the 'philistines', one of the so-called 'Sea Peoples' who invaded Egypt during the eighth year of the reign of Ramesses III (1186–1155 B.C.).[2] At that time, Egypt was subjected to a large-scale land and sea assault launched from the north and east by groups originating from the Aegean region, seeking permanent settlement in the fertile plains and rich pasturelands of the eastern Mediterranean. The Egyptian king, however, decisively repelled the invaders in two major battles: one fought on Egypt's eastern frontier, and the other at the mouth of the Nile. Following their defeat in Egypt, the 'Philistines' migrated northward into the Levant and established a permanent presence in the region extending from Gaza to southern Jaffa. This territory included the major coastal cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and came to be known as *Palastu* or *Pilista* in Assyrian and *Paleste* in Egyptian inscriptions, from which the later name 'Palestine' is probably derived.[3]

The name *Peleshet* appears eight times in the Hebrew Bible,[4] referring specifically to the land of the Philistines. Similarly, the ethnonym *Pelishtim* or *Pəlīštīm* (Hebrew:

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[1] It is particularly noteworthy that the Old Testament itself characterizes the people of Israel not as native inhabitants of the land, but as foreigners and sojourners. This self-perception is explicitly expressed in *Leviticus* 25:23: 'The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers.' This passage underscores a theological and legal understanding in which the Israelites' relationship to the land is conditional and non-possessive. Similarly, in *Deuteronomy* 26:5, the ancestral identity of Israel is framed as nomadic and alien: 'My father was a wandering Aramean,' a phrase traditionally interpreted as a reference to the patriarch Jacob. Together, these passages convey a persistent narrative within Israelite tradition that highlights foreignness, displacement, and divine sovereignty over the land, an understanding that resonates closely with how extra-biblical sources, such as the Merneptah Stele, depict the early Israelites as landless groups rather than established urban dwellers.

[2] Carl Ehrlich, *The Philistines in Transition: A History from ca. 1000–730 BCE* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East [= SHCANE] 10) (Leiden–New York–Köln: Brill, 1996); Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), s.v. Palestine. For the inscriptions and the historical context, see Trude Dothan and Moshe Dothan, *People of the Sea, The Search for the Philistines* (New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, 1992), 13–28.

[3] Giuliano Bonfante, building on a proposal first made by Jacobsohn in 1914 and later supported by Kretschmer in 1935, argued that the name *Philistines* (Greek *Palaistinoi*) is best understood as an Illyrian ethnonym derived from the placename *Palaeste*, attested in Epirus by both Caesar (*Bellum Gallicum* 3.6) and Lucan (*Pharsalia* 5.460). The suffix *-ino-* is a typical Illyrian formation for ethnic names. Bonfante further notes that the root *Pal-* or *Pala-* appears frequently in Illyrian toponyms, strengthening the case for an Illyrian origin of the term. This interpretation offers an alternative to the more common Aegean hypothesis and situates the Philistines within the broader context of the Sea Peoples' migrations from the Balkans into the eastern Mediterranean. See Giuliano Bonfante, 'The Origin of the Philistines,' *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 29, no. 2 (1970): 96–103.

[4] *Exodus* 15:14; *Isaiah* 14:29, 31; *Joel* 4:4 (Eng. 3:4); *Psalms* 60:10; 83:8 [Heb. 7]; 87:4; 108:10 [Heb. 9]. These verses employ *Peleshet* as a geographical term and often associate it with themes of divine judgment, military conflict, or foreign nations.

פְּלִשְׁתִּים) – meaning 'Philistines' – occurs 287 times throughout the text.[1] In the 1611 King James Version of the Old Testament, the Latinized form *Palestina* appears four times.[2] In the Septuagint, the proper noun Φυλιστιείμ appears only rarely.[3] In most other occurrences, however, the Septuagint renders the Hebrew *Peleshet* not as a proper noun but with a general term – typically 'the nations' or 'foreigners' – denoting non-Israelite peoples residing in the Promised Land.[4] This translation choice shows how the Jewish exegetes in Hellenistic Alexandria viewed the Philistines. According to Jewish religious belief, the land was a gift from God to the people of Israel, so anyone else living there – no matter their origin or history – was considered a foreigner. From a historical perspective, the Philistines were migrants who arrived from the Aegean and settled along the southern Levantine coast. However, Jewish religious tradition presents an interpretation of their origins; according to biblical texts, the Philistines were considered migrants from *Keretim* (Crete), as reflected in the Book of Zephaniah: 'Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Kerethites! The word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; I will destroy you so that no one shall be left.'[5] This theological interpretation of the Philistines as foreign settlers aligns with broader Jewish conceptions of territorial inheritance and ethnic belonging. In his retelling of the Exodus narrative, the Jewish philosopher Philo describes Moses as leading the Israelites 'as a colony into Phoenicia, and into the hollow Syria (Coele-Syria), and Palestine, which was at that time called the land of the Canaanites.'[6] This statement reflects Philo's understanding that ancient Canaan – the land promised to the Israelites – was

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[1] See for example, *Genesis* 10:14: 'from whom came the *Pelishtim*'; *Genesis* 26:1: 'Abimelech king of the *Pelishtim* in Gerar'; *Exodus* 13:17: 'by way of the land of the *Pelishtim.*'

[2] *Exodus* 15:14: 'The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.'; *Isaiah* 14:29a: 'Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken'; *Isaiah* 14:31a: 'Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou, whole Palestina, art dissolved'; *Joel* 3:4a: (Heb. 4:4a): 'Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestina?'.

[3] *Exodus* 15:14, LXX: ἤκουσαν ἔθνη καὶ ὠργίσθησαν· ὠδῖνες ἔλαβον κατοικοῦντας Φυλιστιείμ; *Judges* 13:1, LXX: καὶ προσέθηκαν ἔτι οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ ποιῆσαι τὸ πονηρὸν ἐνώπιον Κυρίου, καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς Κύριος ἐν χειρὶ Φυλιστιίμ τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη.

[4] In the Septuagint, the Hebrew term *Pelishtim* (פְּלִשְׁתִּים) is consistently rendered to the generic Greek term ἀλλόφυλοι, emphasizing the Philistines' status as outsiders to Israel. For example, in *1 Samuel* 29:1–3, LXX, we read: 'καὶ συναθροίζουσιν ἀλλόφυλοι πάσας τὰς παρεμβολὰς αὐτῶν εἰς Ἀφέκ, καὶ Ἰσραὴλ παρενέβαλεν ἐν Ἀενδὼρ τὴν ἐν Ἰεζραέλ. καὶ οἱ σατράπαι τῶν ἀλλοφύλων παρεπορεύοντο εἰς ἑκατοντάδας καὶ χιλιάδας, καὶ Δαυὶδ καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες αὐτοῦ παρεπορεύοντο ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτων μετὰ Ἀγχοῦς. καὶ εἶπον οἱ σατράπαι τῶν ἀλλοφύλων· τίνες οἱ διαπορευόμενοι οὗτοι; καὶ εἶπεν Ἀγχοῦς πρὸς τοὺς στρατηγοὺς τῶν ἀλλοφύλων'; compare the Hebrew on: https://septuagint.bible/-/basileion-a-kephalaio-29. Similarly, in *1 Samuel* 4, LXX, the Philistines are repeatedly referred to as ἀλλόφυλοι in significant military and religious contexts; for instance: v.1: 'καὶ συναθροίζονται ἀλλόφυλοι ἐπὶ Ἰσραὴλ εἰς πόλεμον …'; v.2: 'καὶ παρατάσσονται ἀλλόφυλοι εἰς πόλεμον …'; v.7: 'καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν οἱ ἀλλόφυλοι καὶ εἶπον …'; compare also the Hebrew text on https://mechon-mamre.org/f/ft/ft08a04.htm.

[5] *Zephaniah* 2:5. Similarly, we read in *Amos* 9:7: 'Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? says the Lord. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Arameans from Kir?' Although the exact identification of Caphtor remains uncertain, many scholars suggest it may refer to Crete. For a detailed examination of this question, see John Strange, *Caphtor/Keftiu: A New Investigation* (Leiden: Brill, 1980).

[6] Philo, *De Vita Mosis* 1.163.

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geographically and conceptually equivalent to Palestine in his time (early 1ˢᵗ century CE).[1]

Building on this territorial and ethnographic perception of the southern Levant, it is important to contextualize the Philistines' role within the broader ethno-political landscape of the southern Levant. The region, as recorded in biblical and extra-biblical sources alike, was home to four principal ethnolinguistic groups: the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Arameans, and the Hebrews. When the earliest Hebrew migrations began to enter the land, the Canaanites formed the majority population in the area.[2] The Philistines reached the height of their power in the latter half of the 11ᵗʰ century B.C., maintaining military and political dominance over Israel[3] until the reign of David (1ˢᵗ half of the 10ᵗʰ c. B.C.), who successfully defeated them and expanded his control over Edom, Moab, and Ammon.[4] It is also in the tenth century B.C. that the unified monarchy had broken apart and ceased to exist as a single entity. What remained – the northern kingdom of Israel – fell to the Assyrian king Sargon II in 722 B.C., who deported its population and resettled the region with peoples from Babylon, Syria, and Arabia. Later, during the reign of Sennacherib (705–681 B.C.), Assyrian campaigns

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[1] Getzel Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa* (California: University of California Press, 2006), 36.

[2] The Hebrew Bible presents a sequence of early Israelite victories over the principal ethnolinguistic groups inhabiting the southern Levant. As recorded in *Numbers* 21, the Israelites – under the leadership of Moses –achieved decisive victories over two powerful Amorite kings during their journey toward the Promised Land. These conquests are portrayed as both strategic and divinely sanctioned, establishing a foundation for subsequent territorial expansion. This momentum continues in *Joshua* 6, which recounts the fall of a major Canaanite stronghold through a ritualized siege and complete destruction, marking a symbolic and military turning point. Further campaigns are detailed in *Joshua* 10, where Joshua leads a series of assaults against a coalition of Canaanite kings, resulting in the capture of several fortified cities. These events, framed as divinely aided, illustrate the progressive assertion of Israelite dominance over the region and underscore the displacement of earlier populations – including the Canaanites and Amorites – as the Israelites solidify their presence in the land.

[3] See *1 Samuel* 13, where the Philistines are portrayed as a dominant military power, assembling thousands of chariots and soldiers against Israel. The Israelites, in contrast, are depicted as disorganized and demoralized, with many hiding in fear and lacking proper weapons. Saul's premature offering of the burnt sacrifice, due to Samuel's delay, leads to prophetic condemnation and a divine declaration that his kingdom will not endure. This chapter underscores both the military superiority of the Philistines and the internal instability within Israel's leadership during this period.

[4] *2 Samuel* 1–8. Following Saul's death, David receives the Amalekite's report and composes a lament for for Saul and Jonathan, affirming respect for God's anointed even after Saul's demise (chapter 1). David is anointed king over Judah at Hebron (chapter 2), and after civil conflict, Ish-Bosheth's death unifies Israel under his reign (chapter 3). David is subsequently accepted as king by all Israel (chapter 5:1–5), establishes Jerusalem (the 'City of David') as his capital (5: 6–13), and brings the Ark of the Covenant to the city amidst notable theological drama (chapter 6). In chapter 7, God's covenant with David is pronounced through the prophet Nathan, promising an eternal dynasty and Messianic hope. Chapter 8 narrates David's sweeping military victories: he strikes and subdues the Philistines, the Moabites, the Edomites, the Arameans, King Hadadezer of Zobah, and Amalekites, establishing dominance, receiving tribute, and dedicating spoils to the Lord. These triumphs mark David's ascent as Israel's unifying and triumphant king.

pushed deep into Philistine territories along the Egyptian frontier and inflicted massive devastation on the kingdom of Judah.[1]

By the end of the seventh and the beginning of the sixth century B.C., the major imperial powers of the ancient Near East – most notably Assyria and, subsequently, Babylon – had eliminated the independence of the smaller states that had once constituted the political landscape of Syria and Palestine. Following Assyria's collapse, Nebuchadnezzar II launched campaigns to secure Babylonian rule. In 597 B.C., he captured Jerusalem and deported King Jehoiachin and others to Babylon. Both the *Babylonian Chronicles* and biblical sources (*e.g. 2 Kings* 24) confirm this, as well as Zedekiah's appointment as king. In 586 B.C., Babylon captured and devastated Jerusalem, destroyed the First Temple, and initiated what became known as the Babylonian exile.[2]

2. Defining Palestine in Classical Sources:

The earliest attested usage of the Greek term Παλαιστίνη appears in the *Histories* of Herodotus. Writing in the fifth century B.C., Herodotus offers a remarkable early reference to 'a part of Syria called Palestine,' within the context of a Scythian attempt to invade Egypt[3] during the reign of Psammetichus I (664–610 B.C.). Herodotus recounts that when they [the Scythians] were in 'the part of Syria called Palestine, Psammetichus king of Egypt met them and persuaded them with gifts and prayers to come no further. So they turned back, and when they came on their way to the city of Ashkelon in Syria, most of the Scythians passed by and did no harm, but a few remained behind and plundered the temple of Heavenly Aphrodite.'[4]

In Book II, Herodotus provides an ethnographic observation in which he notes that the Syrians of Palestine, alongside the Phoenicians, acknowledge having adopted the practice of circumcision from the Egyptians, an indication of prolonged cultural contact

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[1] Ido Koch, 'Israel and Assyria, Judah and Assyria,' in *The Ancient Israelite World*, eds. Kyle Keimer and George Pierce (London: Routledge, 2022), 693–712. The *2 Kings* also surveys the divided monarchy from Solomon's successors to the exile of Judah. Thematic strands include covenant failure, prophetic witness, and divine judgment, leading to Assyrian conquest of Israel in 722 B.C. and Babylonian exile of Judah in 586 B.C.

[2] For historical background and primary sources, see William Hallo and William Simpson, *The Ancient Near East: A History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 123–144.

[3] For a fuller account of Scythian society, customs, and military practices, see Book IV of Herodotus's *Histories*, commonly referred to as the 'Scythian Book', and see also Renate Rolle, *Die Welt der Skythen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1980); Barry Cunliffe, *The Scythians: Nomad Warriors of the Steppe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). Regarding the specific campaign mentioned here, see Eldred Phillips, 'The Scythian Domination in Western Asia: Its Record in History, Scripture and Archaeology,' *World Archaeology* 4 (1972): 129–138.

[4] Hdt. 1.105. 1–2: ἐνθεῦτεν δὲ ἤισαν ἐπ' Αἴγυπτον. καὶ ἐπείτε ἐγένοντο ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ Συρίῃ, Ψαμμήτιχος σφέας Αἰγύπτου βασιλεὺς ἀντιάσας δώροισί τε καὶ λιτῇσι ἀποτράπει τὸ προσωτέρω μὴ πορεύεσθαι. οἳ δὲ ἐπείτε ἀναχωρέοντες ὀπίσω ἐγένοντο τῆς Συρίης ἐν Ἀσκάλωνι πόλι, τῶν πλεόνων Σκυθέων παρεξελθόντων ἀσινέων, ὀλίγοι τινὲς αὐτῶν ὑπολειφθέντες ἐσύλησαν τῆς οὐρανίης Ἀφροδίτης τὸ ἱρόν. It is worth noting that the term 'Heavenly Aphrodite' (οὐρανίη Ἀφροδίτη) refers not solely to the Olympian goddess, but more broadly to a syncretic deity whose attributes aligned with Astarte in the Phoenician tradition and Mylitta in the Assyrian. Her worship in cities like Ashkelon reflects the religious fusion typical of the eastern Mediterranean in the first millennium B.C. See Alfred Godley (tr.), *Herodotus, Books I and II* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1920), 137.

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between Egypt and the peoples of this region.[1] Herodotus also remarks in the same book that he personally observed pillars erected by the Egyptian king Sesostris 'in the Palestine district of Syria', bearing inscriptions and symbolic markings.[2] The historian offers another reference to the region in Book III of the *Histories*, in the context of Darius I's (522–485 B.C.) administrative division of the Persian Empire into twenty satrapies.[3] As he notes: 'The fifth satrapy was the country (except the part belonging to the Arabians, which paid no tribute) between Posideion, a city founded on the Cilician and Syrian border by Amphilochus son of Amphiaraus, and Egypt; this paid three hundred and fifty talents; in this province was all Phoenicia, and the part of Syria called Palestine, and Cyprus.'[4]

One of the most significant references to the term 'Palestine' in Herodotus appears in Book VII of the *Histories*, in the context of his account of the second Persian invasion of Greece under Xerxes I (486–465 B.C.). While listing the naval contributions of the various peoples who supplied triremes to the Persian fleet, Herodotus notes the following: 'The number of the triremes was twelve hundred and seven, and they were furnished by the following: the Phoenicians with the Syrians of Palestine furnished three hundred; for their equipment, they had on their heads helmets very close to the Greek in style; they wore linen breastplates, and carried shields without rims, and javelins. These Phoenicians formerly dwelt, as they themselves say, by the Red Sea; they crossed from there and now inhabit the seacoast of Syria. This part of Syria as far as Egypt is all called Palestine.'[5]

In Book IV of the *Histories*, Herodotus moves from mythological ethnography – such as the legendary Hyperboreans – to a critical assessment of geographical knowledge in his time. He dismisses prevailing cartographic models that depict the world as a perfect circle bordered by *Oceanus* and proposes instead a more structured account of the inhabited world. He describes Asia as composed of major landmasses which he terms 'peninsulas'.[6] The first of these includes regions around the Black Sea

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[1] Hdt. 2.104. Φοίνικες δὲ καὶ Σύροι οἱ ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ καὶ αὐτοὶ ὁμολογέουσι παρ᾽ Αἰγυπτίων μεμαθηκέναι [*i.e.* circumcision], Σύριοι δὲ οἱ περὶ Θερμώδοντα καὶ Παρθένιον ποταμὸν καὶ Μάκρωνες οἱ τούτοισι ἀστυγείτονες ἐόντες ἀπὸ Κόλχων φασὶ νεωστὶ μεμαθηκέναι [*i.e.* circumcision].

[2] Hdt. 2.106. αἱ δὲ στῆλαι τὰς ἵστα κατὰ τὰς χώρας ὁ Αἰγύπτου βασιλεὺς Σέσωστρις, αἱ μὲν πλεῦνες οὐκέτι φαίνονται περιεοῦσαι, ἐν δὲ τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ Συρίῃ αὐτὸς ὥρων ἐούσας καὶ τὰ γράμματα τὰ εἰρημένα ἐνεόντα καὶ γυναικὸς αἰδοῖα.

[3] Hdt. 3.89.

[4] Hdt. 3.91. ἀπὸ δὲ Ποσιδηίου πόλιος, τὴν Ἀμφίλοχος ὁ Ἀμφιάρεω οἴκισε ἐπ᾽ οὔροισι τοῖσι Κιλίκων τε καὶ Σύρων, ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ ταύτης μέχρι Αἰγύπτου, πλὴν μοίρης τῆς Ἀραβίων ταῦτα γὰρ ἦν ἀτελέα, πεντήκοντα καὶ τριηκόσια τάλαντα φόρος ἦν. ἔστι δὲ ἐν τῷ νομῷ τούτῳ Φοινίκη τε πᾶσα καὶ Συρίη ἡ Παλαιστίνη καλεομένη καὶ Κύπρος: νομὸς πέμπτος οὗτος.

[5] Hdt. 7.89. 1–2. τῶν δὲ τριηρέων ἀριθμὸς μὲν ἐγένετο ἑπτὰ καὶ διηκόσιαι καὶ χίλιαι, παρείχοντο δὲ αὐτὰς οἵδε, Φοίνικες μὲν σὺν Σύροισι τοῖσι ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ τριηκόσιας, ὧδε ἐσκευασμένοι: περὶ μὲν τῇσι κεφαλῇσι κυνέας εἶχον ἀγχοτάτω πεποιημένας τρόπον τὸν Ἑλληνικόν, ἐνδεδυκότες δὲ θώρηκας λινέους, ἀσπίδας δὲ ἴτυς οὐκ ἐχούσας εἶχον καὶ ἀκόντια. οὗτοι δὲ οἱ Φοίνικες τὸ παλαιὸν οἴκεον, ὡς αὐτοὶ λέγουσι, ἐπὶ τῇ Ἐρυθρῇ θαλάσσῃ, ἐνθεῦτεν δὲ ὑπερβάντες τῆς Συρίης οἰκέουσι τὸ παρὰ θάλασσαν: τῆς δὲ Συρίης τοῦτο τὸ χωρίον καὶ τὸ μέχρι Αἰγύπτου πᾶν Παλαιστίνη καλέεται. Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ νέας παρείχοντο διηκοσίας.

[6] Hdt. 4.36–37.

and Asia Minor.[1] Of particular relevance, the second peninsula begins in Persia and stretches through Assyria and Arabia toward Egypt. Herodotus describes the land route as passing through Phoenicia, then what he explicitly names as Syrian Palestine, before finally reaching Egypt, which marks the terminal point of this continental formation: 'And from Phoenicia this peninsula runs beside our sea by way of the Syrian Palestine and Egypt, which is at the end of it; in this peninsula there are just three nations.'[2]

Herodotus further reinforces the geographical identity of Palestine in Book III, where he outlines the main overland route into Egypt from the Levant. As he describes it, the road into Egypt runs through Phoenicia and reaches the vicinity of Cadytis – a prominent city identified with Gaza – 'which belongs to the so-called Syrians of Palestine.'[3] He then notes that 'from Cadytis (which, as I [*i.e.* Herodotus] judge, is a city not much smaller than Sardis) to the city of Ienysus the seaports belong to the Arabians.'[4]

Some scholars argue that Herodotus' references to 'Palestine' pertain exclusively to the coastal strip inhabited by the Philistines, and that the historian's geographical scope is limited to the areas he personally visited along the Mediterranean seaboard.[5] However, a closer contextual analysis of the *Histories* reveals that such a reading is overly reductive. In Book III, Herodotus refers to the fifth Persian satrapy as comprising 'Phoenicia, the part of Syria called Palestine, and Cyprus' (3.91), describing a tax district that extends from Posideion on the Cilician-Syrian border to the frontier of Egypt. The phrase 'Συρίη ἡ Παλαιστίνη καλεομένη' clearly situates 'Palestine' within a broader inland territorial framework. This is especially evident when considered alongside the structure of Persian satrapies, which were not defined along narrow maritime fringes but rather based on overland connectivity, military control, and economic integration across contiguous hinterlands.

Further, in Book IV, Herodotus offers a geographic overview of the inhabited world as we have seen, describing major continental landmasses, or peninsulas. The second peninsula begins in Persia and stretches westward through Assyria and Arabia, then passes 'through Phoenicia, Syrian Palestine, and Egypt' (4.39). The use of the verb παρήκει and the preposition διά implies a continuous inland territory rather than a mere sequence of coastal cities. The word ἀκτή, while often translated as 'coast', can also refer to a region adjacent to the sea, suggesting that Herodotus envisioned this area not as a peripheral seaboard, but as a vital overland route with strategic and commercial

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[1] Hdt. 4.38.

[2] Hdt. 4.39. τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ Φοινίκης παρήκει διὰ τῆσδε τῆς θαλάσσης ἡ ἀκτὴ αὕτη παρά τε Συρίην τὴν Παλαιστίνην καὶ Αἴγυπτον, ἐς τὴν τελευτᾷ· ἐν τῇ ἔθνεα ἐστὶ τρία μοῦνα.

[3] Hdt. 3.5. μούνη δὲ ταύτῃ εἰσὶ φανεραὶ ἐσβολαὶ ἐς Αἴγυπτον. ἀπὸ γὰρ Φοινίκης μέχρι οὔρων τῶν Καδύτιος πόλιος ἐστὶ Σύρων τῶν Παλαιστίνων καλεομένων.

[4] Hdt. 3.5. ἀπὸ δὲ Καδύτιος ἐούσης πόλιος, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκέει, Σαρδίων οὐ πολλῷ ἐλάσσονος, ἀπὸ ταύτης τὰ τὰ ἐμπόρια τὰ ἐπὶ θαλάσσης μέχρι Ἰηνύσου πόλιος ἐστὶ τοῦ Ἀραβίου. The identification of Ienysus remains a matter of scholarly debate, but it is most commonly associated with the area of modern-day al-ʿArīsh, located on the northern coast of the Sinai Peninsula near the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip.

[5] Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land: A Historical Geography from the Persian to the Arab Conquest* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2002 reprinted), 11; Louis Feldman, 'Some Observations on the Name of Palestine,' *Hebrew Union College Annual* 61 (1990): 1–23.

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significance. Moreover, in Book 3, Herodotus describes the main road into Egypt as extending 'from Phoenicia to the borders of Cadytis, which belongs to the so-called Syrians of Palestine' (3.5). Cadytis (Gaza) is indeed a coastal city, yet the framing of the passage centers on the longitudinal path of a land route. This undermines the notion that Herodotus' mention of Palestine is restricted to the coastal margins. Rather, Gaza serves as a waypoint along a broader inland passage, not as the terminus of a littoral district.[1]

Of all Herodotus' references in this context, Book 2.104 has drawn the most attention. It has been argued that his statement regarding the adoption of circumcision must pertain to Jews rather than Philistines. A conclusion that rests on a biblical framework Herodotus neither invokes nor relies upon.[2] Josephus, writing some centuries later to Herodotus, interpreted the passage as referring to Jews on the grounds that they alone among the inhabitants of Syria practiced circumcision.[3] Yet this view is not universally held, as Jerome, in his commentary on *Jeremiah* 9:25–26, notes that other groups in the region also practiced circumcision. Herodotus himself makes no explicit reference to Jews or to any religious justification. His ethnographic approach does not rest on theological distinctions but rather reflects geographic and cultural proximities. The fact that he groups the Syrians of Palestine with the Phoenicians – both characterized by long-term interaction with Egypt – suggests an emphasis on regional connections rather than ethnic boundaries. Rather than indicating confusion or misidentification, this pairing aligns with Herodotus' broader descriptive method, in which administrative, geographic, and cultural factors are intertwined to define inhabited spaces. The implication is that 'Palestine', as Herodotus understood it, referred not to a narrowly defined coastal enclave or singular ethnic group, but to a strategically integrated zone situated within the broader networks of the ancient Near East.

Notably, the use of the term Παλαιστίνη in the Classical period is not limited to historical narratives, but also extends into philosophical and scientific discourses that sought to explain natural phenomena within a broader cosmological framework. In a lesser known but geopolitically instructive passage of his *Meteorologica*, Aristotle refers to a lake 'in Palestine' whose salinity and density allegedly cause any bound

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[1] This interpretation also aligns with the analysis of Eyal Ben Eliyahu, 'מ'יהודה' ל'ישראל' טריטוריה וזהות לאומי (Judea and Israel: The Territorial Dimension of National Identity),' ציון *(Zion)* (2010): 132–133, who observes that Herodotus' references to 'Palestine' are not confined to the narrow Philistine coast but point to a broader inland region.

[2] Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land*, 11, n. 3, casts doubt on the reliability of Herodotus' account by asserting that the historian only visited the coastal regions of southern Palestine. He therefore argues that the 'Syrians of Palestine' mentioned by Herodotus must have been Jews, not Philistines, citing biblical precedent that portrays the Philistines as *ʿărēlîm* (uncircumcised). Feldman, 'Some Observations on the Name of Palestine,' 3, offers a similar skepticism, contending that Herodotus' statement in 2.104 cannot refer to the Philistines, who were historically uncircumcised. Feldman proposes that Herodotus, having relied on second-hand reports due to the difficulties of inland travel, likely mixed up the Philistines with the Jews.

[3] J. *AJ* 8.262. φησὶ δὲ καὶ Αἰθίοπας παρ' Αἰγυπτίων μεμαθηκέναι τὴν τῶν αἰδοίων περιτομήν· 'Φοίνικες γὰρ καὶ Σύροι οἱ ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ ὁμολογοῦσι παρ' Αἰγυπτίων μεμαθηκέναι.' δῆλον οὖν ἐστιν, ὅτι μηδένες ἄλλοι περιτέμνονται τῶν ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ Σύρων ἢ μόνοι ἡμεῖς. ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τούτων ἕκαστοι λεγέτωσαν ὅ τι ἂν αὐτοῖς δοκῇ. And J. *Ap.* 1.171–172. οὐκοῦν εἴρηκε Σύρους τοὺς ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ περιτέμνεσθαι· τῶν δὲ τὴν Παλαιστίνην κατοικούντων μόνοι τοῦτο ποιοῦσιν Ἰουδαῖοι.

person or animal thrown into it to float. He continues to describe its hyper-salinity by noting the absence of fish and the cleansing effect it has on soaked garments.[1] The phrasing "ἐν Παλαιστίνῃ τοιαύτη λίμνη" is unmistakably a reference to the Dead Sea, situated inland along the geological depression known today as the Jordan Rift Valley, far removed from the narrow coastal plain.[2]

Some scholars, such as Feldman[3], have dismissed this passage as second-hand and unreliable, citing Aristotle's introductory clause "εἰ δ' ἔστιν ὥσπερ μυθολογοῦσί τινες" to argue that the philosopher was merely repeating popular lore and had no direct knowledge of either the lake or its location. However, as Cohen has rightly observed,[4] Aristotle's skepticism is directed not toward the location of the lake in Palestine but toward the descriptive claims made about its physical properties. Aristotle's epistemological posture throughout the *Meteorologica* allows room for unverified phenomena to serve as illustrative analogies, without thereby invalidating the underlying geography. Chiara Militello has further clarified the function of the verb μυθολογεῖν in Aristotelian usage, distinguishing between false accounts that contradict philosophical reasoning and unconfirmed reports that may incidentally corroborate scientific hypotheses.[5] In the case of the Dead Sea, the latter applies. Aristotle invokes the lake precisely because its reputed characteristics – buoyancy, salinity, and sterilizing effects – align with his theory that the admixture of external substances increases the thickness and salinity of water.

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[1] Arist. *Mete.* 2.359a. εἰ δ' ἔστιν ὥσπερ μυθολογοῦσί τινες ἐν Παλαιστίνῃ τοιαύτη λίμνη, εἰς ἣν ἐάν τις ἐμβάλῃ συνδήσας ἄνθρωπον ἢ ὑποζύγιον ἐπιπλεῖν καὶ οὐ καταδύεσθαι κατὰ τοῦ ὕδατος, μαρτύριον ἂν εἴη τι τοῖς εἰρημένοις· λέγουσι γὰρ πικρὰν οὕτως εἶναι τὴν λίμνην καὶ ἁλμυρὰν ὥστε μηδένα ἰχθὺν ἐγγίγνεσθαι, τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια ῥύπτειν, ἐάν τις διασείσῃ βρέξας.

[2] This is also asserted by Olympiodorus (a Neoplatonist philosopher of sixth-century Alexandria, known for his commentaries on both Plato and Aristotle, and considered one of the last representatives of Alexandrian philosophical school), who, in his commentary on Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, states: 'τὸ πρῶτον ἐπιχείρημα τὸ ἀπὸ τῆς Νεχρᾶς θαλάσσης, ἧς τὸ ὕδωρ τοσοῦτόν ἐστιν ἁλμυρώτατον'. The term 'Νεχρᾶς' (nom. Νεχρᾶ) is evidently a transliteration, and its etymology warrants close attention. Olympiodorus, writing in the sixth century CE, may have rendered the name phonetically from a Semitic toponym, most likely Arabic. In Arabic, the root *n-kh-r*, from which a form like *nakhara* or *nakhira* could derive, carries connotations of internal decay, decomposition, or disintegration, such as in the expression *nakhira l-ʿaẓm* (the bone decayed). This meaning corresponds well with the character of the Dead Sea as a lifeless and desolate body of water. It is therefore plausible that Νεχρᾶ represents a Greek transliteration of a local Arabic term – possibly circulating orally in Late Antiquity – which Olympiodorus preserved using Greek script. This further supports the identification of the body of water in question as the Dead Sea. The commentary of Olympiodorus can be checked in Guilelmus Stüve (ed.), *Olympiodori in Aristotelis Meteora Commentaria* (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 12.2) (Berlin: Reimer, 1900), II 3 (on *Meteorologica* 359a)=p. 166. It is also worth noting that Ben Eliyahu, 'Judea and Israel: The Territorial Dimension of National Identity,' 132–133, in his discussion of the Aristotle's passage, notes that the reference to a highly saline lake 'in Palestine' most plausibly designates the Dead Sea, further affirming the inland geographical scope of the term Palestine in classical thought.

[3] Feldman, 'Some Observations on the Name of Palestine,' 3.

[4] Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements*, 36, n. 47.

[5] Chiara Militello, 'Myth and Imagination in Olympiodorus' Commentary on Aristotle's Meteorology,' in *Platonism and its Heritage, Selected Papers from the 19th Annual Conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies*, eds. John Finamore, Ioanna Patsioti and Giannis Satamatellos (Chepstow: The Prometheus Trust, 2023), 75–77.

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Thus, the passage's rhetorical structure is not mythological in essence but rather
heuristic; it invites critical engagement with empirical reports rather than dogmatic
rejection. Most importantly for the present inquiry, Aristotle's designation of the Dead
Sea as lying 'in Palestine' serves as an implicit yet authoritative affirmation of the
inland extension of this region. Unlike Herodotus, who embeds Παλαιστίνη within
broader satrapic and military-administrative structures, Aristotle's interest is scientific,
yet both converge in situating Palestine beyond a purely littoral scope.

Among the most valuable sources for understanding the geopolitical and cultural
status of Palestine during the late fourth century B.C. is the *Anabasis of Alexander* by
Arrian. Writing in the second century CE, Arrian offers a retrospective account of
Alexander the Great's campaigns based on now-lost eyewitness testimonies, notably
those of Ptolemy I and Aristobulus.[1] In Book II of the *Anabasis*, Arrian recounts
Alexander's decision to move toward Egypt in 332 B.C., noting that the 'rest of Syria,
called Palestine, had already submitted to him.'[2] The significance of this passage lies
above all in its use of the phrase "Παλαιστίνη καλουμένη Συρία", which reiterates the
Herodotean convention of situating Palestine as a geographic subregion within the
wider Syrian landscape. Arrian's narrative identifies the city of Gaza as the last
stronghold in the region to resist Alexander's advance, commanded by a eunuch named
Batis.[3] Gaza's strategic and symbolic importance is underscored by its tenacious
defense and the recruitment of Arab mercenaries by Batis, who had provisioned the city
extensively in anticipation of a prolonged siege.[4] Arrian's portrayal of Gaza as a
fortified, Arab-defended port city suggests that it functioned not merely as a military
outpost but as a vital commercial and cultural hub linking the Levantine interior with
the maritime trade networks of the eastern Mediterranean.

From a historical-geographic standpoint, Gaza's resistance illustrates the localized
autonomy of urban centers in Palestine during the Persian and early Hellenistic periods,
while also highlighting the ethno-political complexity of the region. Arrian's reference

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[1] Although Arrian composed the *Anabasis of Alexander* in the second century CE – chronologically
placing him alongside Roman imperial authors such as Tacitus and Suetonius – his narrative in the
relevant passages is fundamentally grounded in earlier sources as mentioned above. Consequently,
Arrian's geographical references reflect the political and cultural realities of the late fourth century B.C.,
rather than the conditions of his own time. For this reason, we treat his testimony in this instance within
the corpus of Classical sources, alongside Herodotus and Aristotle, whose works it complements both
chronologically (in terms of the events described) and conceptually (in terms of inherited geographic
conventions). This methodological placement becomes especially evident when Arrian's account is
compared to the Hellenistic and Roman-period sources examined subsequently, where shifts in
geographic terminology and political framing are more discernible.

[2] Arr. *An*. 2.25.4. Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ ἐπ᾽ Αἰγύπτου ἔγνω ποιεῖσθαι τὸν στόλον. καὶ ἦν αὐτῷ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα τῆς
Παλαιστίνης καλουμένης Συρίας προσκεχωρηκότα ἤδη.

[3] Arr. *An*. 2.25.4. εὐνοῦχος δέ τις, ᾧ ὄνομα ἦν Βάτις, κρατῶν τῆς Γαζαίων πόλεως, οὐ προσεῖχεν
Ἀλεξάνδρῳ.

[4] Arr. *An*. 2.25.4. ἀλλὰ Ἄραβάς τε μισθωτοὺς ἐπαγαγόμενος καὶ σῖτον ἐκ πολλοῦ παρεσκευακὼς διαρκῆ
ἐς χρόνιον πολιορκίαν καὶ τῷ χωρίῳ πιστεύων μήποτε ἂν βίᾳ ἁλῶναι, ἔγνω μὴ δέχεσθαι τῇ πόλει
Ἀλέξανδρον.

to Arab allies defending the city implies the presence and influence of the Arab tribes along the southern frontier of Palestine, particularly those such as the Qedarites,[1] who, as attested in Assyrian records and biblical texts, maintained a strong presence across the northern Arabia, and the Sinai corridor during this period. Gaza, in this context, stands as both a symbolic frontier and a transitional zone; an Arab-influenced city embedded within the matrix of Syrian-Palestinian geography.

In another relevant passage from his *Indica*, Arrian provides a broader geographical frame in which he states that 'Arabia, for the most part, lies beyond Babylonia on the right of the Erythraean Sea, and part of it stretches to the sea along Phoenicia and Syrian Palestine.'[2] This comment reflects an inherited geographic tradition that defines Palestine not in isolation but as an integral part of a continuous landmass stretching from Mesopotamia through the Arabian desert and up to the Levantine and Egyptian coastlines. Arrian's formulation harmonizes with Herodotus' description of Palestine as a connective corridor between Phoenicia, Arabia, and Egypt, thereby affirming its centrality within broader imperial and mercantile networks. This geographical configuration further supports the argument that 'Palestine' in classical usage was not restricted to a coastal strip but encompassed a wider territory that included inland urban centers, trade routes, and culturally hybrid communities.

3. From Palestine to Judaea to Syria Palaestina: Shifting Terminologies in Hellenistic and Roman Sources

3.1. A Brief Historical Overview: From Hellenistic Kingdoms to Roman Rule

While the primary aim of this section is to investigate the geographic conceptions of Palestine in Hellenistic and Roman sources, it is necessary to pause and examine key historical developments that reshaped the region's administrative and symbolic landscape during the two periods. This brief detour is not intended as a chronological survey, but rather as a means to contextualize the spatial terminology found in Greek and Latin texts. Terms such as 'Judaea' and 'Syria Palaestina' did not emerge in a vacuum; they were embedded within broader imperial strategies of governance, resistance, and redefinition. Understanding the political transformations that led to the foundation and dissolution of client polities and the imposition of new provincial identities allows for a more critical reading of the Hellenistic and Roman geographic

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[1] The Qedarites were a prominent North Arabian tribe active between the 9th and 5th centuries B.C., known from Assyrian, Babylonian, biblical, and classical sources. Described as descendants of Ishmael's son Qedar (*Gen*. 25:13), they formed a semi-nomadic political entity spread across northern Arabia, southern Transjordan, the eastern Sinai, and parts of southern Palestine. Although tribal in organization, they demonstrated centralized leadership, as evidenced by Assyrian records referring to Qedarite kings and queens involved in warfare, diplomacy, and regional alliances. They controlled key segments of the incense trade routes connecting Arabia to the Levant and Mesopotamia. In biblical literature, they are depicted as powerful yet often hostile desert dwellers (*Isaiah* 21:16; *Jeremiah* 49:28; *Ezekiel* 27:21). Their prominence declined in the late first millennium B.C. with the rise of new Arab powers such as the Nabataeans. See David Graf, 'Palestine in the Persian through Roman Periods,' in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, Vol. 4, eds. Eric Meyers *et al*. (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 223.

[2] Arr. *Ind*. 43.1. τὰ δὲ ἐν δεξιῇ τῆς Ἐρυθρῆς θαλάσσης ὑπὲρ τὴν Βαβυλωνίην Ἀραβίη ἡ πολλή ἐστι, καὶ ταύτης τὰ μὲν κατήκει ἔστε ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν τὴν κατὰ Φοινίκην τε καὶ τὴν Παλαιστίνην Συρίην, πρὸς δυομένου δὲ ἡλίου ὡς ἐπὶ τὴν ἔσω θάλασσαν Αἰγύπτιοι τῇ Ἀραβίῃ ὁμουρέουσι.

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discourse. In this sense, historical context is not merely background, but an integral component of how space was conceptualized, named, and contested.

After the unexpected death of Alexander the Great in Babylon in 323 B.C., his empire was divided among his leading generals, the *Diadochi*, each of whom regarded himself as the rightful heir to Alexander's legacy. Their competing ambitions triggered a prolonged series of conflicts – known as the Wars of the *Diadochi* – that lasted for nearly four decades. One of the most significant outcomes of these wars was the Battle of Ipsus in 301 B.C., in which the coalition forces decisively defeated Antigonus Monophthalmos. As a result, the strategically important region of Phoenicia and Palestine – referred to in Hellenistic sources as Coele-Syria – had become in the possession of the Ptolemaic kingdom.[1] The region was administratively organized into *hyparchies*, which were in all likelihood governed in a manner analogous to the administrative structures employed in Ptolemaic Egypt itself.[2]

One of the most significant primary sources for the administrative and economic history of Hellenistic Palestine under Ptolemaic rule is the Zenon Archive.[3] Zenon undertook extensive travels in the eastern Mediterranean between ca. 260 and 258 B.C. as a representative of the *dioiketes* Apollonios, during which he visited several key sites in southern Syria and Palestine. The papyri from this period document not only Zenon's interactions with local elites and royal administrators,[4] but also provide invaluable insight into the Ptolemaic administrative system as applied to extraterritorial holdings

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[1] A foundational account of the Wars of the Diadochi remains Michael Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1941), especially the introductory chapter (1–23). See also Frank Walbank, *The Hellenistic World* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 46–59, for a concise and updated overview. In this historical context, Coele-Syria soon became a focal point of rivalry between the Ptolemies and the Seleucid Empire, both of which viewed the region as essential to their military security, economic interests, and imperial legitimacy.

[2] Evidence for this administrative structure is provided by a royal *prostagma* issued by Ptolemy II Philadelphos (C. Ord. Ptol. 21–22 = SB V 8008, April 260 B.C.), which required livestock proprietors in Syria and Phoenicia to submit formal declarations of their animals to the *oikonomos* appointed in each *hyparchy*, within sixty days of the decree's promulgation. For the text and English translation of the decree, see Roger Bagnall and Peter Derow, *The Hellenistic Period: Historical Sources in Translation* (Malden–Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2007).

[3] According to TM records, the archive includes 1848 texts, of which 1824 are certain, 16 are uncertain, 4 are erroneous, and 4 are related. See https://www.trismegistos.org/archive/256. And for a full bibliography of the archive see Haytham Qandeil, 'The Origins of Slaves and Their Names in Ptolemaic Egypt: A Case Study of the Zenon Archive,' *IWNW* 2 (2023): 369, n. 5.

[4] One illustrative case is Tubias, a prominent figure of the aristocratic Jewish family known as the Tubiads, based in Transjordan. The Tubiads are well-attested in papyrological sources from the reign of Ptolemy II and appear to have served as loyal local administrators under successive regimes from the Persian satrapy to the early Ptolemies. Tubias himself features in the Zenon Archive as a powerful intermediary in the region, entrusted with responsibilities that reflected both his local standing and his integration into the Ptolemaic administrative network. See Roger Bagnall, *The Administration of the Ptolemaic Possessions outside Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 17; Bagnall and Derow, *The Hellenistic Period*, 113; Stefan Pfeiffer, 'Der eponyme Offizier Tubias: ein lokaler Vertreter der ptolemäischen Herrschaft in Transjordanien,' *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 56 (2010): 242–257; and idem, 'Die Familie des Tubias: Eine (trans–)lokale Elite in Transjordanien,' in *Lokale Eliten und hellenistische Könige*, eds. Boris Dreyer and Peter Mittag (Berlin: Verlag Antike, 2011), 191–215.

beyond Egypt proper.[1] Especially significant in the context of the present discussion are references to cities such as Gaza,[2] Ashkelon,[3] Jaffa,[4] Ptolemais (Akko),[5] and Jerusalem,[6] Jerusalem,[6] all of which indicate a direct integration of Palestine into the fiscal and bureaucratic machinery of the Ptolemaic kingdom.[7]

However, Ptolemaic control over Coele-Syria and Palestine did not go uncontested. The Seleucid kingdom viewed the region as strategically vital and repeatedly sought to assert its dominance. This ongoing rivalry culminated in the Fifth Syrian War, during which Antiochus III defeated the Ptolemaic forces at the Battle of Panion (ca. 200 B.C.), leading to the incorporation of Coele-Syria, including Palestine, into the Seleucid realm.[8] The Seleucid conquest brought with it a renewed assertion of Hellenistic norms and a shift in the structure of local power. According to Polybius, after Antiochus III defeated the Ptolemaic general Scopas, he moved swiftly to consolidate control over Batanaea, Samaria, Abila, and Gadara. Crucially, Polybius reports that 'not long after, those of the Jews who dwell around the temple that is called Jerusalem also joined him.'[9] This passage suggests that the Jerusalem community, while not exercising

[1] For the Ptolemaic administration of Coele-Syria, see Bagnall, *The Administration of the Ptolemaic Possessions*, 11–24; Lester Grabbe (ed.), *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, Vol. 2 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 166f.

[2] P. Col. III 2=C. Zen. Palestine 17 (259 B.C.), l. 2–3: ἐξ Σιδῶνος πορευθέντες εἰς Γάζαν κενοὶ ἐλάβοσαν (l. ἔλαβον) and ἐξ Αἰγύπτου εἰς Γάζαν ψιάθους ἀγαγόντες ἔλαβον; P. Cair. Zen. I 59006 (259 B.C.?), l. 63a: εἰς Γαζαίων λιμένα; P. Cair. Zen. I 59009=C. Zen. Palestine 20, 21 (ca. 259 B.C.), Fr. B, 2, l. 3: ἐν Γάζηι [-ca.?-] and l. 5: ἐν Γάζη[ι -ca.?-]; P. Cair. Zen. V 59804=PSI VI 602=P. Col. III 3=C. Ptol. Sklav. I 38=C. Zen. Palestine 44 (258 B.C.), l. 2: ἐκ το[ῦ Γα]ζαίων λιμένος; P. Cair. Zen. I 59093=SB III 6720=C. Ptol. Sklav. I 41=C. Zen. Palestine 45 (257 B.C.), l. 10–11: Μενεκλῆς δὲ ὁ ἐν Τύρωι ἔφη σωμάτιά τινα καὶ φορτία ἀγαγὼ[ν] αὐτὸς ἐκ Γάζης εἰς Τύρον.

[3] P. Cair. Zen. I 59010=C. Ptol. Sklav. I 43=C. Zen. Palestine 18 (ca. 259), ll. 22: ἄλλας (δραχμὰς) η ἃς ἐν Ἀσκάλωνι.

[4] PSI IV 406=C. Ptol. Sklav. I 42=C. Zen. Palestine 27 (260–258 B.C.), l. 14–16: ἀπέδοντο αὐτὴν ἐν Πτολεμαΐδι | καὶ ἱερέα ἤδη τέταρτον | εἰς Ἰόπη; P. Cair. Zen. I 59011=C. Ptol. Sklav. II 223=C. Zen. Palestine 37 (ca. 259 B.C.), l. 11: ἐν Ἰόπη; P. Cair. Zen. I 59093=SB III 6720=C. Ptol. Sklav. I 41=C. Zen. Palestine 45 (257 B.C.), l. 7: ὅτι Κρότος ἐν Ἰόπη.

[5] PSI IV 406=C. Ptol. Sklav. I 42=C. Zen. Palestine 27 (260–258), l. 14: ἀπέδοντο αὐτὴν ἐν Πτολεμαΐδι; P. Cair. Zen. I 59004=SB III 6777=C. Zen. Palestine 4=C. Pap. Jud. I 2 (259 B.C.), l. 12: ἐν Πτολεμαΐδι; P. Lond. VII 2141=C. Zen. Palestine 15 (258 B.C.), l. 2–3: ξένια \ἐν [Πτολεμα]ΐδι/ ἐν τῆι Ζήνωνος προαποστολῆι εἰς Πηλούσιον; P. Lond. VI 2022=C. Zen. Palestine 35 (mid-3rd cent. B.C.), l. 1: [Ἀπολλόδοτος] Ζήνωνι χαίρειν. αὐτὸς μὲν ἤμην ἐν Πτολεμαΐδι γ[-ca.?-].

[6] P. Cair. Zen. I 59004=SB III 6777=C. Zen. Palestine 4=C. Pap. Jud. I 2 (259 B.C.), l. 3: Ἱεροσολύμ[οις]; Ἱεροσολύμ[οις]; P. Cair. Zen. I 59005=C. Zen. Palestine 5 (259 B.C.), l. 6: Ἱεροσολ]ύμοις ἀλεύρ(ων) ἀρ(τάβαι) β. It is worth noting that the reference in the previous two documents is not to the city of Jerusalem as a geographic location, but rather to its inhabitants.

[7] For further details concerning Zenon's activities in Palestine, see Mohammed Abd El Ghani, 'Zenon in Syria and Palestine,' in *Alessandria e il mondo ellenistico-romano. I Centenario del Museo Greco-Romano. Alessandria, 23–27 Novembre 1992. Atti del II Congresso Internazionale Italo-Egiziano* (Rome, 1995), 12–21.

[8] Plb. 16.16–19; J. *AJ* 12.129, who offers further details on the aftermath of Panion; Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *The Seleucid Army: Organization and Tactics in the Great Campaigns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 146f.; John Grainger, *The Syrian Wars* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2010), 245–272.

[9] Plb. 16.39. μετ᾽ ὀλίγον δὲ προσεχώρησαν αὐτῷ καὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων οἱ περὶ τὸ ἱερὸν τὸ προσαγορευόμενον προσαγορευόμενον Ἱεροσόλυμα κατοικοῦντες.

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political sovereignty, functioned as a localized religious-administrative entity integrated within the broader Seleucid framework. The temple remained the focal point of authority, serving both spiritual and civic roles within the Jewish population.

The Seleucid rule did not operate in a cultural vacuum. The ensuing decades witnessed a deliberate intensification of Hellenistic influence, especially in urban centers. In Jerusalem, the establishment of a *gymnasion*, the adoption of Greek civic institutions, and even the temporary renaming of the city as Antiochia signal the rise of a Hellenizing faction among the Jewish elite.[1] This Hellenizing program provoked resistance from traditionalist groups, particularly those rooted outside the urban elite. For these factions, the new institutions represented a betrayal of ancestral law and identity. The mounting tension reached a breaking point under the rule of Antiochus IV, whose aggressive interventions – such as the suppression of Jewish religious practices and the desecration of the temple – triggered the Maccabean revolt.[2] What began as a cultural and theological dispute thus evolved into a full-fledged insurrection, culminating in the establishment of an independent Hasmonean polity centered in Jerusalem.

The Hasmonean polity, while asserting a form of independence, increasingly found itself involved in the shifting balance of regional power. As internal rivalries destabilized the Hasmonean succession, Roman intervention became inevitable. In 63 B.C., Pompey's eastern campaign resulted in the incorporation of the region into the Roman sphere. Jerusalem was captured, the Hasmonean monarchy curtailed, and the territory was administratively subordinated to the Roman governor of Syria.[3] Although local authority was nominally preserved through figures such as Hyrcanus II, their role was essentially ceremonial, reinforcing Roman sovereignty through the guise of indigenous continuity.[4]

From this point forward, the highland territory traditionally associated with the Jewish population – centered around Jerusalem – began to appear in literary sources under the designation Judaea (Ἰουδαία).[5] Unlike the broader term Palestine, which was used by Greek authors – as we have seen – as a geographically expansive label encompassing both coastal and inland zones, Judaea denoted a more specific administrative unit defined by its ethnic, religious, and political associations. An important figure in this transitional period was Herod the Great, appointed by the Roman Senate as 'King of the Jews' in 40 B.C. and effectively ruling from 37 to 4 B.C. Herod succeeded in consolidating authority across Judaea, operating as a loyal client

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[1] See Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), 117f. For a comprehensive analysis of the scholarly literature concerning the Hellenization of the Jews, see Grabbe, *A History of the* Jews, 125–135.

[2] *1 Macabees* 1: 10–25, 45–56; for further bibliography, see Michel Austin, *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest: a selection of ancient sources in translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006 re-printed), 167.

[3] Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 57.

[4] Graf, 'Palestine in the Persian through Roman Periods,' 225; Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 57f.

[5] See, *e.g.*, Strab. 16.2.2; Tac. *Ann.* 2.42; Tac. *Hist.* 1.10; Suet. *Vit.* 15; *Vesp.* 4; *Tit.* 4; *Dom.* 2, which will be examined in detail shortly.

king under Roman imperial supervision. His reign marked a critical phase in the integration of the region into the Roman world. The Roman governor of Syria retained overarching control, while Herod's rule stabilized the province and established Judaea as a distinct political and territorial entity within the broader provincial framework.[1]

Following Herod's death, his rule was fragmented between his sons until it was reunified again under his grandson Agrippa I (41–44 CE). And following Agrippa's death, Judaea was fully annexed as a Roman province under the direct administration of equestrian procurators.[2] This shift coincided with a heightened Roman military presence and the gradual erosion of local autonomy. The escalation of tensions – rooted in religious restrictions and socioeconomic disparities desecration – culminated in the First Jewish Revolt (66–70 CE), which ended in the destruction of the Second Temple and the consolidation of Roman military control.[3]

In 132 CE, under Hadrian, a second large-scale uprising broke out: the Bar Kokhba Revolt.[4] Following the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt, Roman authorities undertook a comprehensive restructuring of the region's administrative and symbolic landscape. Central to this process was the official elimination of the designation Judaea, a name that, from its inception, had not denoted national autonomy but rather a colonial administrative construct.[5] The term referred to a Roman client territory whose governance was mediated through cooperative local elites – first the Hasmoneans, then Herod and his descendants – who functioned as intermediaries between imperial power and the subjected population. This intermediary structure, or colonial collaboration, served as an instrument of Roman indirect rule. It provided the empire with a seemingly native facade through which taxation, political loyalty, and religious compliance could be managed with minimal Roman deployment. However, the repeated uprisings of the first and second centuries CE revealed the fragility – and ultimately the obsolescence – of this model. The client elite had ceased to function as effective guarantors of imperial stability. Consequently, the administrative unit of Judaea was dismantled. In its place, the province was renamed 'Syria Palaestina', a designation drawn not from the recent political order but from older, broader geographic terminology familiar to Greek and Roman authors. This renaming was not a neutral act of cartographic revision. It constituted a deliberate imperial intervention aimed at dismantling the symbolic infrastructure of the former client polity. The function of Judaea as a vehicle of collaboration had ended; the imperial apparatus no longer required intermediaries but

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[1] See Peter Richardson, *Herod, King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

[2] Graf, 'Palestine in the Persian through Roman Periods,' 226.

[3] For a comprehensive analysis of the origins, trajectory, and consequences of the First Jewish Revolt, see Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome, A.D. 66–70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[4] The literature of the Bar Kokhba Revolt is expansive, see, *e.g.*, Peter Schafer, *Der Bar Kokhba-Aufstand: Studien zum zweiten jüdischen Krieg gegen Rom* (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum, 1.) (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1981); Werner Eck, 'The bar Kokhba Revolt: The Roman Point of View,' *The Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999): 76–89.

[5] Graf, 'Palestine in the Persian through Roman Periods,' 227. In parallel, the city of Jerusalem itself was subjected to a radical redefinition: it was re-founded as the Roman colonia Aelia Capitolina, a settlement from which Jews were formally banned.

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asserted itself directly, both militarily and ideologically, across a region now fully reintegrated into the Roman provincial system under an old/new name.

3.2. Palestine in Hellenistic and Roman Sources: From Ethnographic Geography to Provincial Nomenclature

With the previous framework in place, the analysis now turns to a closer examination of the Hellenistic and Roman literary sources. Among the Hellenistic sources to mention both the Jewish population and the region already known in Greek geographic traditions as Palestine is Diodorus Siculus. Writing in the mid-first century B.C., Diodorus presents a narrative shaped by Egyptian traditions and Hellenistic ethnography.

In one account, Diodorus attributes the origin of various peoples – including the Jews, the Colchians, and the Argives – to ancient Egyptian colonization, emphasizing cultural practices such as circumcision as evidence of this shared lineage: 'They say also that those who set forth with Danaus, likewise from Egypt, settled what is practically the oldest city in Greece, Argos, and that the nation of the Colchi in Pontus and that of the Jews, which lies between Arabia and Syria, were founded as colonies by certain emigrants from their country; and this is the reason why it is a long-established institution among these two peoples to circumcise their male children, the custom having been brought over from Egypt.'[1] The Jews are thus located geographically in a liminal zone – between Arabia and Syria – yet not politically contextualized in terms of Roman structures such as Judaea.

Elsewhere, Diodorus refers to 'Palestine' by name in a geographic rather than political register. In a description of Arabian trade routes and coastal settlements, he identifies a promontory 'which lies over against Petra, as it is called, and Palestine,' noting that the Gerrhaeans and Minaeans transport frankincense and other aromatic wares to this region 'from Upper Arabia: ἐκ τῆς ἄνω λεγομένης Ἀραβίας.'[2] This usage reflects a spatial vocabulary in which Palestine is a recognized geographic area associated with trade networks and broader regional connectivity rather than with any single polity or ethnos.

Significantly, Diodorus's descriptions do not reflect the political ruptures that would later define the region under Roman imperial rule. Terms such as Judaea, Herodian kingship, or Roman provincial structures are entirely absent. His account, instead, offers a glimpse into a pre-Roman conception of the region, one in which the names, peoples, and spatial categories were shaped by ethnographic traditions, geographic orientation, and interregional flows. In this sense, Diodorus serves as a valuable witness to the

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[1] Diod. 1.28.2–3. λέγουσι δὲ καὶ τοὺς περὶ τὸν Δαναὸν ὁρμηθέντας ὁμοίως ἐκεῖθεν συνοικίσαι τὴν ἀρχαιοτάτην σχεδὸν τῶν παρ' Ἕλλησι πόλεων Ἄργος, τό τε τῶν Κόλχων ἔθνος ἐν τῷ Πόντῳ καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀνὰ μέσον Ἀραβίας καὶ Συρίας οἰκίσαι τινὰς ὁρμηθέντας παρ' ἑαυτῶν· διὸ καὶ παρὰ τοῖς γένεσι τούτοις ἐκ παλαιοῦ παραδεδόσθαι τὸ περιτέμνειν τοὺς γεννωμένους παῖδας, ἐξ Αἰγύπτου μετενηνεγμένου τοῦ νομίμου.

[2] Diod. 3.42.5. παραπλεύσαντι δὲ τὸν Φοινικῶνα πρὸς ἀκρωτηρίῳ τῆς ἠπείρου νῆσός ἐστιν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐναυλιζομένων ἐν αὐτῇ ζῴων Φωκῶν νῆσος ὀνομαζομένη· τοσοῦτο γὰρ πλῆθος τῶν θηρίων τούτων ἐνδιατρίβει τοῖς τόποις ὥστε θαυμάζειν τοὺς ἰδόντας. τὸ δὲ προκείμενον ἀκρωτήριον τῆς νήσου κεῖται κατὰ τὴν καλουμένην Πέτραν καὶ τὴν Παλαιστίνην [τῆς Ἀραβίας]· εἰς γὰρ ταύτην τόν τε λίβανον καὶ τἄλλα φορτία τὰ πρὸς εὐωδίαν ἀνήκοντα κατάγουσιν, ὡς λόγος, ἐκ τῆς ἄνω λεγομένης Ἀραβίας οἵ τε Γερραῖοι καὶ Μιναῖοι.

enduring conceptual presence of Palestine in Hellenistic geographic thought, distinct from later Roman administrative interventions.

Strabo's *Geography*, composed in the early Roman imperial period, offers a transitional view of the region between Classical and Hellenistic geographic tradition and Roman administrative redefinition. His account reflects a shifting spatial vocabulary in which terms like 'Judaea' begin to appear with increasing regularity, while the designation 'Palestine' is notably rare. Strabo locates Judaea as an inland district within Syria, 'situated above Phoenicia in the interior between Gaza and Antilibanus, and extending to the Arabians,'[1] and describes it as part of a broader assemblage of ethnic groups when he says in another place: 'Beginning from Cilicia and Mount Amanus, we set down as parts of Syria, Commagene, and the Seleucis of Syria, as it is called, then Coele-Syria, lastly, on the coast, Phoenicia, and in the interior, Judaea. Some writers divide the whole of Syria into Coelo-Syrians, Syrians, and Phoenicians, and say that there are intermixed with these four other nations, Jews, Idumaeans, Gazaeans, and Azotii, some of whom are husbandmen, as the Syrians and Coelo-Syrians, and others merchants, as the Phoenicians.'[2]

The Jews are thus categorized primarily through their ethnic identity, spatially embedded within Syrian and Phoenician contexts. Strabo's depiction of the region blends geographic precision with ethnographic layering, yet his account is not politically neutral; as he in a different place of the *Geography*, remarks that Joppa (Jaffa) once served as 'a naval arsenal' for the Jews, adding polemically that 'the arsenals of robbers are the haunts of robbers,'[3] a phrase which reflects the Roman portrayal of Jewish resistance as banditry.

Despite the increasing centrality of Judaea in Strabo's geographic and ethnographic framework, one particularly revealing passage offers insight into the conceptual transformation of the region under Roman imperial influence. Strabo notes that the western extremities of Judaea toward Mount Casius were 'occupied by the Idumaeans, and by the lake [Sirbonis],' adding that 'The Idumaeans are Nabataeans; when driven from their country by sedition, they passed over to the Jews and adopted their customs.'[4] This narrative of absorption frames Judaea not merely as a geographically bounded ethnos, but as a culturally absorbative and politically adaptive client polity, capable of bringing in outsiders and making them part of its traditions and society. In

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[1] Strab. 16.2.21. ἡ δ᾽ ὑπὲρ ταύτης [*i.e.* Phoenicia] μεσόγαια μέχρι τῶν Ἀράβων ἡ μεταξὺ Γάζης καὶ Ἀντιλιβάνου Ἰουδαία λέγεται.

[2] Strab. 16.2.2. μέρη δ᾽ αὐτῆς τίθεμεν ἀπὸ τῆς Κιλικίας ἀρξάμενοι καὶ τοῦ Ἀμανοῦ τήν τε Κομμαγηνὴν καὶ τὴν Σελευκίδα καλουμένην τῆς Συρίας, ἔπειτα τὴν κοίλην Συρίαν, τελευταίαν δ᾽ ἐν μὲν τῇ παραλίᾳ τὴν Φοινίκην, ἐν δὲ τῇ μεσογαίᾳ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν. ἔνιοι δὲ τὴν Συρίαν ὅλην εἴς τε Κοιλοσύρους καὶ Σύρους καὶ Φοίνικας διελόντες τούτοις ἀναμεμῖχθαί φασι τέτταρα ἔθνη, Ἰουδαίους Ἰδουμαίους Γαζαίους Ἀζωτίους, γεωργικοὺς μέν, ὡς τοὺς Σύρους καὶ Κοιλοσύρους, ἐμπορικοὺς δέ, ὡς τοὺς Φοίνικας.

[3] Strab. 16.2.28. εἶτα Ἰόπη, καθ᾽ ἣν ἡ ἀπὸ τῆς Αἰγύπτου παραλία σημειωδῶς ἐπὶ τὴν ἄρκτον κάμπτεται, πρότερον ἐπὶ τὴν ἕω τεταμένη. ἐνταῦθα δὲ μυθεύουσί τινες τὴν Ἀνδρομέδαν ἐκτεθῆναι τῷ κήτει· ἐν ὕψει δέ ἐστιν ἱκανῶς τὸ χωρίον ὥστ᾽ ἀφορᾶσθαί φασιν ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα τὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων μητρόπολιν· καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐπινείῳ τούτῳ κέχρηνται καταβάντες μέχρι θαλάττης οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι· τὰ δ᾽ ἐπίνεια τῶν λῃστῶν λῃστήρια δῆλον ὅτι ἐστί.

[4] Strab. 16.2.34. τῆς δ᾽ Ἰουδαίας τὰ μὲν ἑσπέρια ἄκρα τὰ πρὸς τῷ Κασίῳ κατέχουσιν Ἰδουμαῖοί τε καὶ ἡ λίμνη. Ναβαταῖοι δ᾽ εἰσὶν οἱ Ἰδουμαῖοι, κατὰ στάσιν δ᾽ ἐκπεσόντες ἐκεῖθεν προσεχώρησαν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις καὶ τῶν νομίμων τῶν αὐτῶν ἐκείνοις ἐκοινώνησαν.

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doing so, Strabo reinforces the image of Judaea as aligned with Roman structure; it is a buffer zone where political utility was prioritized over ethnic fixity.

Strabo continues with a geographic observation that appears at first to be topographical yet carries significant implications. He remarks that 'the greater part of the country along the coast to Jerusalem is occupied by the Lake Sirbonis and by the tract contiguous to it; for Jerusalem is near the sea, which, as we have said, may be seen from the arsenal of Joppa.'[1] This unexpected maritime proximity of Jerusalem, often imagined as a landlocked capital, subtly recalibrates its regional significance, not only as a religious and political center but also as a point of access within coastal and trade networks. He then moves to describe the broader demographic landscape, asserting that these districts – Jerusalem, Joppa, Galilee, Jericho, Philadelphia, and Samaria (renamed Sebaste by Herod) – are 'inhabited generally, and each place in particular, by mixed tribes of Egyptians, Arabians, and Phoenicians.'[2]

Strabo does not present Judaea as a monolithic entity; rather, he emphasizes its cultural multiplicity and demographic fluidity. Yet he simultaneously conveys a dominant tradition concerning the origins of the Jewish people: 'the report most credited' is that 'the Egyptians were the ancestors of the present Jews.'[3] Far from a neutral ethnographic note, this assertion echoes earlier Hellenistic accounts – such as those Diodorus (see above) – that traced Jewish origins to Egyptian exile. In the Roman context, however, such narratives took on a polemical edge. By emphasizing derivative Egyptian ancestry and portraying Judaea as a receptacle of displaced peoples, Strabo contributes to a broader ideological project; this is the containment and subordination of Jewish identity within imperial legitimacy.

Despite this sustained focus on Judaea, Strabo's only reference to 'Palestine' appears in a peripheral and commercial context. There, he notes: 'Next is the island of Phocae, which has its name from those animals, which abound there. Near it is a promontory, which extends towards Petra, of the Arabians called Nabataei, and to Palestine, to this [island] the Minaei, Gerrhaei, and all the neighbouring nations repair with loads of aromatics.'[4] The passage describes a trading route used by the Gerrhaeans and Minaeans, who transport frankincense and other aromatic wares from Upper Arabia. Here, 'Palestine' functions as a non-political geographic marker and a node along a trade corridor. It is not ethnographically described, nor integrated into the Roman administrative vocabulary.

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[1] Strab. 16.2.34. πρὸς θαλάττῃ δὲ ἡ Σιρβωνὶς τὰ πολλὰ κατέχει καὶ ἡ συνεχὴς μέχρι καὶ Ἱεροσολύμων: καὶ γὰρ ταῦτα πρὸς θαλάττῃ ἐστίν: ἀπὸ γὰρ τοῦ ἐπινείου τῆς Ἰόπης εἴρηται ὅτι ἐστὶν ἐν ὄψει.

[2] Strab. 16.2.34. ταῦτα μὲν προσάρκτια [*i.e.* Jerusalem and Joppa]: τὰ πολλὰ δ' ὡς ἕκαστα ἐστὶν ὑπὸ φύλων οἰκούμενα μικτῶν ἔκ τε Αἰγυπτίων ἐθνῶν καὶ Ἀραβίων καὶ Φοινίκων: τοιοῦτοι γὰρ οἱ τὴν Γαλιλαίαν ἔχοντες καὶ τὸν Ἱερικοῦντα καὶ τὴν Φιλαδέλφειαν καὶ Σαμάρειαν, ἣν Ἡρώδης Σεβαστὴν ἐπωνόμασεν. οὕτω δ' ὄντων μιγάδων ἡ κρατοῦσα μάλιστα φήμη τῶν περὶ τὸ ἱερὸν τὸ ἐν τοῖς Ἱεροσολύμοις πιστευομένων Αἰγυπτίους ἀποφαίνει τοὺς προγόνους τῶν νῦν Ἰουδαίων λεγομένων.

[3] Strab. 16.2.34. ἡ κρατοῦσα μάλιστα φήμη ... Αἰγυπτίους ἀποφαίνει τοὺς προγόνους τῶν νῦν Ἰουδαίων λεγομένων.

[4] Strab. 16.4.18. πλησίον δ' αὐτῆς ἀκρωτήριον, ὃ διατείνει πρὸς τὴν Πέτραν τὴν τῶν Ναβαταίων καλουμένων Ἀράβων καὶ τὴν Παλαιστίνην χώραν, εἰς ἣν Μιναῖοί τε καὶ Γερραῖοι καὶ πάντες οἱ πλησιόχωροι τὰ τῶν ἀρωμάτων φορτία κομίζουσιν.

So, while 'Judaea' emerges in Strabo as a structured, populated, and ethnographically rich territory, 'Palestine' is left vague and unmapped in human terms. This likely reflects Strabo's assimilation of the early Roman imperial strategy of indirect rule. In this system, client polities such as Herodian Judaea were retained and reinforced under their local names, lending stability and familiarity to Rome's eastern frontiers. Broader regional terms like 'Palestine', which had appeared fluidly in Classical geography, were now subordinated to the language of control. Roman geography, as Strabo's text reveals, was not only an empirical project; it was a tool of imperial compartmentalization. Strabo's vocabulary thus marks a conceptual transition. From the Classical and Hellenistic emphasis on regional interconnectivity and overlapping identities, we move toward Roman insistence on bounded, governable spaces. Palestine, once a term for a broader geographic region in Greek ethnography, is relegated to the margins of the map, both literally and discursively. Judaea, by contrast, is foregrounded, not because it is more historically enduring, but because it had become more politically useful.

Within this shifting cartographic imagination, Josephus provides a revealing window into how spatial terminology was selectively reconfigured in the service of ethnopolitical identity. While ancient authors like Strabo recoded regional labels to fit the logic of imperial compartmentalization, Josephus, writing from within the ideological battleground of the late Second Temple period, engages in a parallel but distinctly Judaean re-mapping. Far from neutrally adopting inherited Greek geographic categories, Josephus actively repositions them to construct a narrative of Judaean centrality. His use of 'Judaea' and 'Palestine' is not merely descriptive but strategic, mobilized to delineate a sacred heartland from surrounding, often Gentile, territories. In contrast to earlier authors such as Herodotus, who employed Παλαιστίνη as a fluid and expansive term encompassing both coastal and inland zones, Josephus restricts its application to marginal spaces beyond the Judaean core. His spatial rhetoric thus participates in the broader transformation of geography into a tool of ideological delimitation, a process where naming becomes a mode of exclusion as much as description.

In various passages across the *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus juxtaposes 'Judaea' and 'Palestine' in ways that reveal a conscious effort to delimit the former as an ethnoreligious and historical heartland, while presenting the latter as a marginal space. For instance, describing the coordinated campaigns of Jonathan and Simon,[1] Josephus recounts how Jonathan thwarted an ambush planned by Demetrius II's generals, pursued the retreating forces across the Eleutherus River, and raided the Nabataeans and captured livestock and prisoners, which he sold in Damascus. Meanwhile, Simon traversed various towns, securing fortresses and installing garrisons 'in Judaea and Palestine as far as Ashkelon.'[2] This paired designation – Judaea and Palestine – suggests

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[1] Leaders of the Hasmonean (Maccabean) dynasty during the 2nd century B.C. Jonathan (d. ca. 142 B.C.) succeeded his brother Judas Maccabeus as leader of the Maccabean revolt against Seleucid rule, later assuming the high priesthood. Simon (d. 134 B.C.), the last surviving son of Mattathias, succeeded Jonathan and achieved de facto independence for Judaea. Both brothers played key roles in consolidating Jewish autonomy during the turbulent period of the Maccabean Revolt. See *1 Macabees* 9–13; J. *AJ* 13. passim.

[2] J. *AJ* 13.180. Σίμων ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν ἄπασαν ἐπελθὼν καὶ τὴν Παλαιστίνην ἕως Ἀσκάλωνος.

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a spatial distinction, with Judaea representing the inland highland heartland and Palestine denoting the adjacent coastal margin.

Josephus reinforces this conceptual geography by invoking earlier traditions. He asserts that 'Canaan, the fourth son of Ham, inhabited the country now called Judaea, and called it from his own name Canaan,'[1] thereby positioning Judaea as the historical successor of ancient Canaan. In contrast, the region 'from Gaza to Egypt' is said to have been settled by the descendants of Mesraim, 'though it retained the name of one only, the Philistim; for the Greeks call part of that country Palestine.'[2] The implication is clear; Palestine is not portrayed as a comprehensive designation for the southern Levant but is instead confined to a narrower, non-Jewish coastal zone.

The ideological thrust of Josephus's spatial discourse is most evident in the way he invokes deep biblical history to reinforce contemporary boundaries. Josephus reinforces this framework in his account of Abraham's journey to Gerar, which he locates 'in Palestine.'[3] The city of Gerar[4], situated between Gaza and Egypt, corresponds to the same narrow corridor he previously assigned to the Philistines. Once again, 'Palestine' functions not as a general territorial label but as a geopolitical marker of foreign space inhabited by Gentiles, ruled by Abimelech, and associated with moral peril.

A similar logic underpins his discussion of Shishak's invasion of Jerusalem. In book 8 of the *Antiquities*, Josephus refers to 'Palestine' in language drawn from Herodotus, only to distinguish the Jews from the surrounding peoples by stating that 'no other of the Syrians that live in Palestine, besides us alone, are circumcised.'[5] Here, he concedes the broader geographical use of the term but restricts legitimacy and religious distinctiveness to the Jews. Palestine, as a physical space, is acknowledged; yet it is also morally and theologically circumscribed.

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[1] J. *AJ* 1.134. Χαναναῖος δὲ τέταρτος ὢν Χάμου παῖς τὴν νῦν Ἰουδαίαν καλουμένην οἰκίσας ἀφ' αὐτοῦ Χαναναίαν προσηγόρευσεν.

[2] J. *AJ* 1.136. τῶν δὲ Μεσοραίου παίδων ὀκτὼ γενομένων οἱ πάντες τὴν ἀπὸ Γάζης ἕως Αἰγύπτου γῆν κατέσχον, μόνου δὲ Φυλιστίνου τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ἡ χώρα διεφύλαξε· Παλαιστίνην γὰρ οἱ Ἕλληνες αὐτοῦ τὴν μοῖραν καλοῦσι.

[3] J. *AJ* 1.207. Ἄβραμος δὲ μετῴκησεν εἰς Γέραρα τῆς Παλαιστίνης.

[4] According to the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Gerar is a town and district best known from the Hebrew Bible, marking the southern limit of Canaan near Gaza and the Mediterranean coast (*Genesis* 10:19). In the patriarchal narratives, Abraham and Sarah, as well as Isaac and Rebekah, are said to have dwelt in Gerar, where they encountered Abimelech, king of the Philistines (*Genesis* 20–26). The site is frequently portrayed as a borderland space involving episodes of moral testing, territorial negotiation, and conflict over water rights (*Genesis* 26:17–22). Later biblical texts recount military campaigns in the region (*2 Chronicles* 14:13–14). Modern scholarship often identifies Gerar with Tell Abu Hureireh (Tel Haror), 15 km southeast of Gaza. See James Douglas, Merrill Tenney, and Moisés Silva, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), s.v. Gerar, p.520.

[5] J. *AJ* 8.251. Φοίνικες γὰρ καὶ Σύροι οἱ ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ ὁμολογοῦσι παρ' Αἰγυπτίων μεμαθηκέναι· δῆλον οὖν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν ἄλλοι περιτεμνόμενοι τῶν ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ Σύρων ἢ μόνοι ἡμεῖς.

To emphasize the antiquity of Jewish territorial claims, Josephus cites the reign of King Uzziah[1] in the eighth century B.C., who he says subdued the Philistines, expanded Judaean control to the Egyptian border, and founded cities by the Red Sea.[2] These episodes are mobilized not as neutral history, but as ideological precedents. Josephus constructs a vision of Judaean sovereignty that encompasses formerly Philistine territory while avoiding the label 'Palestine'. In his hands, biblical conquest becomes a device for reclaiming space. Even in his historical summation at the close of the *Antiquities*, Josephus lists the trials of the Jews in 'Egypt, Syria, and Palestine…',[3] but never collapses these into a single homeland.

What emerges from these accounts is not merely terminological ambiguity, but deliberate spatial politics. Josephus consistently portrays 'Judaea' as historically and theologically bounded, while 'Palestine' serves as a conceptual exterior. This distinction is particularly significant in light of Herodotus's *Histories* 3.5 (see above) where the Greek historian notes that: 'From Cadytis (which, as I [Herodotus] judge, is a city not much smaller than Sardis) to the city of Ienysus, the seaports belong to the Arabians.' This passage positions the territory south of Cadytis (Gaza) under Arab control. Ienysus is most commonly identified with modern-day al-ʿArīsh, near the Egypt-Gaza border. This suggests that even in Herodotus's time, the region Josephus constrains as 'Palestine' was understood to be part of a broader Arabian sphere, not a distinct Philistine or Jewish domain. In this light, Josephus's definition of Palestine as merely the strip 'from Gaza to Egypt' must be understood not as an inherited geographic truth, but as a rhetorical move. It serves to inscribe Judaea at the center of sacred history, while displacing alternative claims to the periphery. His invocation of 'Judaea and Palestine' is thus not a casual phrasing but a structured ideological contrast, an effort to draw cartographic boundaries around identity itself.

In *Natural History*, completed around 77 CE, Pliny the Elder offers a revealing instance of how Roman imperial discourse restructured inherited geographic categories to reflect administrative subordination and economic utility. His treatment of Judaea and Palestine throughout the work displays a deliberate asymmetry, one that mirrors the broader Roman strategy of transforming local polities into functional instruments of empire. In Book 5, Pliny catalogues Judaea with remarkable bureaucratic precision. He

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[1] King Uzziah, also known as Azariah in some Old Testament passages (e.g., *2 Kings* 15:1–7), was the tenth king of the southern Kingdom of Judah. According to biblical chronology, he reigned for approximately 52 years during the 8th century B.C. (c. 792–740 B.C.). He is introduced in the *Book of Kings* and described in greater detail in *2 Chronicles* 26, where he is portrayed as a righteous and capable ruler in the early years of his reign. His leadership brought about military victories, the strengthening of Jerusalem's fortifications, and notable agricultural prosperity. However, his reign ended in disgrace when he presumptuously assumed priestly duties by offering incense in the Temple, an act reserved exclusively for the priesthood. As a result, he was struck with leprosy, which led to his isolation from royal affairs. His son Jotham subsequently governed in his stead as co-regent. See Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), passim.

[2] J. *AJ* 9.217. στρατευσάμενος δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ Παλαιστίνους καὶ νικήσας μάχῃ πόλεις αὐτῶν ἔλαβε κατὰ κράτος Γίτταν καὶ Ἰάμνειαν καὶ κατέσκαψεν αὐτῶν τὰ τείχη.

[3] J. *AJ* 20.259. περιέχει δ᾽ αὕτη τὴν ἀπὸ πρώτης γενέσεως ἀνθρώπου παράδοσιν μέχρι ἔτους δωδεκάτου τῆς Νέρωνος ἡγεμονίας τῶν ἡμῖν συμβεβηκότων τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις κατά τε τὴν Αἴγυπτον καὶ Συρίαν καὶ Παλαιστίνην, ὅσα τε πεπόνθαμεν ὑπὸ Ἀσσυρίων τε καὶ Βαβυλωνίων, τίνα τε Πέρσαι καὶ Μακεδόνες διατεθείκασιν ἡμᾶς, καὶ μετ᾽ ἐκείνους Ῥωμαῖοι· πάντα γὰρ οἶμαι μετ᾽ ἀκριβείας συντεταχέναι.

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writes: 'Beyond Idumaea and Samaria, Judaea extends far and wide. That part of it which joins up to Syria is called Galilaea, while that which is nearest to Arabia and Egypt bears the name of Peraea. This last is thickly covered with rugged mountains and is separated from the rest of Judaea by the river Jordanes. The remaining part of Judaea is divided into ten Toparchies, which we will mention in the following order: That of Hiericus, covered with groves of palm-trees, and watered by numerous springs, and those of Emmaüs, Lydda, Joppe, Acrabatena, Gophna, Thamna, Bethleptephene, Orina, in which formerly stood Hierosolyma [Jerusalem], by far the most famous city, not of Judaea only, but of the East, and Herodium, with a celebrated town of the same name.'[1] This is not a neutral list of settlements, but a map of imperial internal divisions, reflecting the extent to which Judaea had been absorbed and repurposed into the provincial architecture of Roman governance. Pliny ties the region to key natural resources: the river Jordan and the Asphaltites Lake, which produces bitumen in great abundance,[2] thus aligning it with Rome's extractive priorities.

By contrast, Palestine is mentioned in Pliny's work in an entirely different register. It appears in Book 5 as part of a historical layering of toponyms: 'The part [of Syria] which joins up to Arabia was formerly called Palaestina, Judaea, Coele, and Phoenice.'[3] Later, Pliny notes: 'On leaving Pelusium we come to the Camp of Chabrias, Mount Casius, the temple of Jupiter Casius, and the tomb of Pompeius Magnus. Ostracine, at a distance of sixty-five miles from Pelusium, is the frontier town of Arabia. After this, at the point where the Sirbonian Lake becomes visible, Idumaea and Palaestina begin.'[4] In this framework, Palestine is positioned as a borderland, a threshold region between Arabia, Idumaea, Phoenicia, and the Mediterranean coast.

What matters, however, is not mere mention, but function. Unlike Judaea, which is in detail divided, taxed, and endowed with unique products, Palestine in Pliny's narrative lacks internal structure. Pliny describes Palestine as encompassing not only the interior

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[1] Plin. *Nat*. 5.15. supra idumaeam et samariam iudaea longe lateque funditur. pars eius syriae iuncta galilaea vocatur, arabiae vero et aegypto proxima peraea, asperis dispersa montibus et a ceteris iudaeis iordane amne discreta. reliqua iudaea dividitur in toparchias decem quo dicemus ordine: hiericuntem palmetis consitam, fontibus riguam, emmaum, lyddam, iopicam, acrabatenam, gophaniticam, thamniticam, betholeptephenen, orinen, in qua fuere hierosolyma, longe clarissima urbium orientis, non iudaeae modo, herodium cum oppido inlustri eiusdem nominis. For the places mentioned, see John Bostock and Henry Riley (tr.), *The Natural History of Pliny*, Vol. 1 (London: Taylor and Francis, 1855), 427–428.

[2] Plin. *Nat*. 5.15. Iordanes amnis oritur e fonte Paneade, qui cognomen dedit Caesareae, de qua dicemus. Amnis amoenus et, quatenus locorum situs patitur, ambitiosus accolisque se praebens, velut invitus Asphaltiten lacum dirum natura petit, a quo postremo ebibitur aquasque laudatas perdit, pestilentibus mixtas … Asphaltites nihil praeter bitumen gignit, unde et nomen. Nullum corpus animalium recipit, tauri camelique fluitant; inde fama nihil in eo mergi. Cf. Plin. *Nat*. 2.106. The lake referred to as Asphaltites is conventionally identified with the Dead Sea.

[3] Plin. *Nat*. 5.13 .iuxta syria litus occupat, quondam terrarum maxuma et plurimis distincta nominibus. namque palaestine vocabatur qua contingit arabas, et iudaea et coele, dein phoenice et qua recedit intus damascena.

[4] Plin. *Nat*. 5.14. a pelusio chabriae castra, casius mons, delubrum iovis casii, tumulus magni pompei. ostracine arabia finitur, a pelusio [lxv] p. mox idumaea incipit et palaestina ab emersu sirbonis lacus, quem quidam [cl] circuitu tradidere.

lands beyond the Anti-Lebanon range, but also the broader highland districts that include several semi-autonomous cities and minor client territories, collectively referred to as 'the whole expanse of Palaestina' (*Palaestines tota laxitas*).[1] But again he offers no list of subdivisions, tax arrangements, or resource allocations.

This contrast becomes starker in Book 12, where Judaea is explicitly linked to imperial tribute: 'But to all other odours that of balsamum is considered preferable, a plant that has been only bestowed by Nature upon the land of Judaea … At the present day this tree pays us homage and tribute along with its native land.'[2] Elsewhere in the same Book 12, Palestine is demoted to a transit zone: 'The Arabians import from Carmania also the wood of a tree called stobrum, which they employ in fumigations … For these branches of commerce, they have opened the city of Carrae, which serves as an entrepot, and from which place they were formerly in the habit of proceeding to Gabba, at a distance of twenty days' journey, and thence to Palaestina, in Syria.'[3]

What emerges is not merely a contrast in naming but a political geography of function. Judaea, in Pliny's account, is not simply present; it is performative. Its visibility corresponds to its instrumentalization. As we have seen, Judaea in this period functioned not as a sovereign territory but as a client polity, a subordinated yet semi-autonomous actor. Pliny's textual geography reflects precisely this structure. His Judaea is a land that produces, yields, pays, and perfumes. It is counted, taxed, and classified. Unlike Palestine, which appears in Pliny's narrative only when rhetorical flourish or geographic orientation is required, Judaea is integrated into the empire's administrative grammar. Pliny's descriptive apparatus transforms geography into a legible imperial inventory, where client territories like Judaea are foregrounded not because of their ancient legacy, but because of their compliance, visibility, and utility. Palestine, once a broad Classical term encompassing coast and interior alike, is reduced in function to a conceptual borderland rather than an operative entity.

Pliny's account thus preserves a residual duality in imperial nomenclature, with 'Palestine' still present but it had receded to become a largely marginalized designation, confined to a limited function ‹while 'Judaea' occupies the detailed, administratively operative space of the Roman provincial order. In Tacitus – writing only a few decades later – this residual duality disappears altogether; 'Palestine' vanishes from the official

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[1] Plin. *Nat*. 5.14. A tergo eius Libanus mons orsus MD stadiis Zimyram usque porrigitur, quae Coeles Syriae cognominatur. Huic par, interiacente valle, mons adversus Antilibanus obtenditur, quondam muro coniunctus. Post eum introrsus Decapolitana regio praedictaeque cum ea tetrarchiae et Palaestines tota laxitas.

[2] Plin. *Nat*. 12.54. Sed omnibus odoribus praefertur balsamum, uni terrarum Iudaeae concessum, quondam in duobus tantum hortis, utroque regio, altero iugerum viginti non amplius, altero pauciorum. Ostendere arborum hanc urbi imperatores Vespasiani, clarumque dictu, a Pompeio Magno in triumpho arbores quoque duximus. Servit nunc haec ac tributa pendit cum sua gente, in totum alia natura quam nostri externique prodiderant. Quippe viti similior est quam myrto. Malleolis seri didicit nuper, vincta ut vitis, et implet colles vinearum modo. Quae sine adminiculis se ipsa sustinet, tondetur similiter fruticans ac rastris nitescit properatque nasci, intra tertium annum fructifera.

[3] Plin. *Nat*. 12.40. petunt et in carmanos arborem stobrum ad suffitus, perfusam vino palmeo accendentes. huius odor redit a camaris ad solum, iucundus, sed adgravans capita, citra dolorem tamen; hoc somnum aegris quaerunt. his commerciis carra oppidum aperuere, quod est ibi nundinarium. inde gabbam omnes petere solebant dierum viginti itinere et palaestinen syriam.

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descriptive register, replaced entirely by 'Judaea', whose framing as a client construct marks the culmination of a process already implicit in Pliny's asymmetry.

In *Ann.* 2, 'Judaea' appears paired with Syria in a joint petition for the remission of tribute: 'The provinces too of Syria and Judaea, exhausted by their burdens, implored a reduction of tribute.'[1] This coupling in a fiscal, not geographic, context, reveals that the name functions here as a tax register entry rather than as a self-standing territorial identity. In *Ann.* 12, Tacitus describes a period of mounting disorder in the province of Judaea under the reign of Claudius and after his assassination. Two imperial appointees – Ventidius Cumanus and Antonius Felix – shared authority over the territory, a division imposed not along any organic frontier but as part of an arrangement that placed different ethno-regional groups under separate rulers.[2] The arrangement coincided with, and arguably intensified, hostilities between Galileans and Samaritans, which erupted into raids, reprisals, and armed clashes.[3] The formulation '*ita [provincial] divisa ut huic [Cumanus] Galilaeorum natio, Felici Samaritae parerent*' encapsulates the artificial fragmentation of an already volatile province. Far from describing a neutral administrative boundary, this division illustrates an imperial strategy of control through localized rivalry, with Judaea serving as the overarching administrative shell within which sub-regions were set against each other.

This political geography acquires an added ideological charge in *Ann.* 15, where Tacitus, in the context of Nero's persecution of Christians, refers to Judaea as 'the first source of the evil' (*originem eius mali*).[4] By the time this epithet appears, the name had already been discursively framed as a space defined by disorder and moral suspicion. The moral-political stigma here is not incidental but the culmination of a representational trajectory in which Judaea functions as both a site of managed instability and an emblem of deviance within the imperial imagination. Tacitus' language thus encodes a dual logic of domination: administratively, through fragmentation and the use of local proxies; ideologically, through the projection of vice and sedition onto the very name of the province.

When we turn to Tacitus' *Histories*, the presence of 'Judaea' expands into a fully militarized theatre at a decisive moment in imperial history. In Book 1, it is presented as the base of Vespasian's command over three eastern legions,[5] and in Book 2, it becomes the hub of the eastern coalition that will carry the Flavian house to power, often linked explicitly with Syria and centered administratively in Caesarea, one of the two capitals alongside Antioch.[6] In Book 5, 'Judaea' frames Titus' preparations before the siege of

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[1] Tac. *Ann.* 2.42. et provinciae Syria atque Iudaea, fessae oneribus, deminutionem tributi orabant.

[2] Tac. *Ann.* 12.54. ita [provincial] divisa ut huic [Cumanus] Galilaeorum natio, Felici Samaritae parerent.

[3] Tac. *Ann.* 12.54. discordes olim et tum contemptu regentium minus coercitis odiis. igitur raptare inter se, immittere latronum globos, componere insidias et aliquando proeliis congredi.

[4] Tac. Ann. 15.44. non modo per Iudaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque.

[5] Tac. *Hist.* 1.10. bellum Iudaicum Flavius Vespasianus (ducem eum Nero delegerat) tribus legionibus administrabat.

[6] Tac. *Hist.* 2.5–6, 2.73, and 2.76–2.79.

Jerusalem, marking it as a locus of military mobilization.[1] The geographical excursus in *Hist*. 5.6 defines 'Judaea' as bounded east by Arabia, south by Egypt, west by Phoenicia and the sea, and north by Syria, with a detailed account of the Dead Sea.[2] This territorial outline matches precisely what earlier and later Greek geographers – culminating in Ptolemy (see below) – designated as 'Palestine'. Tacitus' decision to subsume it under the label 'Judaea' reflects more than a mere variation in nomenclature; it is a deliberate act of imperial redefinition, in which a long-established regional identity is overwritten by the title of a Roman client-province, thereby aligning geographic discourse with the structures of imperial control at that time. This is followed by a historical summary that moves from Seleucid rule[3] to the Hasmonaeans,[4] to Pompey's conquest,[5] to Herodian client-kings,[6] and finally to direct Roman governors,[7] tracing the evolution of 'Judaea' as an imperial experiment in indirect rule through compliant intermediaries. Finally, in *Hist*. 5.13, Tacitus reinterprets the prophecy that 'rulers would come from Judaea' as a reference to Vespasian and Titus,[8] thereby co-opting a local claim to sovereignty into an an argument for imperial legitimacy.

These passages make clear that in Tacitus's narrative, 'Judaea' functions not as a deeply rooted geographic reality but as the administrative shell of a Roman client system, devised for a particular constellation of imperial needs and sustained only so long as those needs were served. His account persistently frames the province through the mechanisms of Roman oversight – taxation, partition, militarization – while the broader and older spatial frame, known to earlier Greek authors as Palestine, remains

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[1] Tac. *Hist*. 5.1. Eiusdem anni principio Caesar Titus, perdomandae Iudaeae delectus a patre et privatis utriusque rebus militia clarus, maiore tum vi famaque agebat, certantibus provinciarum et exercituum studiis. atque ipse, ut super fortunam crederetur, decorum se promptumque in armis ostendebat, comitate et adloquiis officia provocans ac plerumque in opere, in agmine gregario militi mixtus, incorrupto ducis honore. tres eum in Iudaea legiones, quinta et decima et quinta decima, vetus Vespasiani miles, excepere. addidit e Syria duodecimam et adductos Alexandria duoetvicensimanos tertianosque; comitabantur viginti sociae cohortes, octo equitum alae, simul Agrippa Sohaemusque reges et auxilia regis Antiochi validaque et solito inter accolas odio infensa Iudaeis Arabum manus, multi quos urbe atque Italia sua quemque spes acciverat occupandi principem adhuc vacuum. his cum copiis finis hostium ingressus composito agmine, cuncta explorans paratusque decernere, haud procul Hierosolymis castra facit.

[2] Tac. *Hist*. 5.6. Terra finesque qua ad Orientem vergunt Arabia terminantur, a meridie Aegyptus obiacet, ab occasu Phoenices et mare, septentrionem e latere Syriae longe prospectant.

[3] Tac. *Hist*. 5.8 .postquam Macedones praepolluere, rex Antiochus demere superstitionem et mores Graecorum dare adnisus, quo minus taeterrimam gentem in melius mutaret, Parthorum bello prohibitus est; nam ea tempestate Arsaces desciverat.

[4] Tac. *Hist*. 5.8. tum Iudaei Macedonibus invalidis, Parthis nondum adultis (et Romani procul erant), sibi ipsi reges imposuere.

[5] Tac. *Hist*. 5.9. Romanorum primus Cn. Pompeius Iudaeos domuit.

[6] Tac. *Hist*. 5.9. regnum ab Antonio Herodi datum victor Augustus auxit. post mortem Herodis, nihil expectato Caesare, Simo quidam regium nomen invaserat. is a Quintilio Varo obtinente Syriam punitus, et gentem coercitam liberi Herodis tripertito rexere.

[7] Tac. *Hist*. 5.9. sub Tiberio quies. dein iussi a C. Caesare effigiem eius in templo locare arma potius sumpsere, quem motum Caesaris mors diremit. Claudius, defunctis regibus aut ad modicum redactis, Iudaeam provinciam equitibus Romanis aut libertis permisit.

[8] Tac. *Hist*. 5.13. pluribus persuasio inerat antiquis sacerdotum litteris contineri eo ipso tempore fore ut valesceret Oriens profectique Iudaea rerum potirentur. quae ambages Vespasianum ac Titum praedixerat.

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absent. This absence is not because it had vanished from lived geography, but because it had been deliberately effaced from the register of imperial description. In Tacitus's hands, the land is reinscribed as a governable segment, its horizons narrowed to the confines of client rule, and its historical depth compressed into the lifespan of a transient Roman administrative experiment. Within the logic of his age, the silence on 'Palestine' becomes an assertion of Rome's prerogative to redefine space itself. The erasure of an inherited name in favor of a temporary provincial construct, which represents an order in which the map reflects not the intrinsic identity of the land but the architecture of imperial power. A power whose experiment in client governance would collapse decisively in the Bar Kokhba revolt, and which, as we shall see, would then restore to the province its older name of Palestine. In Tacitus, 'Judaea' is thus the short-lived facade of imperial clienthood; 'Palestine' is the land's enduring name, awaiting its return.

The transition from Tacitus to Suetonius reveals a shared reliance on the Roman designation 'Judaea', with a marked difference in the manner of its deployment. In Tacitus, Judaea appears as a defined administrative-geographical unit integrated into a broader political-military narrative. In Suetonius – writing in the early second century CE, during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian, and serving as a senior imperial official with access to the archives – it is reframed as a component of imperial biography, invoked in contexts of triumph, oath-taking, the interpretation of prophecy, and demonstrations of military competence. The absence of 'Palestine' in his material does not reflect the disappearance of the geographical reality, but rather the nature of his method, which aimed the compilation of official records, anecdotes, and memoranda selected to shape the image of the ruler, with emphasis on what resonated within Rome's ceremonial and political memory.

In the *Life of Domitian*, Suetonius records that he (*i.e.* Domitian) 'attended them [Vespesian and Titus] in their triumph for the conquest of Judaea,'[1] which is a formulation that reproduces the well-known Flavian slogan 'Judaea Capta' preserved on coins.[2] The toponym here functions less as a precise geographic description than as a commemorative symbol of military victory, positioning Domitian within the familial narrative of imperial glory.

In the *Life of Titus*, Judaea is presented as the theatre of major military operations: Titus 'took the two strong cities of Tarichaea and Gamala, in Judaea;'[3] an expansive usage encompassing regions of Galilee and the Golan. This is preceded by the ideological-political framework Suetonius inserts in the *Life of Vespasian*: 'A firm persuasion had long prevailed through all the East, that it was fated for the empire of the

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[1] Suet. *Dom*. 2. triumphum utriusque Iudaicum ... comitatus est.

[2] See Dan Bearag, 'The Palestinian 'Judaea Capta' Coins of Vespasian and Titus and the Era on the Coins of Agrippa II Minted under the Flavians,' *The Numismatic Chronicle*, Seventh Series, Vol. 18 (138) (1978), 14–23; David Hendin, 'Echoes of "Judaea Capta": The Nature of Domitian's Coinage of Judaea and Vicinity,' *Israel Numismatic Research* 2 (2007), 123–130.

[3] Suet. *Tit*. 4 Tarichaeas et Gamalam urbes Iudaeae validissimas in potestatem redegit.

world, at that time, to devolve on someone who should go forth from Judaea,'[1] followed by his assertion that 'the prediction referred to a Roman emperor, as the event shewed.'[2] Here, a local prophecy is appropriated and reinterpreted to legitimize the accession of a Roman princeps. The choice of Vespasian, Suetonius notes, was made 'in preference to all others, both for his own activity, and on account of the obscurity of his origin and name, being a person of whom there could be not the least jealousy,'[3] explicitly linking the province to the political calculus of selecting a safe and reliable commander. This deployment of the toponym recurs in the scene of the military oath, where 'upon the fifth of the ides of the same month [28 July], the army in Judaea, where he then was, also swore allegiance to him.'[4] Judaea here functions as a unit of military and administrative mobilization, a site deployed in the consolidation of central authority. The familial-ceremonial dimension is equally evident; Domitian's appearance as a youth on a white horse in the triumph for the conquest of Judaea[5] embeds the name within the symbolic vocabulary of dynastic loyalty and Flavian succession.

The province also appears as the setting for moments in which military achievement intersects with political suspicion. Suetonius's account of Titus is particularly revealing. After Galba's accession Titus 'was sent to congratulate him,'[6] attracting speculation that he might be adopted; consulting the oracle of Venus at Paphos, he received assurances of obtaining the empire for himself,[7] and, 'being left to finish the reduction of Judaea,'[8] Judaea,'[8] he [Suetinus] reports that in the final assault on Jerusalem Titus 'slew seven of of its defenders, with the like number of arrows, and took it upon his daughter's birthday.'[9] 'So great was the joy and attachment of the soldiers' that they 'unanimously saluted him [Titus] by the title of Emperor,' even seeking to detain him; an episode that 'gave rise to the suspicion' that he [Titus] would claim 'the government of the East.'[10] This episode situates Judaea not only as a battlefield but as a stage upon which imperial legitimacy could be asserted or contested, depending on the perceptions and loyalties of the forces stationed there.

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[1] Suet. *Ves*. 4. Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis ut eo tempore Judaea profecti rerum potirentur.

[2] Suet. *Ves*. 4. Id de imperatore Romano, quantum eventu postea patuit, praedictum. Cf. Tac. *Hist*. 5.13 above.

[3] Suet. *Ves*. 4. Eligitur Vespasianus praecipue ob industriam, quod et familiae eius et nomini imperii fortuna nihil obnoxii invideretur.

[4] Suet. *Ves*. 6. Iudaicus deinde exercitus V. Idus Iul. apud ipsum iurauit.

[5] Suet. *Dom*. 2. ac triumphum utriusque Iudaicum equo albo comitatus est.

[6] Suet. *Tit*. 5. Galba mox tenente rem p. missus ad gratulandum.

[7] Suet. *Tit*. 5.

[8] Suet. *Tit*. 5. ad perdomandam Iudaeam relictus.

[9] Suet. *Tit*. 5. nouissima Hierosolymorum oppugnatione duodecim propugnatores totidem sagittarum confecit ictibus, cepitque ea natali filiae suae.

[10] Suet. *Tit*. 5. tanto militum gaudio ac favore, ut in gratulatione imperatorem eum consalutaverint et subinde decedentem provincia detinuerint, suppliciter nec non et minaciter efflagitantes, aut remaneret aut secum omnis pariter abduceret. unde nata suspicio est, quasi desciscere a patre Orientisque sibi regnum vindicare temptasset.

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Methodologically, Suetonius does not offer a detailed geographic mapping of the province nor situate it within extended administrative frameworks, as Tacitus does. Instead, the name surfaces where it aligns with the trajectory of imperial biography: a victory, an oath, a reinterpreted prophecy, or an achievement validating the ruler's status. The result is that 'Judaea' operates as a functional designation within the machinery of Roman rule, an instrument for representing domination and associating the ruler with the territory subdued, while 'Palestine' disappears entirely from the narrative, not due to its absence from the lived geography, but because the biographical register of imperial historiography did not require it.

Claudius Ptolemy's Γεωγραφικὴ Ὑφήγησις (*Geography*), represents the apex of Hellenistic-Roman scientific geography. Unlike previous authors such as Diodorus, Strabo, Pliny, Josephus, Tacitus, or Suetonius, whose geographical reflections were shaped by historical narrative, ethnographic speculation, or imperial rhetoric, Ptolemy offers a systematized cartographic vision of the inhabited world, grounded in coordinates and mathematical precision. His work is not merely descriptive but prescriptive, mapping the empire in terms aligned with its administrative logic and imperial coherence. In this context, Ptolemy's treatment of the region designated as 'Palestine', or 'Judaea', acquires exceptional significance. It testifies not only to the geographic extent of the southern Levant, but also to the semantic stabilization of the term Palestine as a formal, supra-ethnic, and territorially expansive designation, increasingly detached from the more localized and ideologically charged label Judaea.

In Ptolemy's *Geography*, composed in the mid-2nd century CE in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba revolt, this usage marks a new trajectory in the Roman-era reactivation and formalization of the ancient name 'Palestine', aligning it with the imperial cartographic vocabulary that superseded 'Judaea'. At the outset of Book 5, Chapter 16, Ptolemy states unambiguously: 'Palestine (Syria), which is also called Judaea.'[1] This formulation, placing Palestine first and treating Judaea as an alternate appellation, reveals that the two terms were understood as referring to the same geographical space. However, the order of presentation suggests that Palestine had already begun to assume terminological primacy. This dual naming, moreover, points to a transitional moment in imperial geography in which older ethnic or religious designations had not yet been erased, but were increasingly being subordinated to a broader, regionally stable nomenclature. Ptolemy delineates the boundaries of this space with remarkable precision: to the north, Syria; to the east and south, Arabia Petraea; to the west, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.[2] These boundaries accord roughly with those suggested by Herodotus and later echoed by Arrian and Cassius Dio (see below), but Ptolemy's framing is far more rigid and cartographically exact.

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[1] Ptol. *Geo.* 5.16.1. Παλαιστίνη (Συρία), ἥτις καὶ Ἰουδαία καλεῖται.

[2] Ptol. *Geo.* 5.16.1. Ἡ Παλαιστίνη (Συρία), ἥτις καὶ Ἰουδαία καλεῖται, περιορίζεται ἀπὸ μὲν ἄρακῶν Συοῖα κατὰ τὴν ἐκτεθειμένην γραμμὴν, ἀπὸ δὲ ἄνατολῶν καὶ μεσημβρίας Ἀραβίᾳ Πετραίᾳ κατὰ γραμμὴν. τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ πρὸς τῇ Συρίᾳ ἑωθινοῦ ὁρίου μέχρι τοῦ πρὸς τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ πέρατος, οὗ πέρατος ἡ θέσις….. εδ δ ̄λ γό ἀπὸ δὲ δύσεως τῷ τε ἐντεῦθεν μέχρι θαλάσσης ἐκτεθειμένῳ τῆς Αἰγύπτου μέρει, καὶ τῷ ἐφεξῆς μέχρι τοῦ ὁρίου τῆς Συρίας πελάγει κατὰ περιγραφὴν τοιαύτην.

This territorial breadth is further underscored in the detailed list of cities Ptolemy includes under the heading of Palestine. He begins with the coastal cities listed after the mouth of the Chorseas River: Caesarea Stratonos, Apollonia, Joppe, the harbor of Iamneiton, Azotos, Ashkelon, the harbor of Gaza, and Anthedon. He then proceeds inland, enumerating the settlements of Galilee: Sepphoris, Kaparkotnei (or Capernaum), Ioulias, and Tiberias, followed by those of Samaria, namely Neapolis and Thena. In the west of the Jordan River, he records Rapheia, Gaza, Iamneia, Lydda, Antipatris, Drousias, Sebaste, Baitogabrei, and Sebous (or Esbous), together with Emmaous, Gouphna, Archelais, Phaselis, and Hierikos. Jerusalem appears as 'Hierosolyma, now called Aelia Capitolina,' accompanied by Thamna, Engadda, Bedoro, and Thamaro. East of the Jordan he lists Kosmos (or Kormos), Livias, Callirhoe, Iazoros, and Epikairos, while in Idoumaia – wholly to the west of the river – he includes Berzama, Kaparorsa, Gemmarouris, and Elousa.[1] Notably, he includes cities east of the Jordan River,[2] demonstrating that Palestine, in his conception, encompassed both banks of the Jordan and extended well beyond the coastal strip.

These data points – recorded with precise coordinates – contradict any attempts to confine the term Palestine to the narrow Philistine coastline. Instead, Ptolemy's usage reflects a conception of the region as a vast and variegated space incorporating highland, coastal, and trans-Jordanian zones. A particularly significant detail appears when Ptolemy records the city of Jerusalem under both its traditional and colonial names: 'Hierosolyma [Jerusalem], which is now called Aelia Capitolina.'[3] This acknowledgment of the city's Romanized name – imposed after the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt – confirms Ptolemy's awareness of the erasure and administrative restructuring implemented by the imperial authorities. His *Geography* thus serves not merely as a neutral map, but as a historical witness to the imperial recoding of urban and regional identities.

This terminological logic is repeated in the opening of the next chapter, where he defines the northern border of Arabia Petraea as adjoining 'Palestine, that is, Judaea',[4] again suggesting equivalence but also indicating that Palestine had become the more commonly accepted designation. The persistence of both names in parallel reflects a

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[1] Ptol. *Geo*. 5.16.2–5.16.10. For reasons of length, the original Greek text – together with the numerous coordinate data given by Ptolemy for each locality – is not reproduced here in full, unlike the practice followed elsewhere in this study. The reference provided corresponds to the complete passage in the standard editions of the *Geography*.

[2] Ptol. *Geo*. 5.16.9.

[3] Ptol. *Geo*. 5.16.8. Ἱεροσόλυμα, ἡ νῦν καλουμένη Αἰλία Καπιτωλίας.

[4] Ptol. *Geo*. 55.17.1. Ἡ Πετραία Ἀραβία περιορίζεται ἀπὸ μὲν δύσεως τῷ ἐκτεθειμένῳ τῆς Αἰγύπτου μέρει, ἄπο δὲ ἄρκτων τῇ τε Παλαιστίνη Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ τῷ μέρει τῆς Συρίας κατὰ τὰς διωρισμένας αὐτῶν γραμμᾶς. The phrase 'τῇ τε Παλαιστίνη Ἰουδαίᾳ' consists of the definite article (τῇ, dat. sg. fem.), the enclitic connective particle (τε), and two proper nouns in the dative singular feminine (Παλαιστίνη and Ἰουδαίᾳ) in immediate succession. The absence of a repeated article before the second noun marks it as appositive rather than coordinate, a common Greek idiom whereby the second term renames or glosses the first. Thus, the construction signifies identity (Palestine, that is, Judaea) rather than juxtaposition of distinct territories, paralleling Ptolemy's explicit formula Παλαιστίνη (Συρία), ἥτις καὶ Ἰουδαία καλεῖται. (Palestine (Syria) which is also called Judaea) in the beginning of 5.16.1.

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moment of semantic overlap, but the growing prominence of Palestine reveals its ascendancy within imperial cartography.

Thus, Ptolemy's account marks a juncture in the spatial reconfiguration of the southern Levant. Geography is no longer merely a reflection of ethnic or religious identity; it is an instrument of imperial rationalization. The region is rendered legible not through myth or tradition, but through coordinates and grids. By the time of Ptolemy's writing, the name Judaea – though still in circulation – had been partially eclipsed by Palestine, which now served as the dominant label for the region. This anticipates the full semantic displacement articulated in Appian and Cassius Dio, for whom Palestine becomes the enduring geographic frame while Judaea recedes into the background as a failed political fiction as will be discussed shortly. Ptolemy thus occupies an important place in this discursive transformation; he registers the name Judaea, but maps Palestine.

Appian of Alexandria writes in a period following the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt and during the administrative re-designation of the province as 'Syria Palaestina'. This temporal and political context accounts for the marked divergence in his terminology from that of Tacitus and Suetonius, who, prior to this shift, employed Judaea as the prevailing administrative label. In Appian's texts, 'Palestine' is restored as the natural geographical framework, while 'the Jews' are referred to as an ethno-fiscal entity within it, not as a province in their own right. This is evident from the outset, when he delineates the bounds of Roman dominion over the Mediterranean: 'Here turning our course we take in Palestine-Syria, and beyond it a part of Arabia. The Phoenicians hold the country next to Palestine on the sea, and beyond the Phoenician territory are Coele-Syria.'[1] The compound term Συρία τε ἡ Παλαιστίνη situates Palestine within a broad geographical orbit, encompassing both coastal and inland zones up to the Euphrates.

When moving from geographical preface to the history of Roman conquest, Appian makes the administrative shift explicit: 'In this way the Romans, without fighting, came into possession of Cilicia and both inland Syria and Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine, and all the other countries bearing the Syrian name from the Euphrates to Egypt and the sea. The Jewish nation still resisted, and Pompey conquered them, sent their king, Aristobulus, to Rome, and destroyed their greatest, and to them holiest, city, Jerusalem, as Ptolemy, the first king of Egypt, had formerly done. It was afterward rebuilt, and Vespasian destroyed it again, and Hadrian did the same in our time. On account of these rebellions the tribute imposed upon all Jews is heavier per capita than upon the generality of taxpayers.'[2] Here, Palestine is listed as one of the fixed Syrian provinces,

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[1] App. *Rom. Hist.* pref. 1.2. Ἐπιστρέφοντι δὲ τὸν πλοῦν καὶ περιιόντι Συρία τε ἡ Παλαιστίνη, καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτὴν μοῖρα Ἀράβων, ἐχόμενοι δὲ τῶν Παλαιστινῶν Φοίνικες ἐπὶ τῇ θαλάσσῃ, καὶ Φοινίκων ὕπερθεν ἥ τε κοίλη Συρία.

[2] App. *Syr.* 8.50. οὕτω μὲν δὴ Κιλικίας τε καὶ Συρίας τῆς τε μεσογείου καὶ κοίλης καὶ Φοινίκης καὶ Παλαιστίνης, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα Συρίας ἀπὸ Εὐφράτου μέχρι Αἰγύπτου καὶ μέχρι θαλάσσης ὀνόματα, ἀμαχὶ Ῥωμαῖοι κατέσχον. ἐν δὲ γένος ἔτι τὸ Ἰουδαίων ἐνιστάμενον ὁ Πομπήιος ἐξεῖλε κατὰ κράτος, καὶ τὸν βασιλέα Ἀριστόβουλον ἔπεμψεν ἐς Ῥώμην, καὶ τὴν μεγίστην πόλιν Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ ἁγιωτάτην αὐτοῖς κατέσκαψεν, ἣν δὴ καὶ Πτολεμαῖος ὁ πρῶτος Αἰγύπτου βασιλεὺς καθῃρήκει, καὶ Οὐεσπασιανὸς αὖθις οἰκισθεῖσαν κατέσκαψε, καὶ Ἀδριανὸς αὖθις ἐπ' ἐμοῦ. καὶ διὰ ταῦτ' ἐστιν Ἰουδαίοις ἅπασιν ὁ φόρος τῶν σωμάτων βαρύτερος τῆς ἄλλης περιοικίας.

while the Jews are singled out as a group subject to a heavier fiscal burden. Judaea disappears as an administrative entity, replaced by the regional-geographical identity, with Appian dating Hadrian's destruction as occurring 'in our own time': καὶ Ἀδριανὸς αὖθις ἐπ᾽ ἐμοῦ.

Appian's account also highlights the Roman practice of indirect administration through local kings and leaders: 'Pompey put the various nations that had belonged to the Seleucides under kings or chiefs of their own.'[1] He then notes that Rome began to appoint governors over Syria; Gabinius was the first, then Crassus, after him Lucius Bibulus, and Saxa,[2] placing Palestine effectively under the jurisdiction of the governors of Syria, with no mention of Judaea as a separate polity. In the context of the civil wars, 'Palestine' appears as a routine theatre of operations: 'Cassius surrounded him [Allienus] unawares in Palestine and compelled him to surrender.'[3] This is reiterated with greater detail: 'Cassius surrounded him [Allienus] in Palestine unexpectedly, while he was in ignorance of what had happened, and compelled him to come to terms and surrender his army, as he did not dare to fight with four legions against eight.'[4] The usage here confirms that 'Palestine' functions as a standard geographical designation for identifying military locations.

In describing Antony's eastern journey, Palestine appears within a network of territories subject to taxation and political rearrangement; he [Antony] went to 'Phrygia, Mysia, Galatia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Coele-Syria, Palestine, Ituraea, and the other provinces of Syria, he imposed heavy contributions on all, and acted as arbiter between kings and cities.'[5] This situates Palestine within a coherent set of territories possessing stable geographical identities, managed through taxation and arbitration between local powers.

The name also occurs in the Mithridatic narrative as a region incorporated into Roman control by Pompey: he 'brought under Roman rule without fighting, those parts of Cilicia that were not yet subject to it, and the remainder of Syria which lies along the Euphrates, and the countries called Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine, also Idumea and Ituraea, and the other parts of Syria by whatever name called.'[6] In the aftermath of Pompey's victories, we read that he founded cities, of which 'in Palestine, the city now

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[1] App. *Syr.* 8.50. Πομπήιος μὲν οὖν τῶνδε τῶν ὑπὸ τοῖς Σελευκίδαις γενομένων ἐθνῶν τοῖς μὲν ... ἐπέστησεν οἰκείους βασιλέας ἢ δυνάστας.

[2] App. *Syr.* 8.51.

[3] App. *BC.* 3.11.78. καὶ αὐτὸν ὁ Κάσσιος οὐδὲν προπεπυσμένον ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ περιέλαβέ τε καὶ ἠνάγκασεν ἑαυτῷ προσθέσθαι.

[4] App. *BC.* 4.8.59. καὶ αὐτὸν ὁ Κάσσιος ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ, τῶν ὄντων οὐ προπεπυσμένον, ἄφνω περιέλαβέ τε καὶ ἠνάγκασε προσθέσθαι οἱ καὶ παραδοῦναι τὸν στρατόν, δείσαντα τέσσαρσι τέλεσι μάχεσθαι πρὸς ὀκτώ.

[5] App. *BC.* 5.1.7. ἐπιπαριὼν δὲ Φρυγίαν τε καὶ Μυσίαν καὶ Γαλάτας τοὺς ἐν Ἀσίᾳ Καππαδοκίαν τε καὶ Κιλικίαν καὶ Συρίαν τὴν κοίλην καὶ Παλαιστίνην καὶ τὴν Ἰτουραίαν καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα γένη Σύρων, ἅπασιν ἐσφορὰς ἐπέβαλλε βαρείας καὶ δίητα πόλεσι καὶ βασιλεῦσιν.

[6] App. *Mith.* 16.106. καὶ Κιλικίας δὲ ὅσα οὔπω Ῥωμαίοις ὑπήκουε, καὶ τὴν ἄλλην Συρίαν, ὅση τε περὶ Εὐφράτην ἐστὶ καὶ κοίλη καὶ Φοινίκη καὶ Παλαιστίνη λέγεται, καὶ τὴν Ἰδουμαίων καὶ Ἰτουραίων, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα ὀνόματα Συρίας, ἐπιὼν ἀμαχὶ Ῥωμαίοις καθίστατο.

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called Seleucis,'[1] and that 'he restored other towns in many places, that had been
destroyed or damaged, in Pontus, Palestine, Coele-Syria, and Cilicia.'[2]

In the same Book 17, Appian provides a detailed enumeration of the enemy leaders
and dignitaries taken captive by Pompey and paraded in his triumphal procession;
among those listed appears 'Aristobulus, king of the Jews', who was shortly thereafter
put to death.[3] The local Jewish king appears within the geographical framework of
Palestine, not as the sovereign of an independent Judaea. In the final enumeration of
conquests, Palestine is again among the listed gains: '… the Syrian countries, Phoenicia,
Coele-Syria, Palestine, and the territory lying between them and the river Euphrates.'[4]
Again, the inclusion of Palestine alongside major regions such as Coele-Syria and
Phoenicia reflects an understanding of it as a fully integrated provincial unit within the
Roman administrative network. Its association with both inland and coastal territories,
and the absence of any delimitation to a narrow littoral, stand in direct contradiction to
any construal that would restrict it geographically.

So, across his geographical preface, Syrian and Mithridatic narratives, and the civil
war books, Appian consistently deploys 'Palestine' as a broad geographical-political
frame absorbed into the Roman provincial system, while Judaea is reduced to an ethno-
fiscal term in contexts of revolt, special taxation, deposition of rulers, and destruction of
cities. This reflects the post-Bar Kokhba shift towards entrenching 'Palestine' in the
Roman geographical-political vocabulary, in place of the now-defunct administrative
fiction of Judaea.

A later yet culturally instructive witness to the enduring geographic idea of Palestine
is Pausanias in his book Ἑλλάδος Περιήγησις (*Description of Greece*). Pausanias
engages the toponym in passing, as part of an antiquarian and travel-literature discourse.
These seemingly incidental references, spread across disparate books of his work, reveal
how 'Palestine' functioned in the Greek intellectual imagination not merely as a Roman
provincial designation, but as a cultural, geographic, and even botanical point of
reference. In Book 1, the name appears in a religious-ethnographic context. Describing
the sanctuary of the Heavenly Aphrodite at Athens, Pausanias traces the cult's
transmission through multiple peoples: 'after the Assyrians the Paphians of Cyprus and
the Phoenicians who live at Ashkelon in Palestine; the Phoenicians taught her worship

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[1] App. *Mith*. 17.117. Παλαιστίνης δὲ ἡ νῦν Σελευκίς.

[2] App. *Mith*. 17.115. καὶ ἑτέρας πολλαχοῦ κατενεχθείσας ἢ βεβλαμμένας διωρθοῦτο περί τε τὸν Πόντον
καὶ Παλαιστίνην καὶ κοίλην Συρίαν καὶ Κιλικίαν.

[3] App. *Mith*. 17.117. Ἰουδαίων βασιλεὺς Ἀριστόβουλος … Ἀριστόβουλος εὐθὺς ἀνηρέθη.

[4] App. *Mith*. 17.118. ὧδε μὲν Ῥωμαῖοι Βιθυνοὺς καὶ Καππαδόκας ὅσα τε αὐτοῖς ὅμορα ἔθνη ἐπὶ τὸν
Πόντον κατοικεῖ τὸν Εὔξεινον, βασιλέα Μιθριδάτην τεσσαράκοντα δύο ἔτεσι μάλιστα καθελόντες,
ὑπηγάγοντο σφίσιν ὑπήκοα εἶναι. τῷ δὲ αὐτῷ πολέμῳ καὶ Κιλικίας τὰ μήπω σφίσι κατήκοα καὶ Συρίας
τήν τε Φοινίκην καὶ κοίλην καὶ Παλαιστίνην καὶ τὴν ἐς τὸ μεσόγειον ἐπὶ ποταμὸν Εὐφράτην, οὐδὲν ἔτι τῷ
Μιθριδάτῃ προσήκοντα, ῥύμῃ τῆσδε τῆς νίκης προσέλαβον, καὶ φόρους τοῖς μὲν αὐτίκα τοῖς δὲ ὕστερον
ἔταξαν.

to the people of Cythera.'[1] Here, 'Palestine' is not reduced to a coastal strip; rather, Ashkelon is presented as one city within the broader, recognized expanse of Palestine. The toponym thus operates as a cultural-geographic coordinate situating Ashkelon within a transregional network of cultic transmission extending from Assyria and Cyprus to the Greek world, aligning with earlier Classical usages in which 'Palestine' designates a cultural zone embracing both coast and hinterland.

A particularly revealing case comes in book 10, where the 'Hebrews' are located 'above Palestine' (ὑπὲρ τῆς Παλαιστίνης).[2] On the surface, this is a purely directional expression, anchoring one people's location relative to a well-known region. In the Roman client-polity phase, Judaea functioned as an ethnically-marked highland interior under indirect rule, its position contrasted against the districts of the Philistian–Phoenician plain. By Pausanias's time, however, this administrative and political role had collapsed; the renaming of the province to Syria Palaestina had effectively erased 'Judaea' from official cartography. Pausanias does not use the name Judaea. Instead, the upland zone is marked ethnographically (Ἑβραίοις, 'the Hebrews') and geographically in relation to Palestine, not as a political entity. This absence itself reflects the success of the Roman imperial reframing, in which 'Palestine' persisted as the dominant geographic signifier while 'Judaea' receded into obsolescence.

A third attestation occurs in Book 9, where the name is invoked in a botanical-economic comparison: In Aulis, 'In front of the sanctuary grow palm-trees, the fruit of which, though not wholly edible like the dates of Palestine, yet are riper than those of Ionia.'[3] 'Palestine' functions as a benchmark of agricultural quality and ripeness, indicating that the region was associated in Greek knowledge not only with its cultic or ethnographic features but also with distinctive agricultural products, specifically, date-palms of superior edibility.

These three passages reveal a conception of Palestine that is markedly different in register from Ptolemy's coordinate-based territorialization or Appian and Cassius Dio's retrospective imperial reframing (the latter will be discussed in detail shortly). In Pausanias, 'Palestine' is neither systematically bounded nor politically defined; it is instead a polyvalent cultural-geographic signifier. It anchors Ashkelon within a network of Near Eastern cult transmission, serves as a fixed point for orienting adjacent peoples (the Hebrews), and functions as an agricultural point of comparison. The persistence of such usages in the mid-second century CE suggests that the Greek educated elite retained a mental geography in which 'Palestine' was a meaningful, historically resonant, and culturally rich region, regardless of its status within the Roman provincial system.

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[1] Paus. 1.14.7. πλησίον δὲ ἱερόν ἐστιν Ἀφροδίτης Οὐρανίας. πρώτοις δὲ ἀνθρώπων Ἀσσυρίοις κατέστη σέβεσθαι τὴν Οὐρανίαν, μετὰ δὲ Ἀσσυρίους Κυπρίων Παφίοις καὶ Φοινίκων τοῖς Ἀσκάλωνα ἔχουσιν ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ, παρὰ δὲ Φοινίκων Κυθήριοι μαθόντες σέβουσιν.

[2] Paus. 10.12.9. ἐπετράφη δὲ καὶ ὕστερον τῆς Δημοῦς παρ' Ἑβραίοις τοῖς ὑπὲρ τῆς Παλαιστίνης γυνὴ χρησμολόγος, ὄνομα δὲ αὐτῇ Σάββη: Βηρόσου δὲ εἶναι πατρὸς καὶ Ἐρυμάνθης μητρός φασι Σάββην: οἱ δὲ αὐτὴν Βαβυλωνίαν, ἕτεροι δὲ Σίβυλλαν καλοῦσιν Αἰγυπτίαν.

[3] Paus. 9.19.8. φοίνικες δὲ πρὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ πεφύκασιν, οὐκ ἐς ἅπαν ἐδώδιμον παρεχόμενοι καρπὸν ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ, τοῦ δὲ ἐν Ἰωνίᾳ τῶν φοινίκων καρποῦ πεπανώτερον.

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The geographic and political conceptualization of Palestine and Judaea in the *Roman History* of Cassius Dio marks a critical point in the Roman imperial reordering of the southern Levant. As a Roman statesman writing in the early third century CE, after the failure of successive experiments in local autonomy and client kingship, Dio presents a retrospective map that deliberately reasserts 'Palestine' as the natural, enduring designation of the region, while relegating 'Judaea' to the status of a transient, politicized, and ultimately disposable construct. In contrast to the fragmented ethnopolitical vocabulary employed by earlier sources, Dio's narrative offers a vision of geographic continuity rooted in imperial ideology, one that restores rather than redefines the Levantine space.

Dio's clearest articulation of this framework appears in Book 37, where he describes Pompey's eastern campaign: 'This was the course of events at that time in Palestine; for this is the name that has been given from of old to the whole country extending from Phoenicia to Egypt along the inner sea. They have also another name that they have acquired: the country has been named Judaea, and the people themselves Jews.'[1] The juxtaposition here is telling. 'Palestine' is marked explicitly as the natural name ἐκ παλαιοῦ, encompassing the full geographical expanse. By contrast, 'Judaea' is introduced as a derivative designation, acquired at a later stage and associated with a specific ethnopolitical formation. The syntax of Dio's Greek implies a fundamental distinction between a regional geography of long-standing coherence (Palestine) and a temporary political naming imposed by contingent historical developments (Judaea). This distinction is not merely semantic; it reflects a broader Roman cartographic logic that sought to neutralize rebellion and ethnonational fragmentation by reintegrating regions into imperial topographies.

The concept of 'Judaea' had become, by Dio's time, synonymous with unrest, exceptionality, and failed autonomy. By effacing it, Dio participates in a historiographical project of imperial rectification, whereby the nomenclature of the map is aligned with the administrative and ideological needs of the empire. Throughout his narrative, Palestine is treated as the default spatial frame; the landscape upon which Roman history of the region unfolds. During Gabinius' campaign, Dio states: 'He himself then reached Palestine, arrested Aristobulus, who had escaped from Rome and was causing some disturbance, sent him to Pompey, imposed tribute upon the Jews, and after this invaded Egypt.'[2] Again, it is 'Palestine' that is the geographical constant, while Judaea is reduced to a tax-paying subset within it. Likewise, during Caesar's civil war, Dio refers to military action directed 'to Palestine'[3], not Judaea, a terminological choice that detaches the geography from the failed institutions that had once claimed it.

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[1] Dio 37.16.5. ταῦτα μὲν τότε ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ ἐγένετο· οὕτω γὰρ τὸ σύμπαν ἔθνος, ὅσον ἀπὸ τῆς Φοινίκης μέχρι τῆς Αἰγύπτου παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τὴν ἔσω παρήκει, ἀπὸ παλαιοῦ κέκληται. ἔχουσι δὲ καὶ ἕτερον ὄνομα ἐπίκτητον· ἥ τε γὰρ χώρα Ἰουδαία καὶ αὐτοὶ Ἰουδαῖοι ᾽ὠνομάδαται.

[2] Dio 39.56.6. ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον ἐξέδωκεν, αὐτὸς δὲ ἐς τὴν Παλαιστίνην ἐλθὼν τόν τε Ἀριστόβουλον ῾διαδρὰς γὰρ ἐκ τῆς ῾Ρώμης ὑπετάραττέ τί συνέλαβε καὶ τῷ Πομπηίῳ ἔπεμψε, καὶ φόρον τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ἐπέταξε, καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἐς τὴν Αἴγυπτον ἐνέβαλε.

[3] Dio 41.18.1. ὁ δ᾽ οὖν Καῖσαρ ταῦτά τε οὕτως ἐποίησε, καὶ τὴν Σαρδὼ τήν τε Σικελίαν ἀμαχεὶ κατέσχε̣ ἐκχωρησάντων τῶν τότε ἐν αὐταῖς ἀρχόντῳ τόν τε Ἀριστόβουλον οἴκαδε ἐς τὴν Παλαιστίνῃ.

Judaea, in Dio's account, is not a sovereign actor but an administrative fiction, sustained by Roman will and dissolved by Roman decree.

Cassius Dio's representation of the Herodian dynasty reveals a logic of Roman clientage rooted in military conquest and strategic repression. Herod the Great, far from being a native ruler or a legitimate successor to Jewish kingship, is installed by Mark Antony following the brutal siege of Jerusalem. Dio recounts that: 'These people [the Jews] Antony entrusted to a certain Herod to govern.'[1] This appointment follows not negotiation but annihilation. The Roman general Sosius, acting on Antony's behalf, had just conquered Jerusalem and crushed Jewish resistance. Dio writes: 'The Jews had done much injury to the Romans, for the race is very bitter when aroused to anger, but they suffered far more themselves.'[2] The description is stark; the Jewish defenders of the Temple were the first to be captured and likely slaughtered.[3] The general population was subdued with ruthless force. In this context, Herod's appointment is not a political solution negotiated with the governed; it is the final act of a military campaign. His legitimacy does not derive from lineage or acceptance but from Roman power. Antigonus, the last Hasmonean claimant, is not only removed but ritually humiliated: 'Antigonus he [Mark Antony] bound to a cross and flogged – a punishment no other king had suffered at the hands of the Romans – and afterwards slew him.'[4] Such theatrical cruelty signals the absolute nature of Rome's triumph. Herod, by contrast, is elevated as a client precisely because he is loyal, non-threatening, and utterly dependent on imperial backing.

Later in his narrative, Dio offers a rare moment of geographic designation, referring to 'Agrippa of Palestine' (Agrippa II: τῷ γὰρ Ἀγρίππᾳ τῷ Παλαιστίνῳ), who happened to be in Rome and supported Claudius in his bid for imperial power. As a reward, Claudius 'enlarged the domain of Agrippa,' granted him the rank of consul, and allowed his brother Herod a principality and praetorship.[5] This passage encapsulates the functional role of the Herodians; they were not autonomous monarchs but imperial beneficiaries. The phrase 'of Palestine' situates Agrippa as a man from a territory already named and classified by Roman geography. It reinforces the idea that Palestine by this point had become a Roman administrative concept, not a Jewish national space. Moreover, the phrase 'τε ἀρχὴν προσεπηύξησε' indicates Roman initiative, not local

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[1] Dio 49.22.6. λοιπῶν τὰ νομιζόμενα ποιῆσαι. ἐκείνους μὲν οὖν Ἡρώδῃ τινὶ ὁ Ἀντώνιος ἄρχειν ἐπέτρεψε.

[2] Dio 49.22.4. πολλὰ μὲν δὴ καὶ δεινὰ καὶ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ἔδρασαν ʼτὸ γάρ τοι γένος αὐτῶν θυμωθὲν πικρότατόν ἐστι, πολλῷ δὲ δὴ πλείω αὐτοὶ ἔπαθον.

[3] Dio 49.22.5. ἑάλωσαν μὲν γὰρ πρότεροι μὲν οἱ ὑπὲρ τοῦ τεμένους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀμυνόμενοι, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἐν τῇ τοῦ Κρόνου καὶ τότε ἡμέρᾳ. The phrase 'ἐν τῇ τοῦ Κρόνου... ἡμέρᾳ' refers to the Day of Kronos, the Greco-Roman designation for the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday). Cassius Dio here alludes to the Jewish custom of refraining from combat on the Sabbath, a religious observance that the Romans strategically exploited during the siege, facilitating their capture of Jerusalem. On the Sabbath as a military liability; see also J. *BJ* 1.

[4] Dio 49.22.6. τὸν δ' Ἀντίγονον ἐμαστίγωσε σταυρῷ προσδήσας, ὃ μηδεὶς βασιλεὺς ἄλλος ὑπὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐπεπόνθει, καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀπέσφαξεν.

[5] Dio 60.8.2–3. τῷ γὰρ Ἀγρίππᾳ τῷ Παλαιστίνῳ συμπράξαντί οἱ τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ἔτυχε γὰρ ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ ὤν' τήν τε ἀρχὴν προσεπηύξησε καὶ τιμὰς ὑπατικὰς ἔνειμε. τῷ τε ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ Ἡρώδῃ τό τε στρατηγικὸν ἀξίωμα καὶ δυναστείαν τινὰ ἔδωκε, καὶ ἔς τε τὸ συνέδριον ἐσελθεῖν σφισι καὶ χάριν οἱ ἑλληνιστὶ γνῶναι ἐπέτρεψεν.

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legitimacy. Power flows downward, from emperor to client, not upward from popular will or historical right. This dynamic of clienthood as governance permeates Dio's treatment of the region. Judaea is linked with the presence of legions,[1] and its identity is framed not through autonomous institutions, but through Roman military administration.

This structural instability – Judaea as a temporary construct, sustained only through mediation and coercion – had come to an end after the Bar Kokhba revolt. A key passage from Book 69, though chronologically located late in the narrative, provides interpretive clarity. Dio writes about the conclusion of the revolt: 'Very few of them [the Jews] survived. Fifty of their most important outposts and nine hundred and eighty-five of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those that perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out. Thus, nearly the whole of Judaea was made desolate.'[2] The stark numbers – Despite its inherent exaggeration – convey more than devastation; they articulate the erasure of Judaea as both a provincial entity and a conceptual space. The phrase 'ἦν, ὥστε πᾶσαν ὀλίγου δεῖν τὴν Ἰουδαίαν ἐρημωθῆναι' functions not merely as a description of material destruction, but as a retrospective justification for the near erasure of the term 'Judaea' from Dio's geographic vocabulary. While the name does appear on rare occasions, such appearances are tightly bound to specific narrative necessities where the use of the term becomes unavoidable.

On the other hand, Palestine is repeatedly invoked as the natural stage upon which Roman history in the Levant unfolds.[3] For instance, as we have seen above, during the campaign of Gabinius, Dio writes: 'He then reached Palestine … imposed tribute upon the Jews…'[4] The scene is not described as occurring in Judaea – even though the actors and events pertain directly to it – but in Palestine, which serves as the broader geographic container. This terminological shift signals a conscious reclassification aligned with imperial logic. A similar dynamic appears in Dio's account of the Parthian

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[1] In Dio 55.23.1–7, he lists the legions stationed across the empire during Augustus' reign, identifying two (Legio VI Ferrata and Legio X) as being posted in Judaea: τὸ δὲ ἐν Ἰουδαίᾳ, τὸ σιδηροῦν (Dio 55.23.3); καὶ οἱ δέκατοι ἑκάτεροι, οἵ τε ἐν Παννονίᾳ τῇ ἄνω οἱ δίδυμοι, καὶ οἱ ἐν Ἰουδαίᾳ (Dio 55.23.4).

[2] Dio 69.14.1–2. ὀλίγοι γοῦν κομιδῇ περιεγένοντο. καὶ φρούρια μὲν αὐτῶν πεντήκοντα τά γε ἀξιολογώτατα, κῶμαι δὲ ἐνακόσιαι καὶ ὀγδοήκοντα καὶ πέντε ὀνομαστόταται κατεσκάφησαν, ἄνδρες δὲ ὀκτὼ καὶ πεντήκοντα μυριάδες ἐσφάγησαν ἔν τε ταῖς καταδρομαῖς καὶ ταῖς μάχαις· τῶν τε γὰρ λιμῷ καὶ νόσῳ καὶ πυρὶ φθαρέντων τὸ πλῆθος ἀνεξερεύνητον, ἦν, ὥστε πᾶσαν ὀλίγου δεῖν τὴν Ἰουδαίαν ἐρημωθῆναι.

[3] It is important, however, to clarify a key methodological point. Many of the episodes in which Dio employs the term 'Palestine' chronologically precede the Bar Kokhba revolt. Yet they are narrated through a spatial vocabulary that excludes 'Judaea'. This is not a contradiction or anachronism; rather, it reflects a retrospective narrative strategy, which also took place in Appian above. Writing in the early third century CE, Dio reconfigures the past through the lens of a later imperial reality, one in which Palestine had supplanted Judaea as the normative administrative frame. The use of 'Palestine' in earlier contexts, therefore, should be read as part of a larger historiographical project that reconstructs geography in light of imperial stabilization rather than chronological fidelity.

[4] Dio 39.56.6.

invasion during the civil wars. when describing the campaign of Pacorus[1] in 40 B.C., Dio writes that he 'invaded Palestine', even though the immediate context involves the deposition of Hyrcanus and the installment of Aristobulus.[2] This terminological choice is significant, not merely as a geographic description, but as a marker of Roman political reordering. By referring to the region as Palestine rather than Judaea, Dio decouples the land from the failed institutions associated with Roman client rule, projecting instead an image of an imperialized, depoliticized territorial frame. This is not simply a matter of cartographic revision but a rhetorical dissociation of the land from the institutions that had once claimed it. Palestine becomes more than a name of antiquity; it is deployed as a discursive tool for reintegrating the region into the imperial order once its exceptional status has been stripped away.

This semantic transformation is further illuminated when one considers the breadth of Dio's references to Palestine across various historical epochs. His usage does not appear sporadic or casual; rather, it reflects a sustained discursive framework in which 'Palestine' emerges as a geographic constant across political ruptures, imperial transitions, and narrative strata. As early as Book 38, Dio includes Palestine in a sweeping list of imperial conquests: 'Crete, Pontus, Cyprus, Asiatic Iberia, Farther Albania, both Syrias, the two Armenias, Arabia, and Palestine,'[3] placing it within a register of normalized Roman dominion, alongside long-incorporated provinces like Macedonia and Africa.[4] This passage is notable for its retrospective tone; the lands listed are not active theatres of conquest, but established components of the imperial structure. Palestine is thus inscribed into the cognitive geography of the empire not as a recent or contested acquisition, but as a stable locus of Roman sovereignty.

In Book 48, during the Parthian invasion of the eastern provinces following the collapse of Brutus and Cassius. Dio narrates how Pacorus, the Parthian prince, 'invaded Palestine and deposed Hyrcanus, who was at the moment in charge of affairs there, having been appointed by the Romans, and in his stead set up his brother Aristobulus

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[1] Pacorus I, son of Orodes II of Parthia, was a central figure in the Parthian military expansion into the Levant during the late first century B.C. In 40 B.C., he advanced through Syria, securing major urban centers and installing regimes aligned with Parthian interests. This advance ended abruptly in 38 B.C., when he was killed at the Battle of Mount Gindarus by the forces of Publius Ventidius, a decisive defeat that compelled the Parthians to withdraw from Syria and restored Roman control over the region; See Strab. 16.1.28; 16.2.8; J. *AJ* 14.330; J. *BJ* 1.248; Tac. *Hist.* 5.9; Dio 48.26.2; James Seaver, 'Publius Ventidius. Neglected Roman Military Hero,' *The Classical Journal* 47 (1952): 275–280+300.

[2] Dio 48.26.2. οὗτοι μὲν οὖν ἀνάλωτοι ἔμειναν· τὰ δ' ἄλλα ὁ Πάκορος λαβὼν ἐς Παλαιστίνην ἐσέβαλε, καὶ τόν τε Ὑρκανόν, ὃς τότε τὰ πράγματα αὐτῶν παρὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐπιτραπεὶς εἶχεν, ἔπαυσε, καὶ τὸν Ἀριστόβουλον τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἄρχοντα.

[3] Dio 38.38.4. τί γὰρ δεῖ κἀνταῦθα καθ' ἕκαστον ἐπεξιέναι τὴν Κρήτην, τὸν Πόντον, τὴν Κύπρον, τὴν Ἰβηρίαν τὴν Ἀσιανήν, τὴν Ἀλβανίαν τὴν ἐκεῖ, Σύρους ἀμφοτέρους, Ἀρμενίους ἑκατέρους, Ἀραβίους, Παλαιστίνους; ὧν οὐδὲ τὰ ὀνόματα πρότερον ἀκριβῶς εἰδότες νῦν τῶν μὲν αὐτοὶ δεσπόζομεν, τὰ δὲ ἑτέροις ἐχαρισάμεθα, ὥστε ἐξ αὐτῶν καὶ προσόδους καὶ δυνάμεις καὶ τιμὰς καὶ συμμαχίας προσειληφέναι.

[4] Dio 38.38.4. πολλῷ πλείω καὶ μείζω προσκατειργάσαντο. τί γὰρ ἄν τις καθ' ἕκαστον λέγοι τὴν Σαρδώ, τὴν Σικελίαν, τοὺς Μακεδόνας, τοὺς Ἰλλυριούς, τὴν Ἑλλάδα, τὴν Ἀσίαν τὴν περὶ τὴν Ἰωνίαν, Βιθυνούς, Ἴβηρας, Ἄφρους;

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as a ruler because of the enmity existing between them.'[1] Crucially, Dio does not refer to 'Judaea' in this context, despite the Jewish nature of the polity and the Hasmonean lineage of its rulers. The choice of 'Palestine' suggests a conceptual abstraction, a spatial framework into which the local conflict is inserted.

That this pattern is consistent is evident from Dio's subsequent references. Herod, introduced initially in relation to Judaea, is later referred to as 'Herod of Palestine' (Ἡρώδης ὁ Παλαιστῖνος),[2] despite his original association with the Roman-imposed kingship of Judaea. Agrippa II, likewise, becomes 'Agrippa the Palestinian' (τῷ γὰρ Ἀγρίππᾳ τῷ Παλαιστίνῳ…),[3] not 'king' but simply a man identified by his origin, with Palestine, by now, functioning as a self-sufficient geographic term. The shift in terminology reflects a change and transformation in imperial spatial consciousness. Dio's language places Palestine firmly within the Roman world, as part of its naturalized imperial cartography.

The imperial usage continues into the Flavian era. In Book 65, Vespasian's son Titus is said to be 'in Palestine' at the time of his father's acclamation in Egypt,[4] and later, Vespasian is described as having left Titus 'in Palestine' before sailing to Rome.[5] Notably, while the specific objective of Titus was the capturing of Jerusalem (τὸν δὲ υἱὸν αὐτοῦ Τίτον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα καταλελοιπὼς πορθῆσαι αὐτά), Dio refers to his location simply as 'in Palestine', thereby placing the local conflict within a broader imperial geography. Even in the context of the Jewish War, Dio opts for 'Palestine', a choice that removes the rebellion from its ethno-political context and re-situates it within the abstract space of imperial geography. Further evidence of this standardization appears under Trajan, when Lucius Quietus is appointed as 'governor of Palestine.'[6]

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[1] Dio 48.26.2. οὗτοι μὲν οὖν ἀνάλωτοι ἔμειναν: τὰ δ' ἄλλα ὁ Πάκορος λαβὼν ἐς Παλαιστίνην ἐσέβαλε, καὶ τόν τε Ὑρκανόν, ὃς τότε τὰ πράγματα αὐτῶν παρὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐπιτραπεὶς εἶχεν, ἔπαυσε, καὶ τὸν Ἀριστόβουλον τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἄρχοντα.

[2] Dio 55.27.6. ὅ τε Ἡρώδης ὁ Παλαιστῖνος, αἰτίαν τινὰ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν λαβών, ὑπὲρ τὰς Ἄλπεις ὑπερωρίσθη, καὶ τὸ μέρος τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῦ ἐδημοσιώθη. It is worth noting that this Herod is not Herod the Great but rather Archelaus, his son, who assumed the name Herod on his coinage; see Ernest Cary (tr.), *Dio Cassius Roman History*, vol. 6 (London: William Heinemann LTD, 1935), 465.

[3] Dio 60.8.2.

[4] Dio 65.1.1. ταῦτα μὲν οὕτως ἔσχεν, αὐτοκράτωρ δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ὁ Οὐεσπασιανὸς καὶ πρὸς τῆς βουλῆς ἀπεδείχθη, καὶ Καίσαρες ὅ τε Τίτος καὶ ὁ Δομιτιανὸς ἐπεκλήθησαν, τήν τε ὕπατον ἀρχὴν ὁ Οὐεσπασιανὸς καὶ ὁ Τίτος ἔλαβον, ὁ μὲν ἐν τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ ὁ δὲ ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ ὤν.

[5] Dio 65.8.2a. τὴν μὲν οὖν Αἴγυπτον δι' ὀλίγου κατεστήσατο, καὶ σῖτον πολὺν εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην ἔπεμψεν ἀπ' αὐτῆς: τὸν δὲ υἱὸν αὐτοῦ Τίτον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα καταλελοιπὼς πορθῆσαι αὐτά, τὴν ἐκείνων ἀνέμεινεν ἅλωσιν, ἵνα μετὰ τοῦ υἱέος ἐπανέλθῃ πρὸς τὴν Ῥώμην. τριβομένου δὲ χρόνου ἐν τῇ πολιορκίᾳ τὸν μὲν Τίτον ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ κατέλιπεν, αὐτὸς δὲ ὁλκάδος ἐπιβὰς ἐς Λυκίαν ἔπλευσε, κἀκεῖθεν τὰ μὲν πεζῇ τὰ δὲ ναυτιλλόμενος ἐς τὸ Βρεντέσιον ἐκομίσθη.

[6] Dio 68.32.4. ὅτι Κυῆτος Λούσιος Μαῦρος μὲν ἦν καὶ αὐτὸς τῶν Μαύρων ἄρχων ὢν καὶ ἐν ἱππεῦσιν ἴλης ἐξήταστο, καταγνωσθεὶς δὲ ἐπὶ πονηρίᾳ τότε μὲν τῆς στρατείας ἀπηλλάγη καὶ ἠτιμώθη, ὕστερον δὲ τοῦ Δακικοῦ πολέμου ἐνστάντος καὶ τοῦ Τραϊανοῦ τῆς τῶν Μαύρων συμμαχίας δεηθέντος ἦλθέ τε πρὸς αὐτὸν αὐτεπάγγελτος καὶ μεγάλα ἔργα ἀπεδείξατο. τιμηθεὶς δὲ ἐπὶ τούτῳ πολὺ πλείω καὶ μείζω ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ πολέμῳ ἐξειργάσατο, καὶ τέλος ἐς τοσοῦτον τῆς τε ἀνδραγαθίας ἅμα καὶ τῆς τύχης ἐν τῷδε τῷ πολέμῳ προεχώρησεν ὥστε ἐς τοὺς ἐστρατηγηκότας ἐσγραφῆναι καὶ ὑπατεῦσαι τῆς τε Παλαιστίνης ἄρξαι: ἐξ ὧν πού καὶ τὰ μάλιστα ἐφθονήθη καὶ ἐμισήθη καὶ ἀπώλετο.

The term here is not only normalized but institutionalized; Palestine has become a defined administrative entity, suitable for senatorial governance.

The final and perhaps most symbolic appearance of the term occurs in Book 76, where Severus is said to have 'gone to Palestine, where he sacrificed to the spirit of Pompey.'[1] This journey is not part of a campaign; it is an act of imperial piety, staged within a pacified landscape bearing no trace of its former volatility. Palestine, here, is neither rebellious nor liminal; it is simply a province, legible within Roman ritual geography. In contrast, Judaea increasingly disappears from the narrative. Although Dio recounts episodes where the protagonists are clearly Jewish, or where the events transpire within the historical bounds of Judaea, he often refrains from invoking the term. By the time of Severus, 'Judaea' is not merely absent; it has been overwritten.

Thus, Dio's use of 'Palestine' is not a neutral or incidental lexical choice, but a historiographical act. The term becomes a rhetorical vehicle for imperial ideology, through which local exceptionalism is neutralized and political disorder is reclassified as historical deviation. The re-inscription of the southern Levant under the singular label of 'Palestine' marks the culmination of this discursive logic. What was once a fractured zone of revolts and factionalism is now rendered intelligible, manageable, and stable, through the grammar of empire. Far from inventing a new term, Dio is restoring an older one. Cassius Dio speaks with the clarity of imperial closure. Judaea was a momentary construct, a failed experiment in mediated governance. Palestine was the land's enduring name, the spatial identity that preceded, outlasted, and ultimately replaced the ephemeral structures built upon it. Dio's terminology restores history.

4. Palestine in Late Roman Sources: Provincial Tripartition, Sacred Geography, and Frontier Security

After it has been made clear that 'Judaea' was, in the imperial perspective, nothing more than a client administrative entity – employed for a time within the Roman apparatus of control and then removed from the state's official vocabulary after the second century, replaced by the designation 'Syria Palaestina' – evidence from the fourth century shows that this linguistic and political shift was fully realized at the level of maps and institutions. An important study by Di Segni demonstrates that large sectors of the adjoining desert, including the Negev, parts of Sinai, and southeastern Transjordan, were incorporated into the body of 'Palaestina' during the Tetrarchy (c. 295–300 CE) and that this arrangement was reinforced through an internal division that, by the early fifth century, produced three units: Palaestina Prima (capital: Caesarea), Palaestina Secunda (capital: Scythopolis/Beth Shean), and Palaestina Tertia or Salutaris (capital: Petra).[2] This means, in methodological terms, that 'Palestine' had moved from being a broadly circulating geographical term to a multi-centered administrative matrix, managed through a clear civil-military hierarchy and occupying a logistical position on the Antioch-Alexandria axis.

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[1] Dio 76.13.1. εἴκοσι δ' οὖν ἡμέρας τῇ πολιορκίᾳ προσεδρεύσας ἐς τὴν Παλαιστίνην μετὰ τοῦτο ἦλθε καὶ τῷ Πομπηίῳ ἐνήγισε.

[2] Leah Di Segni, 'Changing borders in the provinces of Palaestina and Arabia in the fourth and fifth centuries,' *Liber Annuus* 68 (2018): 247–267.

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Irfan Shahîd adds a decisive interpretive layer. Beginning in the fourth century, with the Edict of Milan (313 CE) and the subsequent formalization of Christianity, Palestine rose to the status of the 'Holy Land', with Jerusalem becoming the spiritual capital of the Christian empire. Within this new religious-political context, the Ghassanids – *foederati* of the state – served as the eastern 'security belt' of the Diocese of the East, protecting Palestine's southern and eastern frontiers and securing trade routes and caravan networks. This facilitated a wide-ranging ecclesiastical and architectural boom on both banks of the Jordan.[1] Thus, Palestine emerged as an entity that was at once tightly administered, religiously conceptualized, and militarily secured within the imperial structuring of the East.

It is this composite framework – administrative, spiritual, and strategic – that gives the testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus (4th century CE) its full interpretive weight. Ammianus Marcellinus opens his treatment of Palestine with a panoramic geographical survey in the course of his description of the eastern provinces,[2] designating it as 'the last region of the Syrias,'[3] extending over 'a great expanse of territory'[4] and 'abounding in cultivated and well-kept lands.'[5] He names Caesarea, Eleutheropolis, Neapolis, Ashkelon, and Gaza as rival urban centers,[6] conveying the image of a province with a dense civic network and a competitive urban culture. Although lacking navigable rivers, Ammianus notes the presence of natural hot springs with medicinal value,[7] an element that ties local resources to broader imperial patterns of health, leisure, and economic integration.

Marcellinus' historical remark that Pompey incorporated the territory into the Roman provincial system after defeating the Jews and capturing Jerusalem[8] employs the name 'Palestine' retrospectively, applying to an earlier period the designation that had become standard in the later imperial vocabulary – a shift already discernible in Appian and fully realized in Cassius Dio – thus anchoring it within the administrative framework from the late Republic onward and, by Ammianus's day, within the Diocese of the East. Its position in the sequence of provinces – immediately before Arabia[9] – underscores its its role on the Syro-Arabian frontier, serving as both the terminus of the Syrian

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[1] Irfan Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Volume 2, Part 2, Economic, Social, and Cultural History (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2009), 8–9.

[2] Amm. 14.8.

[3] Amm. 14.8.11. Ultima Syriarum est Palaestina.

[4] Amm. 14.8.11. per intervalla magna protenta.

[5] Amm. 14.8.11. cultis abundans terris et nitidis.

[6] Amm. 14.8.11. et civitates habens quasdam egregias, nullam nulli cedentem, sed sibi vicissim velut ad perpendiculum aemulas: Caesaream, quam ad honorem Octaviani principis exaedificavit Herodes, et Eleutheropolim et Neapolim, itidemque Ascalonem Gazam, aevo superiore exstructas.

[7] Amm. 14.8.12. In his tractibus navigerum nusquam visitur flumen, et in locis plurimis aquae suapte natura calentes emergunt, ad usus aptae multiplicium medellarum.

[8] Amm. 14.8.12. Verum has quoque regiones pari sorte Pompeius Iudaeis domitis et Hierosolymis captis, in provinciae speciem delata iuris dictione formavit.

[9] Amm. 14.8.13. Huic Arabia est conserta, ex alio latere Nabataeis contigua …

provinces and the northern anchor of the Nabataean-Arabian hinterland. This description presents Palestine as a settled, cultivated, and urbanized province, fully integrated into the imperial order and strategically situated within the geopolitical geography of the East.

This structural portrait of Palestine in Ammianus, with its cultivated lands, urban network, and strategic frontier position, provides the essential backdrop for understanding his later, more operational account of how the province's geography and infrastructure were mobilized for high-level imperial purposes. It is in the context of the *maiestas* prosecutions under Constantius II that this framework comes into sharp focus. Ammianus reports that the imperial notary Paulus, nicknamed 'Tartareus', was dispatched to the East with wide-ranging authority to 'investigate and punish,' and that the theatre of torture and execution was set at Scythopolis, 'a city of Palestine,' for two specific reasons: 'As the theatre of torture and death Scythopolis was chosen, a city of Palestine which for two reasons seemed more suitable than any other: because it is more secluded, and because it is midway between Antioch and Alexandria.'[1] This brief remark by Ammianus conveys, at once, geographical- administrative, and security-political dimensions. His description of Scythopolis as 'more secluded' (*secretior est*) and 'midway between Antioch and Alexandria' (*inter Antiochiam Alexandriamque media*) is not a casual statement of geography, but reflects an awareness of a functioning imperial transport and communication network along the Syro-Egyptian axis, and of a province capable of efficiently transferring defendants and rotating judicial and military personnel between two major centers while avoiding the disruptions of larger urban environments. This administrative dimension is reinforced by Ammianus's note that 'men were brought in from almost the whole world, noble and obscure alike; some bowed down with chains, others wasted away from the agony of imprisonment.'[2] Such judicial and security density required a secure reception infrastructure, military support, and a well-organized logistical flow. It follows that, in the late imperial view, Palestine was treated and utilized as a central operational hub within the Diocese of the East rather than a peripheral zone, and that its 'midway' position was not merely a matter of distance, but a strategically calculated location at the heart of the empire's decision-making apparatus.

Ammianus's account of Scythopolis as a secure and strategically placed judicial center also gains further depth when set against the wider religious and social climate he describes elsewhere. In the same historical frame, he recounts Julian's policy of reopening pagan temples and deliberately amplifying divisions among Christians, recording the sharp remark of Julian that 'no wild beasts are such enemies to mankind as are most of the Christians in their deadly hatred of one another.'[3] This comment, when read alongside the logistical and administrative considerations that made Scythopolis an ideal hub, reveals an integrated imperial strategy: to manage not only the

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[1] Amm. 19.12.8. Et electa est speetatrix suppliciorum ferialium civitas in Palaestina Scythopolis, gemina ratione visa magis omnibus opportuna, quod secretior est et inter Antiochiam Alexandriamque media, unde multi plerumque ad crimina trahebantur.

[2] Amm. 19.12.8. ducebantur ab orbe prope terrarum, iuxta nobiles et obscuri, quorum aliquos vinculorum afflixerant nexus, alios claustra poenalia consumpserunt.

[3] Amm. 22.5.4. nullas infestas hominibus bestias, ut sunt sibi ferales plerique Christianorum.

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movement of people and the operation of justice, but also the containment of religious tensions within controllable spaces. In a province like Palestine – by then elevated to the Holy Land and drawing diverse and sometimes rival Christian groups – the judicial function of a place like Scythopolis cannot be separated from the need to maintain order amid such sectarian complexity. Here, Shahid's insight becomes directly relevant; the Ghassanids' role as an organized security cordon complemented this internal management, providing a stable frontier while enabling the state to keep politically sensitive and religiously charged proceedings away from the great capitals yet still firmly within the empire's main communication and transport network.

Elsewhere, Ammianus situates Palestine on an old imperial itinerary, attributing to Marcus Aurelius the following remark: '[For Marcus], as he was passing through Palestine on his way to Egypt, being often disgusted with the malodorous and rebellious Jews, is reported to have cried: 'O Marcomanni [Germanic people], O Quadi [Germanic people], O Sarmatians [Iranian people], at last I have found a people more unruly than you'.'[1] Whether or not the remark is authentic, it reflects a clear geographical awareness of Palestine as part of the imperial corridor linking Antioch to Egypt, a route deliberately traversed by emperors for administrative and strategic purposes. With the added 'Holy Land' layer in the fourth century, this corridor functioned as an administrative-spiritual middle-zone, enabling the state to maximize both symbolic control (pilgrimage and church construction) and practical control (justice and security).

A close reading of Ammianus' testimony reveals that, in the late Roman period, Palestine was far from being a peripheral territory; it had been reorganized into a functional instrument of imperial governance. Geographic position, administrative structure, security role, and religious significance converged to make it a center capable of serving multiple state objectives. Its location along the Syro-Egyptian axis positioned it as a corridor linking major urban centers and enabling the rapid movement of troops and officials, while its local administrative capacity allowed for the management of politically and religiously sensitive affairs away from the disruptions of the great capitals. At the same time, its symbolic status as the Holy Land endowed the imperial presence with a form of legitimacy in the eyes of diverse audiences, even as protective alliances – such as those with the Ghassanids – secured its frontiers and facilitated control of its interior. In this configuration, Palestine emerged as a province in which sanctity and security, geography and function, were fused into a coherent whole, making it an integral component of the imperial governance apparatus in the East.

If Ammianus represents the culmination of late Latin usage of the name Palestine in a coherent administrative-military context, Orosius, roughly a generation later, offers a different form though a comparable effect. He integrates the same term into a providential narrative directed against the pagans, retrojecting it onto events of the first century B.C. and the early imperial age, and making Palestine the stage of divine

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[1] Amm. 22.5.5. Ille enim cum Palaestinam transiret, Aegyptum petens, Iudaeorum faetentium et tumultuantium saepe taedio percitus, dolenter dicitur exclamasse: 'O Marcomanni, o Quadi, o Sarmatae, tandem alios vobis inquietiores inveni.'

providence and a locus of reward and punishment. At the opening of the fifth century, Paulus Orosius, in his *Historiarum adversus paganos*, composed a providential history intended to refute pagan claims by demonstrating that wars and disasters were not the result of the spread of Christianity, but had preceded its appearance and continued under its persecution, and that the Roman peace was, in his view, a preparation for the advent of Christ. From this premise, his historical material assumes a distinctly theological cast, in which political and military events are linked to celestial portents and miracles, and the unfolding of events follows the logic of divine retribution; calamities are read as punishment for rejecting the faith or persecuting the Church, while deliverance or prosperity is interpreted as a reward for piety. In addition, Orosius engages in marked retrospective narrative, employing later administrative terminology to describe much earlier periods; this practice reflects the entrenched presence of Palestine in the late Latin lexicon and its use as an administrative label applied almost automatically, even in reference to far earlier epochs.

This theological-administrative perspective shapes his treatment of Palestine, which does not appear in his work as a neutral geographic space so much as the stage for divine action and the theatre of reward and punishment. In recounting events of the pre-Christian era and the early empire, he notes, for example, that Crassus 'turned toward Palestine and plundered the temple treasures'[1] in 55 B.C., a designation drawn from a much later administrative reality and retrojected onto a period when the commonly used name was Judaea. Similarly, he describes Pilatus in the reign of Tiberius as 'the governor of the province of Palestine,'[2] repeating the same usage and offering strong evidence that by the fifth century Palestine was a familiar administrative term employed without hesitation in retrospective narration.

In narrating Hadrian's suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt, Orosius states that the operation took place in 'Palestine' and that the emperor rebuilt the city under the name Aelia [Capitolina], even claiming that only Christians were allowed to reside there.[3] This formulation ascribes an early privilege to Christians in a way unsupported by contemporary evidence, which instead points to the foundation of a pagan colony dedicated to Jupiter, a comprehensive ban on Jews, and the later emergence of a Christian community within a broader civic framework. Orosius further develops the image of Palestine as the setting for a religious-political struggle transcending geography. He recounts the story of Pilatus' 'report' to Tiberius concerning the miracles

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[1] Oros. *Hist. Adv. Pag.* 6.13. Crassus, in consulatu collega Pompei, provinciam sortitus in Parthos, homo inexplebilis cupiditatis, audita in Hierosolymis templi opulentia, quam Pompeius intactam reliquerat, in Palaestinam divertit, Hierosolymam adit, templum pervadit, opes diripit.

[2] Oros. *Hist. Adv. Pag.* 7.4. Pilatus, praeses Palaestinae provinciae, ad Tiberium Imperatorem atque ad senatum retulit de passione et resurrectione Christi, consequentibusque virtutibus, quae vel per ipsum palam factae fuerant.

[3] Oros. *Hist. Adv. Pag.* 7.13. Judaeos sane perturbatione scelerum suorum exagitatos et Palaestinam, provinciam quondam suam, depopulantes ultima caede perdomuit, ultusque est Christianos, quos illi Cocheba duce, quod sibi adversus Romanos non adsentarentur, excruciabant; praecepitque ne cui Judaeo introeundi Hierosolymam esset licentia, Christianis tantum civitate permissa: quam ipse in optimum statum murorum exstructione reparavit et Aeliam vocari de praenomine suo praecepit.

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of Christ and the emperor's attempt to 'deify' him before the Senate refused,[1] thus
directly linking the province to the central authority in Rome. He also notes Caligula's
orders to place statues in the temple[2] and Pilate's subsequent suicide,[3] and he relates the
story of Queen Helena of Adiabene sending grain to Jerusalem during a famine,
portraying her as a Christian,[4] contrary to Josephus' account of her conversion to
Judaism.[5]

In these examples, the hallmarks of Orosian narrative recur; the privileging of
theological meaning, the intensification of symbolic dimensions at the expense of
historical exactitude, and the deployment of Palestine as the natural administrative term,
even for periods when it was not in official use. In this context, Orosius' narrative
serves as a valuable witness to the evolution of administrative and geographic
terminology in the Latin West. It shows that by the fifth century Palestine had shifted
from being merely a toponym to becoming an entrenched administrative and symbolic
construct, invoked to describe the past in light of the political-ecclesiastical present. In
this way, Orosius adds another Latin layer to the retrospective usages seen in
Ammianus, paralleling him in presenting Palestine as an administratively named and
semantically charged entity, though with a purpose centered on theological
demonstration rather than precise geographic or administrative description. His
testimony thus fits into the sequence of transformations undergone by the term – from a
topographical designation in the classical, Hellenistic, and early Roman periods to an
instrument of administrative and judicial framing among late historians – while
remaining, at the same time, a symbolic space within Christian narratives that recast
geography in the service of salvation history.

From Ammianus's late fourth-century survey, in which Palestine figures as a
coherent administrative-military unit, to Orosius's early fifth-century providential

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[1] Oros. *Hist. Adv. Pag.* 7.4. At postquam passus est Dominus Christus, atque a mortuis resurrexit, et
discipulos suos ad praedicandum dimisit, Pilatus, praeses Palaestinae provinciae, ad Tiberium
Imperatorem atque ad senatum retulit de passione et resurrectione Christi, consequentibusque virtutibus,
quae vel per ipsum palam factae fuerant, vel per discipulos ipsius in nomine eius fiebant, et de eo, quod
certatim crescente plurimorum fide deus crederetur. Tiberius cum suffragio magni favoris retulit ad
senatum, ut Christus deus haberetur. Senatus indignatione motus, quod non sibi prius secundum morem
delatum esset, ut de suscipiendo cultu prius ipse decerneret, consecrationem Christi recusavit, edictoque
constituit, exterminandos esse Urbe Christianos: praecipue cum et Sejanus, praefectus Tiberii,
suscipiendae religioni obstinatissime contradiceret. Tiberius tamen edicto accusatoribus Christianorum
mortem comminatus est.

[2] Oros. *Hist. Adv. Pag.* 7.5. spreta legatione Philonis, omnes Judaeorum sacras aedes, atque in primis
antiquum illud Hierosolymis sacrarium profanari sacrificiis gentilium, ac repleri statuis simulacrisque
imperavit, seque ibi ut Deum coli praecepit.

[3] Oros. *Hist. Adv. Pag.* 7.5. Pilatus autem praeses, qui sententiam damnationis in Christum dixerat,
postquam plurimas seditiones in Hierosolymis excepit ac fecit, tantis irrogante Cajo angoribus coarctatus
est, ut sua se transverberans manu malorum compendium mortis celeritate quaesierit.

[4] Oros. *Hist. Adv. Pag.* 7.6. Eodem anno imperii eius fames gravissima per Syriam facta est, quam etiam
prophetae praenuntiaverant: sed Christianorum necessitatibus apud Hierosolymam, convectis ab Aegypto
frumentis, Helena, Adiabenorum regina conversa ad fidem Christi, largissime ministravit.

[5] J. *AJ* 20.17f. Κατὰ τοῦτον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν τῶν Ἀδιαβηνῶν βασιλὶς Ἑλένη καὶ ὁ παῖς αὐτῆς Ἰζάτης εἰς τὰ
Ἰουδαίων ἔθη τὸν βίον μετέβαλον.

history, in which the same term is retrojected onto earlier ages within a theological frame, the conceptual field has already shifted from provincial reportage to soteriological interpretation. Advancing another century, the testimony of Procopius of Caesarea, writing in the first half of the sixth century as the official historian of Justinian's wars, moves us into yet another register. Here Palestine is reinscribed within a Greek-Constantinopolitan discourse that anchors it in the empire's defensive infrastructure: its maritime frontiers, terrestrial fortifications, and the broader strategic theatre of the Red Sea and the intertwined networks of Arabs, Aksumites, and Himyarites. This chronological and thematic progression thus spans three distinct modes of representation: Ammianus's administrative-judicial mapping, Orosius's theological retrojections, and Procopius's geo-strategic integration of the province into the military and commercial horizons of the mid-sixth-century Mediterranean-Red Sea world.

The passage in which Procopius sets out his description of Palestine in Book 1 of the *Persian Wars* occurs during his account of Justinian's plan to forge an alliance with the Aksumites of Ethiopia and the Himyarites of Yemen against Persia.[1] To show how such allies might benefit the Roman Empire, he begins a geographical excursus from the southern frontier of Palestine at the Gulf of Aqaba, extending through the Red Sea to the coasts of Yemen and Ethiopia. In this context he notes that 'the boundaries of Palestine extend eastward toward the rising sun as far as the sea called the Erythraean,'[2] and that 'the city of Aila lies on the shore of this sea, where the waterway narrows into a very tight strait.'[3] This is not a purely local description; rather, Palestine is presented as the northern terminus of a chain of maritime stations forming part of a strategic corridor for imperial trade and military movement. On its south-eastern desert fringe, Procopius observes that 'this coast, immediately beyond the boundaries of Palestine, is held by the Saracens,'[4] and adds that 'the emperor appointed a *phylarch* over the Saracens of

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[1] Procop. *Pers*. 1.19.1. Ἔννοια δὲ τότε Ἰουστινιανῷ βασιλεῖ γέγονεν Αἰθίοπάς τε καὶ Ὁμηρίτας ἐπὶ τῷ Περσῶν πονηρῷ ἑταιρίσασθαι. ὅπη δὲ τῆς γῆς οἱ ἄνθρωποι οἵδε ᾤκηνται καὶ καθ᾽ ὅ τι αὐτοὺς Ῥωμαίοις ξυνοίσειν βασιλεὺς ἤλπισεν, ἐρῶν ἔρχομαι.

[2] Procop. *Pers*. 1.19.2. τὰ Παλαιστίνης ὅρια πρὸς ἀνίσχοντα ἥλιον ἐς θάλασσαν τὴν Ἐρυθρὰν καλουμένην διήκει.

[3] Procop. *Pers*. 1.19.3. καὶ πόλις Αἰλὰς καλουμένη πρὸς τῇ ταύτης ἠϊόνι ἐστίν, ἔνθα ἡ θάλασσα, ὥσπερ μοι εἴρηται, ἀπολήγουσα πορθμός τις ἐς ἄγαν στενὸς γίνεται.

[4] Procop. *Pers*. 1.19.3. Ταύτην δὴ τὴν ἠϊόνα εὐθὺς μὲν ὅρους τοὺς Παλαιστίνης ὑπερβάντι Σαρακηνοὶ ἔχουσιν. In the context of Procopius (sixth century), the term Saracens in Byzantine discourse functioned as an ethno-geographical designation for the Arabs inhabiting the deserts and frontier zones stretching from the Syrian steppe to northern Arabia and Sinai, irrespective of their political allegiance or religious affiliation. It encompassed Rome's allies, such as the Ghassanids within the *foederati* system, as well as its adversaries, such as the Lakhmids aligned with Persia. At this stage, the term did not serve as a synonym for any specific religious identity, embracing both Christians and pagans alike. Following the transformations brought about by the Arab conquests in the seventh century, the term began in Byzantine and Latin sources to acquire a narrower and more ideologically charged sense, coming to refer primarily to Muslim Arabs, before expanding in the Latin West during the Middle Ages to denote all Muslims – Arab or non-Arab – thus shifting from an ethno-geographic description to a religious-political category within European discourse; see Norman Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe* (London–New York: Longman, 1979), passim; David Graf, 'The Saracens and the Defense of the Arabian Frontier,' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 229 (1978): 1–26.

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Palestine.'[1] The inclusion of this administrative detail in a geo-strategic context signals that the adjoining desert was no empty space but an organized security zone within Palestine's provincial framework. The *phylarch*'s tribal force functioned as a protective belt along the land-sea routes linking Aila to Gaza, securing caravan and pilgrimage traffic.

Procopius also recalls the older geographical nomenclature, stating that 'the land as far as the boundaries of the city of Gaza was formerly called Arabia,'[2] thereby linking sixth-century administrative Palestine to an earlier phase when this region belonged to the Nabataean Arabia, centered on Petra.[3] The excursus then broadens to the Red Sea's harbors and navigation, noting that 'it is not permitted for them [Indians and Ethiopians] to purchase any of these things [*e.g.* iron] from the Romans, for it is explicitly forbidden to everyone by law. For the penalty for anyone caught is death.'[4] This is an allusion to the imperial policy forbidding the export of strategic materials, such as iron, to regions where they might reach enemy hands. By placing this within the same frame, Procopius situates Palestine's southern terminus within a tightly controlled global network of navigation and trade.

Following this maritime-frontier excursus, Procopius moves in Book 2 to a very different context. This is the Sasanian invasion of 540 CE under Khosrow I. He reports that Khosrow 'decided to lead his army straight to Palestine in order to plunder all the treasures in Jerusalem, having heard that it was an exceptionally fine land, inhabited by people rich in gold.'[5] The insertion of this detail into the war narrative serves two purposes. It underlines Palestine's economic and symbolic value from the perspective of Rome's greatest rival, and it confirms that the province was not peripheral but a primary strategic objective. Within the same campaign, Procopius introduces a Christian Saracen named Ambros, serving under the Lakhmid ruler al-Mundhir, who intervened to save the city of Sergiopolis from falling to the Persians by informing its defenders of the enemy's plans and water shortage.[6] This episode illustrates the complex security environment of the eastern frontier, where Christian Arab allies of Rome operated alongside, and in tension with, Arab allies of Persia, and where Palestine's security was intertwined with a broader web of tribal and political balances.

In this expanded frame, the image of Palestine in Procopius emerges as a continuation and enlargement of the one given by Ammianus. The location that for Ammianus was 'midway between Antioch and Alexandria' becomes, for Procopius, a junction linking the eastern Mediterranean with the southern Red Sea, housing an

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[1] Procop. *Pers*. 1.19.10. τούτῳ τῷ φοινικῶνι βασιλέα Ἰουστινιανὸν Ἀβοχάραβος ἐδωρήσατο, ὁ τῶν ἐκείνῃ Σαρακηνῶν ἄρχων, καὶ αὐτὸν βασιλεὺς φύλαρχον τῶν ἐν Παλαιστίνῃ Σαρακηνῶν κατεστήσατο.

[2] Procop. *Pers*. 1.19.20. χώρα γὰρ ἡ ἐνθένδε ἄχρι τῶν Γάζης πόλεως ὁρίων Ἀραβία τὸ παλαιὸν ὠνομάζετο.

[3] Procop. *Pers*. 1.19.20. ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ βασίλεια ἐν τοῖς ἄνω χρόνοις ἐν Πέτραις τῇ πόλει ὁ τῶν Ἀράβων βασιλεὺς εἶχεν.

[4] Procop. *Pers*. 1.19.25–26. οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ πρὸς Ῥωμαίων ὠνεῖσθαι τούτων τι οἷοί τέ εἰσιν, νόμῳ ἅπασι διαρρήδην ἀπειρημένον. θάνατος γὰρ τῷ ἁλόντι ἡ ζημία ἐστί.

[5] Procop. *Pers*. 2.20.18. γνώμην δὲ εἶχεν εὐθὺ Παλαιστίνης ἄγειν τὸ στράτευμα, ὅπως τά τε ἄλλα καὶ τὰ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις κειμήλια πάντα λήίσηται. χώραν γὰρ ταύτην ἀγαθήν τε διαφερόντως καὶ πολυχρύσων οἰκητόρων εἶναι ἀκοῇ εἶχε.

[6] Procop. *Pers*. 2.20. 1–15.

organized tribal-security apparatus in Palestine, and constituting a direct objective of grand-strategic invasions. The interweaving of maritime and terrestrial geography, security and commerce, symbolic and material value, renders sixth-century Palestine an integrated component of the imperial apparatus, not merely administrative and judicial, but at once maritime and desert, economic and military. In this way, the testimonies of Ammianus and Procopius can be read as parts of a single continuous thread which is the enduring strategic function of Palestine within the late Roman Near East.

John Malalas' *Chronographia*, composed in Antioch in the mid-sixth century CE, represents a register markedly distinct from the classical historiographical tradition exemplified by Procopius. Written in highly colloquial Greek, the work interweaves biblical chronology, legendary motifs, and local Antiochene memory with episodes of imperial history spanning from Alexander the Great to Augustus. Although the *Chronographia* is a problematic historical source – its chronological framework is artificial, and many episodes are suffused with folkloric embellishment – it remains of considerable value for illuminating perceived geography and political order in Syria, Palestine, and adjacent regions as understood in Late Antiquity.

Of particular note is Malalas' explicit inclusion of Palestine within the royal sphere of the Seleucids, naming it alongside Syria, Babylonia, and Asia as territories ruled by Seleucus I Nicator.[1] The placement of Palestine within such territorial enumerations reflects the persistence of Hellenistic-Roman spatial categories into the Byzantine period, wherein Palestine is not reduced to an exclusively religious or scriptural concept but is presented as a province integrated into the imperial geography of the East. Equally significant are Malalas' notices on Antiochus IV Epiphanes' actions in Jerusalem, including the transformation of the Temple into one dedicated to Olympian Zeus and Athena, and his explicit reference to famine in 'Palestine' that prompted the transport of grain from Egypt.[2]

While Malalas' narrative here condenses and moralizes earlier accounts, it nonetheless preserves the conception of Palestine as a clearly defined, famine-stricken

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[1] Malalas 8, p. 197–198. Τῆς δὲ Συρίας καὶ Βαβυλωνίας καὶ Παλαιστίνης [Alexander] διετάξατο κρατεῖν καὶ βασιλεύειν Σέλευκον τὸν Νικάτορα. The passages from Malalas quoted here – and in subsequent passages – are reproduced as they appear in his *Chronographia*. As noted above, this work is replete with chronological inconsistencies, anachronisms, and folkloric embellishments. They are cited here not for their factual accuracy, but for the insight they offer into the imagined geography and political order of Syria, Palestine, and adjacent regions in Late Antiquity, as reflected in sixth-century Antiochene memory.

[2] Malalas 8, p. 205–207. Ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς Ἀντίοχος ὃ Ἐπιφανὴς ἠγανάκτησε κατὰ Πτολεμαίου, βασιλέως Αἰγύπτου, διότι τέλη ἀπήτησε τοὺς ἐκ τῆς ὑπ' αὐτὸν ὄντας χώρας Ἰουδαίους. τῶν γὰρ αὐτῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐκ τῆς Παλαιστίνης ἐλθύντων ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ καὶ αἰτησάντων τὸν αὐτὸν Ἀντίοχον γράψαι Πτολεμαίῳ τῷ τῆς Αἰγύπτου τοπάρχῃ καὶ βασιλεῖ μὴ ἀπαιτεῖν αὐτοὺς τέλος μεταχομίζοντας σῖτον εἰς ἀπὸ τροφὰς αὐτῶν, μεγάλου λιμοῦ τότε γενομένου ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ· ἀπὸ γὰρ τῆς αἰγυπτιακῆς χώρας μετεχόμιζον σῖτον οἱ Τονδαῖοι. ὅστις Πτολεμαῖος δεξάμενος τὰ γράμματα Ἀντιόχου πλέον αὐτοὺς ἐχέλευσεν ἀπαιτεῖσθαι. καὶ λοιπὸν Ἀγτίοχος ὃ Ἐπιφανὴς ἐπεστράτευσε κατὰ Πτολεμαίου, διότε οὐκ ἐπείσθη τοῖς γράμμασιν αὐτοῦ. καὶ συμβολῆς γενομένης μεταξὺ αὐτῶν ἔπεσε πλῆθος ταῦ αὐτοῦ Ἀντιόχου πολύ, καὶ φυγὼν ἀπῆλθεν ἐπὶ τὸ λίμιτον. τοῦτο δὲ γνόντες οἱ τῆς Ἰερουσαλὴμ Ἰουδαῖοι, ἐξάψεις ἐποίησαν πρὸς χάριν τοῦ Πτολεμαίου, νομίσαντες τεθνάναι τὸν Ἀντίοχον, ἑαυτοὺς παρατιθέμενοι. ὃ δὲ Ἀντίοχος ὃ Ἐπιφανὴς συνάξας πλῆθος, ἐπέρριψε τῷ Πτολεμαίῳ καὶ ἐφόνευσεν αὐτὸν χόψας καὶ τὰ πλήθη αὐτοῦ. καὶ γνοὺς περὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων τῆς Ἰερουσαλὴμ τὸ τί πέπραχαν κατ' αὐτοῦ, ὡς συγχαρέντες τῇ αὐτοῦ ἥττῃ, ὡπλίσατο κατὰ τῆς Ἰερουσαλήμ. καὶ πολιορχήσας αὐτὴν ἐπολέμησε καὶ παρέλαβεν αὐτὴν καὶ κατέσφαξε πάντας. τὸν δὲ Ἐλεάζαρ τὸν ἀρχιερέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ τοὺς Μεκκαβεῖς ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ ἀγαγὼν κολάσας ἐφόνευσε. καὶ χαθεῖλε τὴν ἀρχιερωσύνην τῆς Ἰουδαίας, καὶ χαθεῖλε τὴν ἀρχιερωσύνην τῆς Ἰουδαίας, καὶ τὸ ἱερόν, Σολομῶντος ὄντα, τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐποίησε Ζιὸς Ὀλυμπίου καὶ Ἀθηναῖς, μιάνας τὸν οἶκον χοιρείοις χρέασι, καὶ ἐχώλυσε τοὺς Ἰουδαίους τῆς πατρῴας θρησκείας καὶ ἑλληνίζειν αὐτοὺς ἐβιάζετο ἐπὶ ἔτη τρία.

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territory within the Ptolemaic-Seleucid-Roman spheres, reinforcing its status as a politically bounded region rather than a purely scriptural *topos*. Malalas thus stands as a witness to the ways in which late antique Antiochene historiography transmitted, reframed, and localized the inherited geopolitical vocabulary of the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. His *Chronographia* illustrates how the designation 'Palestine' persisted as part of an interconnected Syrian-Mesopotamian-Egyptian world, while simultaneously absorbing biblical and legendary narratives, an amalgamation that would come to characterize much of Byzantine historical thought.

Conclusion: Palestine between Naming Practices and Spatial Realities

The chronological arc revealed – from Herodotus' earliest testimony through Hellenistic and Roman sources to the late antique divisions – not only suggests that 'Palestine' was the broader and more enduring designation, but also indicates that 'Judaea' appears, in light of the evidence, as a functional client entity shaped at a specific political juncture to serve as an instrument of imperial administration. Rather than constituting a simple alternative or purely local name, 'Judaea' seems to have been a construct of governance, defined by its administrative role, bound by political allegiance, and activated when expedient and set aside when its function lapsed. Within this methodological framework, the differential reading becomes evident; 'Palestine' can be understood as an authentic geographic framework corroborated by verifiable spatial evidence, whereas 'Judaea' emerges as an administrative creation whose nature is revealed when assessed through the lens of geography rather than the imperatives of identity.

In Herodotus, 'Syrian Palestine' appears as a defined portion of the Syrian continuum toward Egypt, present in route lines, in the description of the coast, its towns and tribes, and in the tribute lists of Persian's Fifth Satrapy. The name thus operates as a stable geographical frame predating later manipulations of borders and identities. Aristotle secures the name's inland reach by placing the Dead Sea within it, and Arrian restates this in a retrospective military account of Alexander's campaigns, drawing on the contemporaneous memoirs of Ptolemy and Aristobulus to link ports to the highlands. This triad establishes from the outset that the referent is a territorial field, not merely a coastal strip nor a single ethnic group.

Diodorus Siculus, in the late Hellenistic era, retains 'Palestine' as the idea of a territorially continuous zone bound into commercial and regional networks; it is not reducible to one ethnicity or to a transient local authority. This is an ethno-geographic usage that reads the land in terms of connectivity and movement, before Rome re-encoded it in the language of taxation and provincial governors.

Strabo, standing at the threshold between classical geography and early Roman re-coding, situates 'Judaea' as an inland district, classifies the Jews within a wider Syrian ethnic spectrum, and presents ethnographic-political vignettes highlighting the absorption of other groups into Jewish customs, which is a narrative of 'assimilation' portraying Judaea as a client polity able to absorb outsiders for imperial advantage. He depicts Judaea as demographically mixed and functionally defined within imperial strategy. Against this sustained focus on Judaea, Strabo mentions 'Palestine' only in a marginal commercial context along the incense route between Nabataean Arabia and Palestine, which is evidence of the shift from the broad Classical-Hellenistic vocabulary to the controlling terminology of early Roman administration, where expansive terms like 'Palestine' are sidelined in favor of instrumental administrative labels like 'Judaea'. Strabo thus sets the pattern later completed in the Roman record; Judaea is in the

foreground as a control unit, and Palestine is in the background as a deferred geographic frame.

Josephus' rhetorical inversion is overt. 'Judaea' is elevated to the theological-historical center, 'Palestine' relegated to a minimal definition (from Gaza to Egypt), which is a deliberate constriction of the wider frame to foreground the client polity's narrative. Pliny the Elder, by contrast, reveals the empire's logic in numbers; he details Judaea's toparchies and links them to specific resources and taxes, while leaving 'Palestine' as a broad transit-border title without internal tax subdivisions.

Tacitus consolidates the picture; 'Palestine' disappears from official description, and the land is written as 'Judaea', an administrative shell for a client regime defined by surveillance, segmentation, and militarization, which means a name speaking the voice of the imperial center, not the language of geography. Suetonius moves the term into the theatre of imperial biography; 'Judaea' becomes a victory slogan (Judaea Capta), a site of military oath, and a symbol in dynastic glory, functional in ceremonial state discourse, not in geography.

Ptolemy delivers the cartographic apex: 'Palestine (Syria), also called Judaea,' placing Palestine first, functionally equating it with Judaea but giving the wider name semantic precedence. His coordinates fix coastal, inland, and trans-Jordani boundaries, and record the renaming of Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina after Bar Kokhba. Ptolemy registers the name 'Judaea', but maps 'Palestine'. Appian of Alexandria confirms the break; 'Palestine' is a fixed unit within the Syrian complex, and 'the Jews' are a fiscal-ethnic group within the frame, not a frame themselves.

Cassius Dio provides the closure: 'This is what happened in Palestine; for that is the name by which the country from Phoenicia to Egypt has been called since ancient times… it later acquired another name, Judaea.' The text distinguishes an ancient, stable name from a later, functional one. Dio then uses 'Palestine' as the default stage for events concerning Judaea itself: Gabinius' campaign, Pacorus' invasion, Titus' operations; naming the theatre 'Palestine' and placing the Jews as a taxed community within it. Even the kings of Judaea are called 'Palestinians' (Herod, Agrippa) in the context of embedding the name within the state's geography. His account of Judaea's devastation after the revolt serves as a retrospective rationale for erasing the name from his geographic lexicon and reinstating the stable 'Palestine' in its place, which signals the end of a proxy polity planted by imperial administration and uprooted when its function ceased.

By late antiquity, with the tripartite reorganization of Palestine, the original name is fully integrated into the new religious-security framework (Christian pilgrimage networks, Ghassanid frontier belts). 'Palestine' becomes the frame into which state functions are poured; 'Judaea' has no place in the administrative vocabulary since direct governance replaced proxy rule.

The historical trajectory thus demonstrates that 'Judaea' was never a natural extension of the land but a device in the engineering of political space for the dominant power, which means a project clad in the garb of identity, living only under its patron, and ending when it ceased to serve. 'Palestine', by contrast, remained the vessel of

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memory, embracing diversity and absorbing change without losing its meaning. This dynamic is not unique to this region. Some polities are born of the land, bearing names as part of their inherited memory, persisting as long as the geography that birthed them. Others are created in the crucible of politics, given names to fulfill a function, enduring only while they serve a purpose, and dissolving when that purpose ends. The former belong to deep time, the latter to a fleeting moment in the ledger of power.

The final methodological conclusion that emerges from the evidence is that names are not merely words on maps but political testimonies to the nature of the formation they designate. An authentic name, rooted in geographic memory, endures because it is part of the land's identity; a functional name falls away because it is a circumstantial creation serving a particular authority. The story of 'Palestine' and 'Judaea' is thus not a contest between two labels, but between an identity that springs from the land and one imposed upon it; it is a contest between a geography that sustains itself over time and powers that impose client polities and erase their names once their function has expired. In this way, the trajectory traced here becomes a broader historical lesson: what is born of politics dies with it; what is born of geography endures as long as the land itself.

Appendix A

Usage and Spatial Semantics of Palestine/Judaea in Greek and Latin Sources (5th c. B.C.–6th c. CE): A Chronological Comparative Table

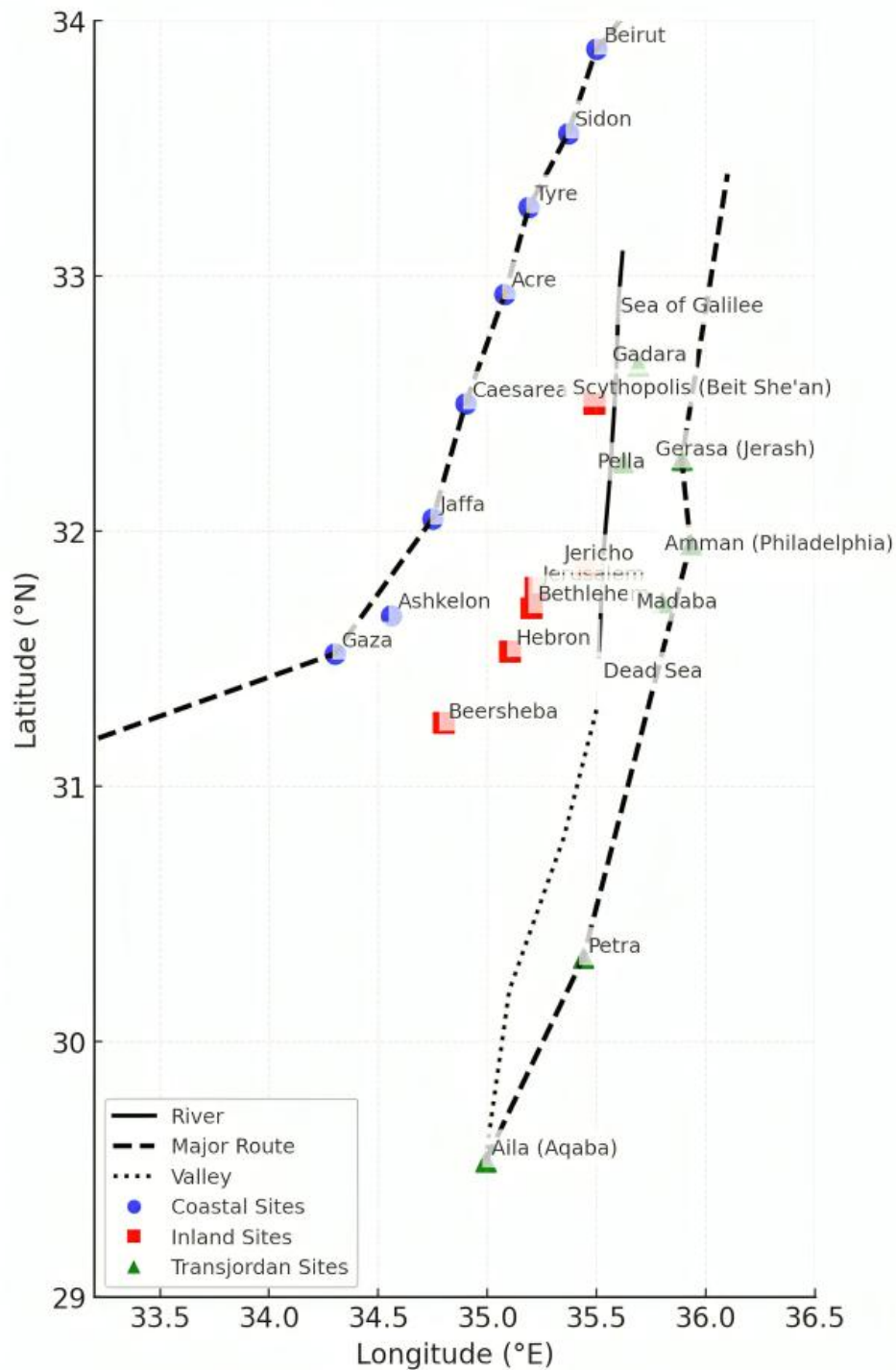| Author	Approx. Date	Context of Usage	Spatial Scope
Herodotus	Ca. mid-5th c. B.C.	Ethnographic, geopolitical, and administrative: mentions Palestine in accounts of Scythian campaign, Egyptian contacts (circumcision), Persian satrapies, continental 'peninsulas', and naval contingents in Xerxes' invasion	Broad inland and coastal zone between Phoenicia and Egypt; part of Persian 5th satrapy; includes Cadytis (Gaza) and overland routes; not a narrow seaboard but integrated overland corridor
Aristotle	4th c. B.C.	Scientific and cosmological: refers to a 'lake in Palestine'; identifies the Dead Sea within broader natural philosophy	Inland geographical designation: Dead Sea within the Jordan Rift Valley; confirms Palestine's scope far beyond the coastal strip, extending into the deep interior of the southern Levant
Arrian	2nd c. CE (Relating events of the late 4th c. B.C., depending on eyewitness sources)	Retrospective historical narrative: describes Alexander's march to Egypt; identifies Gaza as the last stronghold, defended by Batis	Defines Palestine as a geographic subregion of Syria, encompassing inland and coastal zones; Gaza portrayed as fortified, Arab-influenced commercial hub linking Levant interior with Mediterranean trade; Palestine situated within broader continuum stretching from Mesopotamia and Arabia to Phoenicia and Egypt
Diodorus Siculus	1st c. B.C.	Historical-ethnographic: attributes the origin of the Jews to Egyptian colonization, noting the Jews 'between Arabia and Syria'; mentions 'Palestine' in Arabian trade routes	Jews placed in a liminal zone between Arabia and Syria; 'Palestine' treated as a geographic region tied to trade, not Roman politics
Strabo	early 1st c. CE	Geographical-political/administrative: places Judaea as an inland district of Syria; describes the Jews alongside others; notes Joppa as a 'naval arsenal', Jerusalem near the sea, and emphasizes mixed populations and Egyptian	Judaea: defined inland polity within Syria, politically salient under Rome, ethnographically mixed. Palestine: vague geographic marker linked to Arabian trade networks, marginal in Roman administrative

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		origins; mentions 'Palestine' in a peripheral trade-route context.	vocabulary
Josephus	1st c. CE	Political–ideological historiography: uses 'Judaea' and 'Palestine' in deliberate contrast; 'Judaea' framed as sacred, historical heartland; 'Palestine' applied to marginal, often Gentile zones; invokes biblical history to reinforce Judaean centrality while relegating Palestine to exterior or foreign space.	Judaea: core ethnoreligious territory and expanded under biblical kings. Palestine: narrow coastal corridor, acknowledged geographically but framed as non-Jewish and peripheral.
Pliny the Elder	1st c. CE	Natural geography/ Roman imperial geography: Judaea described in detail as an administrative unit; Palestine mentioned as a historical-geographic label and borderland, but without subdivisions or fiscal detail.	Judaea: mapped with bureaucratic precision, tied to resources and tributes, integrated into imperial economy. Palestine: broader, fluid zone, functioning as a conceptual rather than administrative space.
Tacitus	Early 2nd c. CE	Historical narrative/ administrative/ Roman provincial discourse: 'Palestine' disappears; 'Judaea' dominates as a client province, framed through taxation, partition; a militarized theatre, with geographic excursus aligning it to earlier definitions of Palestine but renamed for imperial control.	Judaea: bounded east by Arabia, south by Egypt, west by Phoenicia/sea, north by Syria. Functions as a Roman administrative shell, defined by oversight and military mobilization. Palestine, though long-standing, is effaced from nomenclature, replaced by the provincial construct of Judaea.
Suetonius	Early 2nd c. CE	Biographical-ceremonial: 'Judaea' appears in triumphs, prophecies, military oaths, and imperial achievements; used as a commemorative toponym; setting for Titus' campaigns and Domitian's triumphal display; Palestine absent	Judaea as a theatre of war and imperial legitimation; functions less as mapped province than as symbolic and biographical stage of Flavian power.
Ptolemy	2nd c. CE	Scientific-cartographic: presents Palestine (Syria), also called Judaea with precise coordinates	Broad, systematized region including both coasts and highlands; Palestine defined as a large, multi-zonal territorial unit.
Appian	2nd c. CE	Political-administrative: Post-Bar Kokhba revolt; uses 'Palestine' as the standard administrative-geographical term, while	Palestine-Syria treated as a stable provincial unit alongside Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, and Idumaea, includes both

		'the Jews' appear only as an ethno-fiscal category.	coastal and inland zones.
Cassius Dio	3rd c. CE	Imperial narrative: Writing as a Roman senator and historian after the Bar Kokhba revolt; distinguishes between 'Palestine' (the old, enduring geographic name) and 'Judaea' (a transient, ethnopolitical construct tied to rebellion and failed autonomy).	Palestine is repeatedly defined as the natural geographic frame; it functions as a normalized Roman provincial entity; marking the final semantic displacement of Judaea from imperial vocabulary.
Ammianus Marcellinus	4th c. CE	Administrative-geographical and security-political	Broad inland and coastal province; urbanized and cultivated; positioned as corridor Antioch-Egypt; integrated Holy Land with strategic frontier and internal security functions.
Paulus Orosius	Early 5th c. CE	Providential/ theological historiography: retrojects the later administrative name 'Palestine' back onto 1st c. B.C. and 1st c. CE events; treating the province as a stage of divine providence, reward, and punishment	Not a neutral geography but an administrative-symbolic construct: Palestine as theological space, locus of salvation history and imperial-Christian narrative.
Procopius of Caesarea	6th c. CE	Geo-strategic: Palestine as terminus of Red Sea corridor; frontier zone with Saracen *phylarch*, integrated in imperial naval and trade security; also, as target of Sasanian invasion	Palestine is a coastal, inland, and desert frontiers: province linked to Mediterranean-Red Sea corridor, fortified and organized as security belt, economically rich and militarily strategic.
John Malalas	Mid-6th c. CE	Antiochene chronographic tradition: Palestine integrated into Seleucid royal domains; referenced in episodes of Antiochus IV and famine; demonstrates persistence of Hellenistic-Roman territorial categories in Byzantine historical imagination.	Bounded political-territorial unit within Eastern Mediterranean order, linking Syria, Babylonia, Asia, and Egypt; not only scriptural but part of interconnected imperial geography.

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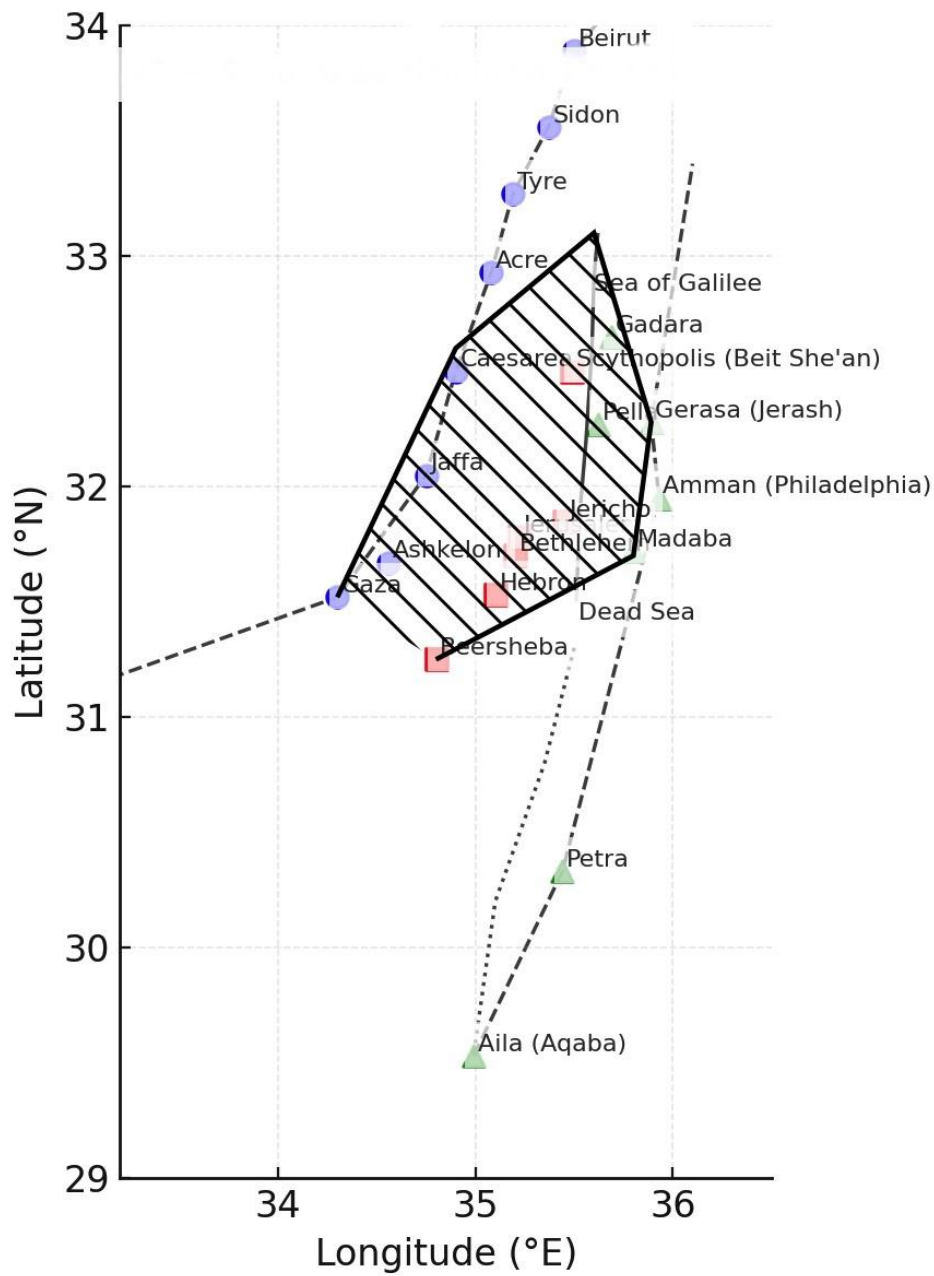Status in Classical through Late Roman sources

Appendix B

A schematic historical map, highlighting the principal coastal, inland, and Transjordan
sites discussed in the text, together with the main routes and valleys

Appendix C

A Schematic Historical Map of 'Syria Palaestina' after 135 CE (Post-Bar Kokhba)

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Appendix D

A Schematic Historical Map of the Byzantine Provinces of Palestine (Palaestina I, II,
III)
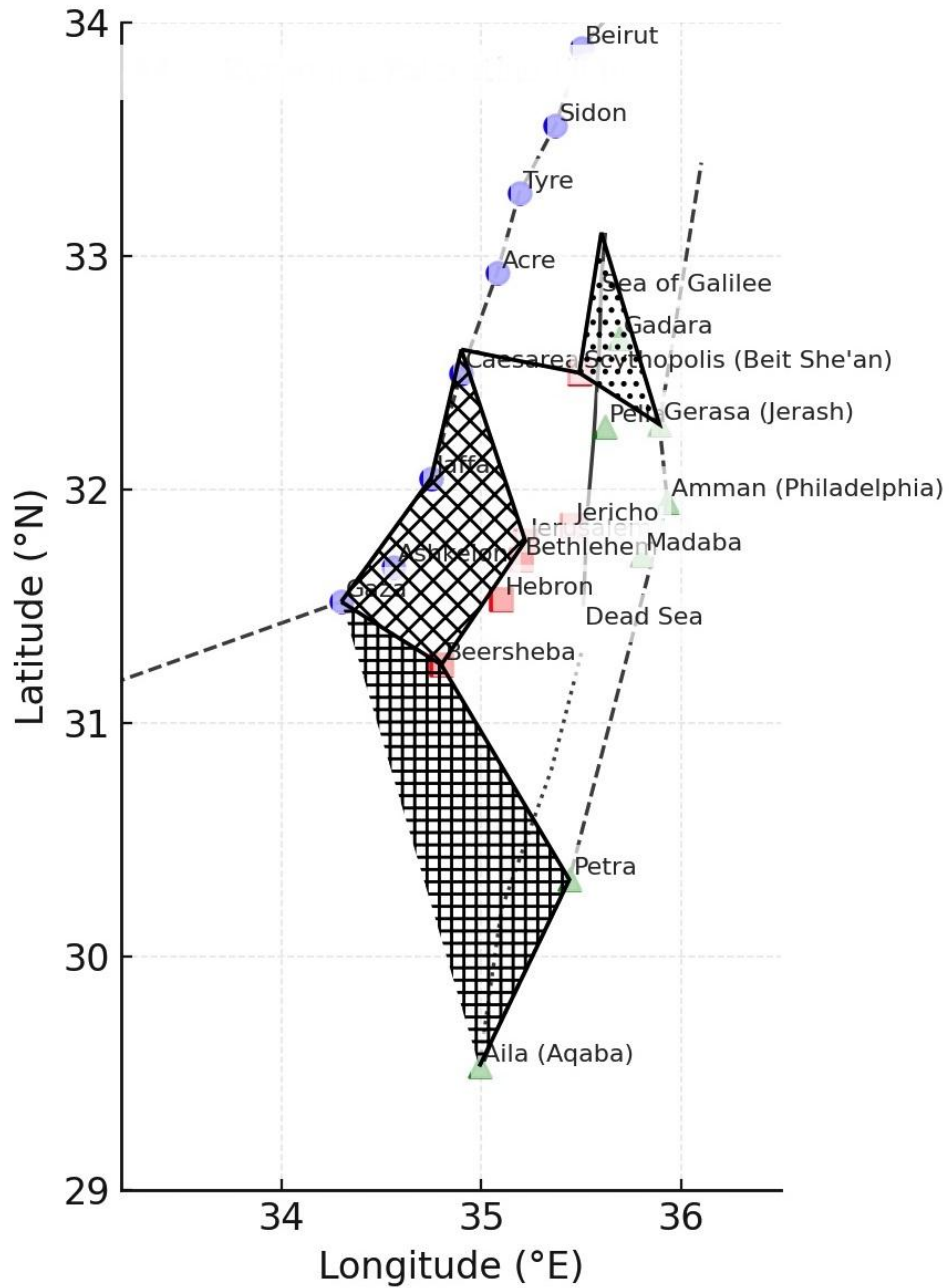
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- Literary sources and works of ancient authors are cited according to abbreviations found in the Perseus Digital Library Project which is available at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/.

- Not included in the Perseus Digital Library Project are the following:

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  - Oros. *Hist. Adv. Pag.*= Paulus Orosius. *Historiarum Adversum Paganos*. Thorunii, 1857.
  - Malalas= John Malalas. *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, (ed.) Ludwig Dindorf. Bonnae: E. Weber, 1831.

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