

Hadrian's Religious Policy: An Architectural Perspective

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This thesis argues that the emperor Hadrian used vast building projects as a means to display and project his distinctive religious policy in the service of his overarching attempt to cement his power and rule. The undergirding analysis focuses on a select group of his building projects throughout the empire and draws on an array of secondary literature on issues of his rule and imperial power, including other monuments commissioned by Hadrian. An examination of Hadrian's religious policy through examination of his architectural projects will reveal the catalysts for his diplomatic success in and outside of Rome. The thesis discusses in turn: Hadrian's building projects within the city of Rome, his villa at Tibur, and various projects in the provinces of Greece and Judaea. By juxtaposing analysis of Hadrian's projects in Rome and Greece with his projects and actions in Judaea, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of his religious policy and the state of Roman religion in his times than scholars have reached to date.

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By

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I. Introduction and Background

Hadrian began his reign at the peak of Roman expansion. Hadrian halted expansion upon his accession, withdrew from certain recently conquered areas, and began an initiative of diplomacy and unification. The undergirding analysis focuses on a select group of his building projects throughout the empire and draws on an array of secondary literature on issues of his rule and imperial power, including other monuments commissioned by Hadrian. An examination of Hadrian's religious policy through examination of his architectural projects will reveal the catalysts for his diplomatic success in and outside of Rome. The thesis discusses in turn: Hadrian's building projects within the city of Rome, his villa at Tibur, and various projects in the provinces of Greece and Judaea. The building projects of Rome and Greece were selected based on their visibility to the broadest segment of the Roman population and the availability of extant primary documents. By juxtaposing analysis of Hadrian's projects in Rome and Greece with his projects and actions in Judaea, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of his religious policy and the state of Roman religion in his times than scholars have reached to date. This thesis argues that the emperor Hadrian used vast building projects as a means to display and project his distinctive religious policy in the service of his overarching attempt to cement his power and rule. Hadrian's policy is unique in that his policy development, stemming from his intentions to unify Rome while still embracing the past, and the monuments themselves contribute greatly to his success.

The life of Publius Aelius Hadrianus, princeps of Rome 117-138CE, remains an enigma to many historians. He was a complex character, as described by his biographer in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (hereafter SHA; to be discussed later):

“grave and gay, affable and dignified, impulsive and cautious, mean and generous, secretive yet open, cruel and gentle, and, in sum, consistent only in his inconsistency.”¹ When he took power, after Trajan’s military feats and expansion, he faced the daunting task of unifying the widespread empire. He halted expansion due to revolts in Egypt and Cyrene, in present day Libya, and began to visit the provinces of Rome more systematically than any predecessor. “His activity centered on bettering the empire internally in various ways: improving material and administrative infrastructure, boosting municipal elites as well as the senatorial and equestrian infrastructure, invigorating religious practices, and encouraging cultural activities, especially those of a literary ritual kind.”²

His actions and rule emulate those of Augustus, the first emperor, and his principate has been seen by contemporary observers as a portrayal of the second Golden Age, a pax Romana, like Augustus’s. He spent many years away from the city of Rome, recognizing that the capital had become a decultured symbol of the past. Faced with an expansive empire and the requirements of travel, Hadrian’s Rome was heading into modern times. Hadrian completed two large tours, one began in 125 and ended in 127 and the other began in 128 and ended in 133. In his first tour he traveled from Gaul into Britain and then to Tarraco in Spain, and continued to Nicea, Cyzicus, and Pergamum in Asia Minor where he extended his journey to the Euphrates before returning with an extensive visit in Ephesus, and other visits in Rhodes, Athens, Eleusis and Sicily. On his second tour he went from Sicily to Africa, then on to parts of Greece,

¹ E. Capps et al. eds., *The Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, vol I, trans. David Magie, (New York: J.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1922), 43.

² M. Boatwright, D. Gargola, R. Talbert, *The Romans from Village to Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 348.

particularly Athens, before going to Syria, Antioch, Judea, and Alexandria, and then revisiting Athens on the way home, after traveling through Asia Minor.³ Hadrian's reign is comparable to the time of Augustus in that it was a time of unification within the empire, a peaceful extent of time, and policies and procedures for the empire were developed and put in place.

I will present information throughout this thesis that will demonstrate the idea that Hadrian believed that in order to rule effectively, he had to understand and embrace the provinces' varying cultures and governments, and in turn determine what factors would unify them. Hadrian enacted a policy of religious tolerance in the case of those groups who recognized the pagan gods⁴, while having a different agenda and less tolerant approach to those who practiced Judaism and Christianity. His tolerance unified some, mainly pagan, while limited as seen in his persecution of Jews and Christians.

Hadrian allowed the provinces to worship their local gods and cults through their local practices, and unified them through their agreement to recognize the imperial cult, a tradition established by his predecessors. He went so far as to participate in some of these religious practices, satisfying both his religious curiosity and his political program, and appealing to the provincial powers. Coins bearing the representation of gods from the principate of Hadrian and his predecessors, as we shall see, demonstrate the differences in their imperial agendas. Trajan's official coinage was commonly adorned with images of the military and his conquests, while Roman and provincial deities of protection or personified representations of the divine commonly adorned Hadrian's official coinage. Unlike his predecessors, Hadrian's coinage promoted assimilation and

³ Anthony Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor* (London: Routledge, 1997), 12-24.

⁴ That is, the traditional Greek and Roman gods.

unification rather than conquest and military prowess. Coins described by Boatwright and Briley depict Hadrian in the role of different provincial deities or with provincial symbolism.

Hadrian's building projects outside and within the city of Rome reveal much about his religious policy. Within Rome Hadrian built, or had reconstructed, temples and sanctuaries. He reconstructed the Pantheon, built the temple to Venus and Roma, both at Rome, and built a large villa at ancient Tibur (modern Tivoli). This villa, which he helped design, is perhaps the most revealing of the ruler's religious penchants. It contains sculpture and architecture symbolizing his travels and the different gods he encountered throughout. The villa, which reveals a close affinity with the Egyptian gods, is the summation of his travels and his religious policies; and the iconography of his young deified lover, Antinous, enhances the religiosity of the villa and highlights Hadrian's unusual religious perspective.

In Greece, Hadrian's building projects and his participation in religious rituals there provide evidence of how he implemented a Hellenic program. He spent a generous portion of his provincial travels in Athens and other Greek cities. In Athens, he built a common sanctuary of the gods, inspired the construction of the Arch of Hadrian, and completed the Temple of Olympian Zeus, which had stood unfinished for six centuries. Hadrian's relations with the Greeks provide rich evidence about his religious policy and personal religious preferences.

Hadrian's religious policy is further revealed by an examination of his actions in Judaea. Despite initial considerate treatment of the Jewish people, he ignited a war when he built Aelia Capitolina. Aelia Capitolina was a Roman colony, built on Jewish

soil, in Jerusalem. Hadrian's perceptions and misperceptions of Jewish religious practices and beliefs are inconsistent with his overall policy of tolerance and violated traditional Roman tolerance of Judaism based on its great antiquity.

Hadrian was ruling at the peak of the Roman peace, and he was the third of the five good emperors. In the Renaissance, Machiavelli had already evaluated the success of these five emperors whose succession was based on their merit and not on inheritance:

From the study of this history we may also learn how a good government is to be established; for while all the emperors who succeeded to the throne by birth, except Titus, were bad, all were good who succeeded by adoption, as in the case of the five from Nerva to Marcus. But as soon as the empire fell once more to the heirs by birth, its ruin recommenced.⁵

Hadrian ruled at the peak of this prosperous era which, in the Enlightenment, Edward Gibbon considered to be one of the most blessed in history⁶:

If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman Empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom. The armies were restrained by the firm but gentle hand of four successive emperors, whose characters and authority commanded respect. The forms of the civil administration were carefully

⁵ Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livy*, Book I, Chapter 1.

⁶ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, (New York: The Heritage Press, 1946), 78.

preserved by Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian and the Antonines, who delighted in the image of liberty, and were pleased with considering themselves as the accountable ministers of the laws. Such princes deserved the honour of restoring the republic, had the Romans of their days been capable of enjoying a rational freedom.

Hadrian was part of a shift in leadership and culture in Rome after the turmoil of the Flavian dynasty. He contributed to the new era of stability and prosperity by developing a strong diplomatic policy in which religious tolerance was a key element. Nevertheless, at the end of his principate, Hadrian acted tyrannically and had alienated the senate.

Previously, Nerva (r. 96-98), who was appointed by the senate, spent his time remedying the wrongs of his predecessors. Nerva relieved debt, allowed exiles to return home, and was somewhat tolerant towards the Christians. Scholars agree that Nerva's very brief rule was just and prosperous. Before his death, Nerva named Trajan as his successor to avoid the possible later appointment of an unworthy successor.

Trajan (r. 98-117), a Spaniard and distant cousin of Hadrian's, was the first non-native of Italy to rule Rome, an indication that Rome was beginning to harmonize and cultivate the provinces of the empire. He was beloved by the people, the senate, and the army. Trajan blended "the goodwill of the army and harmony with the senate."⁷ He used this leverage to improve the plight of the poor and further mend relationships with the senate. Trajan also expanded the empire, acquiring the provinces of Dacia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Arabia, and bringing the empire to its largest extent. As he was dying Trajan reportedly adopted Hadrian as his successor, although there are

⁷ Boatwright. et al. *The Romans*, 366.

suggestions of interferences manipulated by his wife.⁸ Hadrian made arrangements for his own successors prior to his own death: Antoninus Pius in the first generation, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus in the second generation.

Hadrian's predecessor created a firm basis for Hadrian to focus on diplomatic efforts, for he strengthened the government and brought lands and peoples into the Roman empire. At one level Hadrian was left to strengthen what already had been built, but first he gave up some of the lands Trajan had conquered believing that trying to hold them would overextend the empire. Faced with having to unite a far-flung empire administratively, Hadrian responded by traveling, building, and exploring all while encouraging all the various cultures in the empire to tolerate each other and co-exist peacefully. As imperial policy moved under Hadrian from conquering new territories to better governing the one within the empire through diplomacy, he cultivated a new imperial persona travelling far and wide not as questing conqueror, but as an appeasing diplomat. In stark contrast, successor Antoninus Pius never left Italy. Hadrian had favored the provinces and neglected many aspects of Rome, so that Pius stayed in Italy to re-establish Rome as the heart of the empire.

This thesis collects and interprets select primary evidence and analyzes certain key building projects in the Empire. Hadrian's projects in Italy and Greece are most revealing of this enigmatic ruler. In this way, this thesis provides a fresh perspective on Hadrian's political program, specifically regarding his religious policies, and this perspective allows the reader to understand the ruler's successes through the

⁸ Gibbon, *Decline of the Roman Empire*, 50-89; Boatwright et.al., 37.

development of his policy and monuments, and it will provide an overall characterization of Hadrian's impact on Rome.

II. Source Analysis and Historiography

The extant sources regarding Hadrian's life are fragmented and scarce, much is lost. The present paper in no way attempts to write a biography of the man, a task successfully achieved by eminent scholars. The purpose of this work is to identify and analyze Hadrian's religious policy as it affected pagans, Jews, and the world of Rome itself. Hadrian's religious policy and how it affected his decisions and political life will be illustrated through an analysis of individual building projects. This chapter surveys the sources, primary and secondary, that have explored the religious policy of Hadrian.

The two primary extant literary sources discussing the emperor are the *Vita Hadriani* in the *SHA* and book 69 of Cassius Dio as epitomized by Xiphilinus. In addition to these two sources, whose limitations will be discussed below, epigraphic collections, numismatic collections, and the emperor's building projects illuminate aspects of the emperor's religious policy. The analysis is arranged in geographic order, beginning with Rome, Tibur, and Greece before Judaea.

The *SHA* and the epitome of Dio's Book 69 are discussed in order to convey their strengths and their weaknesses in presenting a picture of the emperor. Dio began writing his history around 197, or a little later, approximately sixty to seventy years after Hadrian's death.⁹ The *SHA* appeared in the years of Diocletian and Constantine in the late third and early fourth centuries, approximately 150-200 years after Hadrian's death.¹⁰ Dio, a future consul in 197, has a more personal and closer relationship with the workings of the Roman Empire than does the more detached anonymous author of

⁹ Fergus Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1964), 11.

¹⁰ H.W. Benario, *A Commentary on the Vita Hadriani in the Historia Augusta* (Ann Arbor: Edward Brothers, 1980), 5.

the *Vita Hadriani*, which begins the *Historia Augusta*. Each tells the story of Hadrian in a distinctive tone, through the treatment of similar events, but the *SHA* is both more extensive and sensational in its presentation for reasons we will see below.

Cassius Dio was a Roman citizen from Bithynia, born in 165. He served as Roman consul twice in 222 and 229, and was a close friend of the emperor Septimius Severus. He wrote a history of Rome in eighty volumes, beginning with the arrival of Aeneas in Italy circa 1200 BCE and spanning the centuries down to Septimius Severus' principate and slightly later. Scholars compare his style and organization to Thucydides', which is not apparent in the abbreviated version of book 69 that survives. The epitome, then, is only a brief summary of the original material Dio wrote concerning Hadrian, and not a full representation of either his methodology or his writing technique.

The advantages of Dio's work include its being written closer to the death of Hadrian, and therefore with the availability of first generation oral sources, as well as Hadrian's autobiography, which was subsequently lost. Another advantage was Dio's role in government, which helped him to articulate the inner workings of the principate.¹¹ Dio could also draw on his father's research, which he refers to several times: "My father Apronianus, who was governor of Cilicia, had ascertained accurately the whole story about him."¹² During the final years of his life and reign, as both sources concur, Hadrian was unpleasant, irrational, and disliked by the people. The legacy of disdain for the ruler likely influenced Dio; for despite the evidence he presents that Hadrian's reign

¹¹ Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio*, 23-38.

¹² Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, vol. XIII, trans. Ernest Cary. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 3.

was peaceful and prosperous, his overall tone is contemptuous, even if the epitome interferes with our ability to appreciate Dio's tone fully.

For Dio's Books 36-80 the chief authority is the epitome of Xiphilinus, a monk of Constantinople, who abridged these books at the request of the emperor Michael VII Ducas, late in the 10th century.¹³ He divided his epitome into sections each containing the life of one emperor. As, Herbert Baldwin Foster states:

Four hundred and seven small pages, over and above the Epistle Dedicatory, are contained in Volume One. Really, however, this is not the true Dio at all, but merely his shadow, seized and distorted to satisfy the ideas of his epitomizer, the monk Xiphilinus, who was separated from him by a thousand years in the flesh and another thousand in the spirit.¹⁴

This suggests the analysis of Dio was far removed from the time period of the epitomizer.

Much controversy regarding accuracy surrounds the *SHA*, which consists of biographies of the emperors and important figures of Rome from 117-284. Scholars disagree about the authorship of the work; the majority of scholars accept, as the work itself claims, that multiple authors had a hand in it. Others believe it to be a late forgery, and claim the *SHA* may have had only one author. Part of the scholarly debate concerns the veracity of the work. Many anachronisms appear in the text and the use of later Latin language raises questions regarding the dating of the work and the facts

¹³ Herbert Baldwin Foster, *Dio's Rome* (New York: Pafraets Co., 1905), 2-3

¹⁴ Cassius Dio, trans. Herbert Baldwin Foster, *Dio's Rome* (New York: Pafraets Co., 1905), 4.

contained within it. In 1880 Theodor Mommsen proposed that there was an editor of the *SHA* during the time of Theodosius (r. 379-395), which would explain the linguistic anomalies, but to this day disagreements persist.¹⁵ Ronald Syme conjectures, “The whole of the papers are a work of fictional history and constitute an elaborate and erudite hoax.”¹⁶ Though parts of the work seem “anecdotal” and “propagandistic,” according to H.W. Benario, “it remains one of the most significant primary sources concerning Hadrian, and all in all one can read the *Vita* with considerable confidence,” despite the ongoing controversies.¹⁷

This *Vita* provides a more extensive discussion of Hadrian than Dio, and it exists in its entirety. Aelius Spartianus is the attributed author of the *Vita Hadriani*. Spartianus’s work, if it is his work, appears to have been modeled after the writings of Suetonius, author of the *De vita Caesarum*. The *Vita Hadriani* covers, in order, Hadrian’s ancestry, his life previous to the accession of the throne, his policies and the events of his reign, his personal traits, death, personal appearance, and honors after death. The *SHA* is more formulaic and ordered than the epitome of book 69. Spartianus used Hadrian’s now lost autobiography, as well as government documents of Rome to construct Hadrian’s biography.¹⁸

The secondary sources on Hadrian have ranged widely, from biographies, monographs analyzing his coinage, evaluations of the purpose of his allegedly

¹⁵ Joseph Drake, “Studies in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*,” *The American Journal of Philology* 20 (1899): 40-58.

¹⁶ Ronald Syme, “Hadrian and Italica,” *Journal of Roman Studies* LIV: (1983)142–149.

¹⁷ Benario, *A Commentary on the Vita Hadriani in the Historia Augusta*, 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid* 12-18.

defensive wall in Britain, questions regarding his lover Antinous, discussions about his role in triggering the Jewish war, and a cataloguing of his building programs. This thesis is very much indebted to *Hadrian and the Cities of Rome* (2002) and *Hadrian and the City of Rome* (1989), both by Mary Boatwright. Boatwright gathers material evidence, such as archaeological findings and inscriptions, to support her purpose which is to bring together and to discuss in urban and historical context Hadrian's constructions and administrative changes in Rome itself. In her earlier book she states in her introduction:

Because other urban changes in the capital city during Hadrian's principate have left less visible traces, however, few people realize how powerfully Hadrian transformed the face and life of the capital city not only by these and other monumental edifices, but by renovating buildings and even entire districts, and by reorganizing the building industry and neighborhood life.

This thesis aims to develop Boatwright's views of Hadrian's building projects and emphasizing Hadrian's piety and his religious policy seen through architecture, affected the Roman Empire.¹⁹

Boatwright establishes how Hadrian paid special attention to local autonomy and respected local customs. Hadrian created a new Greco-Roman culture, which he used to establish what was "Roman" and what was "foreign." She attributes his problems with the Jews to their inability to accept the Greco-Roman culture, and therefore Jewish culture was considered "foreign." Included, perhaps most of all in this difference, were

¹⁹ Mary Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1987), 5-7.

their religious beliefs, which prevented many of them from accepting the Graeco-Roman cultural practice, worshipping the image of the Emperor, which Hadrian considered essential.²⁰

Her later book presents a similar thesis, using archaeological evidence from the provinces. In her work she establishes the uncommon activity of Hadrian throughout the Roman Empire. Her work was the first of its kind. She argues that Hadrian's actions and reception were essentially positive:

No one has attempted to compile and interpret all of Hadrian's different interactions with cities throughout the Roman Empire. This I now aim to do, because I see Hadrian's personal involvement in Roman cities as intrinsic to the continuance of the Roman Empire itself. Even though our evidence tends to report only successful pleas, the collected data let us see that Hadrian's municipal activity was predominantly positive. His benefactions, and their fame, decidedly helped to persuade Rome's provincials to cooperate with the ruling power.

While Boatwright has expanded our knowledge of politics, culture, and religion of Rome through topography, this thesis serves as a resource to identify and list specific building projects that are most revealing of this emperor's religious policy. Boatwright discusses religion and its effect on cities as a whole, and the present paper focuses on the religious policy and its effect on Hadrian's successful political diplomacy. This thesis

²⁰ Ibid 6-12.

elaborates on her basic idea that Hadrian's actions were positive and beneficial to the empire as a whole.²¹

Useful secondary sources worth noting and consulting include Anthony Birley's *Hadrian the Restless Emperor* (1997). Birley uses a variety of literary, numismatic, and epigraphic evidences and discusses Hadrian in a highly speculative way, claiming that prior research has not done the emperor justice and that through his new work on Hadrian he can use new methods to bring about a new perspective on Hadrian. In writing a biography, Birley constructs his life of Hadrian by filling evidential gaps with three kinds of data: the relevant actions of other individuals in those years, events in the history of literature, and information from the *SHA*. His most useful contribution to Hadrianic scholarship includes his discussions of where Hadrian traveled and those with whom he interacted. While he is not very revealing about who Hadrian was, he does provide a catalog of sources establishing the historical context in which Hadrian lived and acted. This catalog allows researchers to identify important evidence and to explain or illuminate Hadrian's specific actions and policies.²²

In sum, the religious policy of Hadrian has yet to be the primary focus of a Hadrianic thesis. Scholars have agreed, for the most part, that Hadrian was a successful ruler, and that he made great efforts to unify the empire and define the new "Roman." Scholars regularly mention his affinity for building projects and travel. There are brief discussions in many works concerning Hadrianic participation in different

²¹ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of Rome*, 9-12.

²² Anthony Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor* (London: Routledge, 1997).

pagan rituals. This thesis analyzes the epitomized Dio and the *Vita Hadriani* of the *SHA*, and uses Boatwright's model to highlight, explore, model, and deepen our understanding of Hadrian's relationship with the empire through religion.

III. Religion in Rome

This section serves to clarify the definition and concept of 'religion' as that term is used in this thesis. The modern definition of religion does not apply directly to the term in Roman usage. Even religions that have a modern day presence Judaism, were defined and conceived of differently during the Hadrianic period. In ancient Rome there was no single set of sacred scriptures. Certain documents explained certain myths, traditions, and cult and festival practices, but no unifying document comparable to that of the Bible. There also was no single Greek or Latin word which clearly aligned with our modern day definition of religion.

Many words conveyed the idea of things and actions sacred, pious, or of divine origin, but none would accommodate our modern minimalist definition of a religion: a distinct set of beliefs and practices. Therefore the combination of the Latin and Greek terminology, the word *religio* and the phrase *nomizein theous*, are used here to define Roman religious ideas at the time of Hadrian. The Greek phrase is considered and aligned with Roman ideas, because of Hadrian's philhellenism and the time he spent in Greece, and his participation in many Greek religious rituals and practices. The word religion derives from the Latin word *religio*, which is best defined at this time period, as contentiousness or as "an obligation with respect to the divine." Beard states that "The focus of the term was on public, communal behaviour towards the gods of the state. *Religio* was displayed by individuals -- from the emperor to members of the local elites-- primarily within this public context."²³ This statement affirms that *religio* can be applied

²³ M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price. *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge, 1998), 216-217.

to the emperor's relationship with the divine. The Greek phrase *nomizein theous*, means "to acknowledge the gods by engaging in customary practice."²⁴ In summary, the relationship between the people and the divine both defines religion and gives it a political and social orientation. Thus, the different ways in which Hadrian paid respect to various deities, through various building projects and inscriptions, and the practices in which he and those with whom he engaged participated yield further insight into the religious policy of the ruler.

The *Panegyricus* of Pliny the Younger thanking Trajan for naming him consul in 100 AD, provides a glimpse into the religious theory of the time period:

It was a good and wise custom of our ancestors to begin no act or speech without prayer. They believed it only proper and prudent to reverence the gods and seek their aid and guidance. How much more ought we now to have recourse to prayer when, by command of the senate and the will of the people, your consul is about to make an expression of gratitude to a good prince! For what gift of the gods is better or nobler than a chaste, pious, godlike prince! And I am sure that even if there were still doubt as to whether rulers are given to the world by chance or by divine will, we should all feel that our prince was chosen by divine direction. For he was not found out by the secret power of fate, but by the open manifestation of Jupiter's will, and was chosen amid sacred altars in the same temple in which Jupiter dwells in person as clearly as he does in the starry heavens. It is therefore all the more fitting that I should turn in prayer to thee, Jupiter, most mighty and

²⁴ James B. Rives, *Religion of the Roman Empire* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1997), 13-17.

good, and ask that my address may prove worthy of me as consul, worthy of our senate, and worthy of our prince; that my words may bear the stamp of freedom, faith, and truth, and lack as much the semblance, as they do the need, of flattery.²⁵

It was believed by many people that the princeps was elected by the gods to be the ruler of Rome, chosen by “divine direction.” There is a suggestion that the people still question the notion that the emperor could be selected by chance. Pliny redirects the perception of those listening by determining that Trajan was selected by “Jupiter’s will” and therefore is worthy of praise and devotion, as he was selected “amid sacred altars in the same temple in which Jupiter dwells in person as clearly as he does in the starry heavens.” This concept, that the ruler was divinely elected, was a relatively recent development in history, dating back to Augustus’s reign. During his reign, worship of his image in the East was criticized by traditionalists at Rome. Hadrian was constructing a religious persona, an idea less than 150 years in the making.

The panegyric also reveals the virtues required of a good ruler. “For what gift of the gods is better or nobler than a chaste, pious, godlike prince.” Noreña examines the virtues expected of rulers and concludes that, “Imperial mediation between man and god was commemorated by a proliferation of sacrificial images that emphasized the emperor’s central role in the act of sacrifice.”²⁶ In order for a ruler to portray these

²⁵ Trans. by FP Garland, from *Masterpieces of Eloquence*, ed. M.W. Hazeltine et al. (New York: Collier, 1905).

²⁶ Carlos F. Noreña, “The Communication of the Emperor’s Virtues” *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 91 (2001), 146.

virtues, he would have to engage in public service. Hadrian met these requirements through his restructuring of the city and the empire. He used religious practices as a tool to gain support throughout the empire. Hadrian's participation in rituals did not make him the recipient for the favor of the gods, but rather were a constituent aspect of his conduct as a good ruler. Thus the emperor must seek not everlasting character which is already awaiting him but a good reputation which was brought about not by likeness and status but by virtue and merits.²⁷

Hadrian's extensive empire requires a discussion on the status of Rome's imperial cult as "an expression of the ambiguous relationship between the Princeps and his subjects." The 'imperial cult' "offered to the Roman emperor, or his (deified predecessors), with temples, festivals, prayers, and priesthoods in every province of the empire." ²⁸ Cassius Dio states (51.20.7):

He commanded that the Romans resident in these cities should pay honour to these two divinities; but he permitted the aliens, whom he styled Hellenes, to consecrate precincts to himself, the Asians to have theirs in Pergamum and the Bithynians theirs in Nicomedia. This practice, beginning under him, has been

²⁷ B Mason Hammond, "Pliny the Younger's Views on Government," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 49 (1938): 127

²⁸ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 318. It is also important to note that Beard, North, and Price conclude that there was no single entity that can be "identified" as the imperial cult. "Rather, there were a series of different cults sharing a common focus in worship of the emperor, his family, or processors, but operating quite differently according to a variety of different local circumstances- the Roman status of communities in which they were found, the pre-existing religious traditions of the area, and the degree of central Roman involvement in establishing the cult. " In this thesis, the term 'imperial cult will be used to address this idea, not the entity.

continued under other emperors, not only in the case of the Hellenic nations but also in that of all the others, in so far as they are subject to the Romans.²⁹

From Dio's statement, beginning with Augustus, one can conclude that the emperor was a unifying factor in the religions of the Roman territory, an aspect of worship that all Roman people and provinces shared. Individual cities and provincial authorities voluntarily petitioned for permission to profess, through public rituals, their homage to their living emperor. Especially in its early stages, the cult often matched the emperor with Rome itself. Therefore, the imperial cult, in Hadrian's case, was used as a tool to bring unity and also appease and honor the provinces. The provinces recognized his role in the imperial cult, which is apparent in statues, inscriptions, obelisks, and other offerings. The most abundant evidence originates in Greece: "in the attempt to reconstruct provincial viewpoints on the process of Romanization in the provinces," which will be discussed further in section VI, where his villa at Tibur adds to the provincial discussion on his time in Egypt.³⁰

The Romans had no sacred scripture. "In the normative Graeco-Roman tradition, there were no writings at all that were regarded as "the Word of God" and functioned as the tradition's center or foundation."³¹ Texts do exist that explain the religion of the time. Some describe ways to praise the gods, explain ritual rules, or outline or describe festivals and ceremonies, but these texts are limited. It is also important to note that the majority of the surviving texts were written by or describe the elite, offering a weak perspective of the masses. While texts are necessary, this thesis emphasizes the

²⁹ Cassius Dio 69.20.7.

³⁰ Boatwright et al., *The Romans*, 347.

³¹ Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 7.

analysis of material culture. Scholars agree that his building projects were clearly aligned with his religious and diplomatic policy.

Boer examines Hadrian's religious policy and concludes:

His unifying ambition made him collect all official gods in the Pantheon. His eccentric ideas of unity led to the creation of architectural and sculptural monstrosities at Tivoli, the remains of which are the despair of the archaeologists when reconstruction is attempted... Geographical distances no longer counted: Egypt was in Italy in Canopus in Tivoli. Unity of the Empire there should be-- and likewise unity of the people.³²

Therefore Hadrian's building projects are not only important in their own right, but have been consistently consulted in analyzing Hadrian's various policies. Most agree that these projects were used for purposes of unifying the empire. Hadrian's building projects, both those still standing and those described only in historical texts, provide important insight into his religious policy. Many of these projects were adorned with statues and images of the gods. Most telling are the statues at his villa at Tibur, which, as we will see, reflect his relationship with Egypt and Egyptians. Also, in this category are the imagery and structures honoring his boy lover, Antinous. In addition to his building projects, epigraphic evidence, most abundant in Greece, documents individual offerings to the gods. While individually superficial, collectively the inscriptions allow us to evaluate the religious life of the Greeks, and connect those inscriptions associated with Hadrian's presence to aspects of his religious policy.

³² W. Den Boer, "Religion and Literature in Hadrian's Policy." *Mnemosyne*, 8 (1955): 128

IV. Hadrian in Rome

The *SHA* confirms that Hadrian participated in many construction projects within Rome. “At Rome he restored the Pantheon, the Voting-enclosure, the Basilica of Neptune, very many temples, the Forum of Augustus, the Baths of Agrippa, and dedicated all of them in the names of their original builders.”³³ Hadrian’s accomplishments illustrate Lewis Mumford’s statement, regarding ancient cities: “The chief function of the city is to convert power into form, energy into culture, dead matter into the living symbols of art, biological reproduction into social creativity.”³⁴ Hadrian changed the topographical structure of Rome in this way; he converted the power, energy, dead matter, and biological reproduction into the monuments that represented the culture, symbols, social creativity and form of new Rome. His building projects are some of the most well-known buildings of ancient Rome. While Hadrian spent significant time outside of the city he still showed great concern for constructions within the city. An analysis of his greater works within the city reveals components of his religious policy and personal affinities, which he projected to and were likely heard by the subjects of the empire. Boatwright examines extensively the urban and historical context of Hadrian’s buildings and their link to the administrative changes in Rome. She explores how Hadrian’s buildings changed the physical nature of the city. This

³³ *Vita Hadriani* 19.10.

³⁴ Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 376.

exploration of Hadrianic structures reveals details about the princeps' intentionality to promote a new Rome, and his use of the structures to inspire the people of Rome. Following her lead, this section looks closely at three structures: the Pantheon, the Temple of Venus and Roma, and the Obelisk of Antinous. Each is examined both structurally and within its own context, and will be followed by a discussion of imagery and symbolism used within the structure, and each section will conclude with an analysis of what the structure reveals about Hadrian and his policies.

The Pantheon is one of Hadrian's greatest constructions. McDonald argues, "Hadrian's Pantheon is one of the grand architectural creations of all time: original, utterly bold, many-layered in associations, the container of immanent universality. It speaks of an even wider world than that of Imperial Rome."³⁵ While the meaning and symbols of the Pantheon remain enigmatic, it provides scholars with a tool to analyze and understand the enigmatic ruler. Extant sources offer at best anecdotal references and explanations of the Pantheon and its meaning. The most revealing source is the building itself.

The Pantheon was originally built by Agrippa and dedicated in 25 B.C. It was burned twice before Hadrian's rebuilding. The building project started sometime after 117, and was dedicated about 126-128. The structure can be dated quite precisely, for Roman brick-makers would stamp their bricks with the names of their brickyards and the name of the consuls currently in office³⁶. The Pantheon was reinscribed with the original inscription, when rebuilt by Hadrian. It is unclear who the head architect of the

³⁵ William L. MacDonald, *The Pantheon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), II.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 13.

project was, but evidence from Dio suggests that because of his affinity for architecture Hadrian would have lent a generous hand in the project.

Dio (69.4.1) recounts Hadrian's interactions with the architect, Apollodorus:

[Hadrian] first banished and later put to death Apollodorus, the architect who had built the various creations of Trajan in Rome.... The reason assigned was that he had been guilty of some misdemeanor, but the true reason, was that once when Trajan was consulting him on some point he had said to Hadrian, who had interrupted him with some remark: 'Be off and draw your pumpkins. You don't understand any of these matters' – it chanced that Hadrian at the time was pluming himself upon some such drawing. When he became emperor, therefore, he remembered this slight and would not endure the man's freedom of speech...Hadrian, the emperor...restrained neither his anger nor his grief, but slew the man. Indeed, his nature was such that he was jealous not only of the living, but also of the dead.³⁷

While it is unknown whether Hadrian did in fact put Apollodorus to death for insulting his architectural abilities, the anecdotal evidence does suggest that Hadrian took pride in drawing or planning architectural structures. His affection for architecture and purpose in promoting building projects will be discussed below.

One can conjecture that it was for power, political support, pleasing the gods for state prosperity, that Hadrian built the Pantheon. The massive dome symbolizes a protector over its visitors just as Roman civilization was a protector over all Roman

³⁷ Dio, 69.4.1

citizens. The perfectly rounded dome would reflect both the universe and the perfection of the ideal Roman Empire: “no beginning, no end, no seams or cracks or corners.”³⁸ The glory of the building would reflect upon Hadrian himself, the divine emperor unifying an expansive empire. McDonald states, “Hadrian, the Pantheon, and the cultural texture of the early second century are all inextricably interwoven, and there can be no doubt that the conception of the building and the motivating personality behind its creation were Hadrian’s.”³⁹

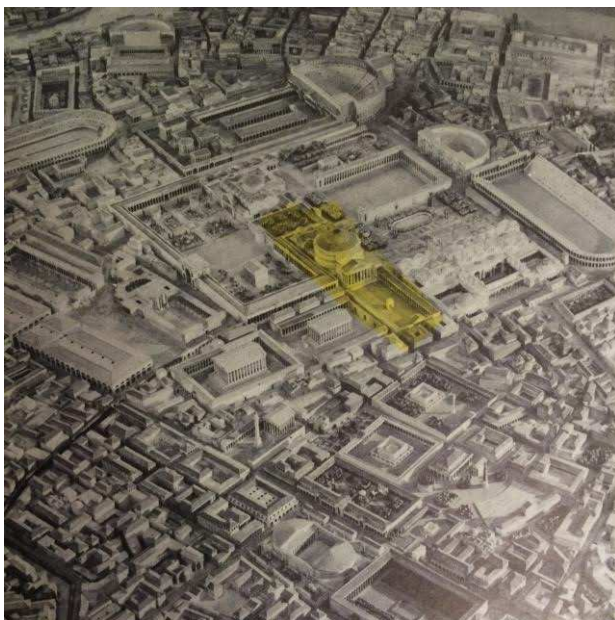


Figure 1: Campus Martius about 300; some details conjectural

The Pantheon was placed in axial and right angled relationships to pre-existing monuments in the central part of the Campus Martius. “The building faces due north; it consists of a huge rotunda preceded by a *pronaos* (the inner area of the portico). The former is a drum of brick-faced concrete, in which exist numerous brickstamps of the time of

Hadrian.”⁴⁰ At the time of Hadrian’s rule, the area surrounding the Pantheon would have looked wholly different from its current state. Unlike its modern setting, only the northern façade of the

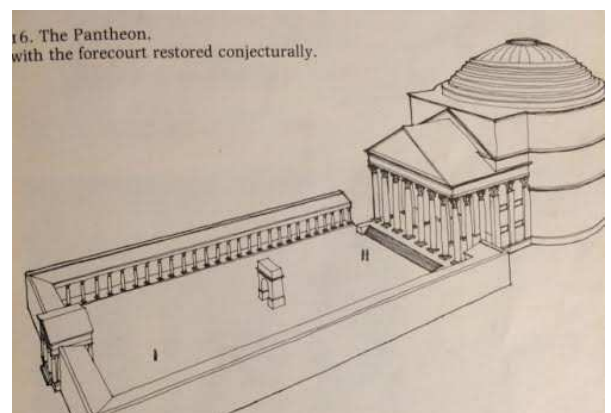


Figure 2: The Pantheon with forecourt restored conjecturally

³⁸ MacDonald, *The Pantheon*, 12.

³⁹ MacDonald, *The Pantheon*, 14.

⁴⁰ Platner and Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), 47.

Pantheon was visible.

A rectangular forecourt on the northern side of the Pantheon surrounded a three-sided portico. The paved forecourt of the Pantheon probably extended originally three or four hundred feet north of the porch. The forecourt was an elongated paved space, surrounded on three sides by covered *stoas*. It is conjectured that there was a formal gateway at its north end (See Figure 1.2). It carried reliefs showing the princeps as benefactor of the provinces. Many details of these are unknown.⁴¹ The Basilica Neptunis, erected during the time of Hadrian, flanked the south side of the rotunda, and the east and west sides were flanked by other buildings. The east side touched the walls of the Saepta Iulia.⁴²

While complex, the Pantheon had three main components: the rotunda, the transitional block, and the portico. “The portico was decorated with a frieze, which is no longer present. The symbolism in Hadrian’s pediment would have linked the new building to the spirit of the old one. Some scholars believe the frieze was of an eagle, while others argue the pediment displayed a bronze cast of the Battle of the Titans.”⁴³

The rectangular structure, called the transitional block, links the portico with the rotunda. As you enter the rotunda, around the oculus, the interior features a coffered ceiling, which during Hadrian’s time contained bronze star ornaments. This coffering served not only to decorate, but also to strengthen the roof. The coffers for the concrete dome were poured in molds, probably on the temporary scaffolding; the oculus admits the light and the elements. The original bronze doors still mark the entrance to the

⁴¹ MacDonald, *The Pantheon*, 28.

⁴² *Ibid*, 18-19.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 14.

building. The Pantheon has no windows. All needed light is provided by the oculus.⁴⁴ The absence of windows will be discussed in further detail below.

Imperial architecture was never created absent of symbolism. Hadrian commissioned the design of the Pantheon in its entirety to elicit specific emotions, solicit certain praise, and enhance the relationship between the city and the gods. The Pantheon became a building to celebrate the imperial institution rather than its individual dynasties, as Agrippa had originally intended. Hadrian wanted to celebrate the imperial order. He intentionally built the Pantheon to create a structural symbol between the imperial and the divine.⁴⁵ The symbolism within the Pantheon is extensive. The most relevant to revealing Hadrian's religious policy will be examined below.

Agrippa's building was rectangular, measuring 19.82 by 43.76 meters, and had a prominent entrance. "Hadrian built an enormous structure whose climactic element was a brick-faced concrete rotunda. The new pronaos was placed over the remains of the Agrippan building, but with the orientation reversed to face north." In doing this, he integrated the Pantheon onto the cardinal points, like other buildings in the Campus Martius.⁴⁶ The comparison of Agrippa's building and Hadrian, symbolizes the different intentions of the princeps at two different time periods. Hadrian was building onto the old orders and creating a new society and world. Many scholars suggest that Hadrian's new design reflected Hadrian's desire "to prove that the Imperial order, with its rule of law and its care for the republic, was part of the divine order, initiated by it and

⁴⁴ Ibid, 19-20.

⁴⁵ JB Ward Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 137.

⁴⁶ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 44.

subsumed to it.”⁴⁷ Hadrian believed the gods were unhappy with Agrippa’s placement of Augustus alongside the major deities and this led to the fire and lightning that ruined the first two Pantheon structures.⁴⁸

The Pantheon’s architecture controls the way the visitor would enter and interact with the divine. The entrance to the portico is the first threshold one must cross. The portico is lined with reliefs of Hadrian as benefactor. The visitor would have to face the large frieze on the pediment. Hadrian may have been selecting imagery that symbolized the link between the old and new buildings and orders. Then the visitor would have had to go through the transitional block. This transitional block was short and not well lit, surrounded by columns. This section may symbolize a humble place for the visitor to reflect before entering the grandeur and spiritual nature of the rotunda.⁴⁹

The rotunda, the main building of the Pantheon, is crowned by a half-sphere, resting on a heavy ring of concrete. The cylinder is divided into sixteen parts. Some scholars identify this number with the *Etrusca disciplina*, the sixteen parts of the sky, “the sky from which the lightening that had menaced and finally destroyed the previous structure had come.”⁵⁰ Others speculate that the sixteen divisions could be linked to Vitruvius’ wind rose, “indispensable to the orientation of cities.” The Etruscan sky-system locates the “regions of beginning and end in the regions of night, which

Figure 3: William Loerke’s rendering of the sixteen point division

⁴⁷ Indra Kagis McEwen, “Hadrian’s Rhetoric I: The Pantheon,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 24 (1993): 55-56.

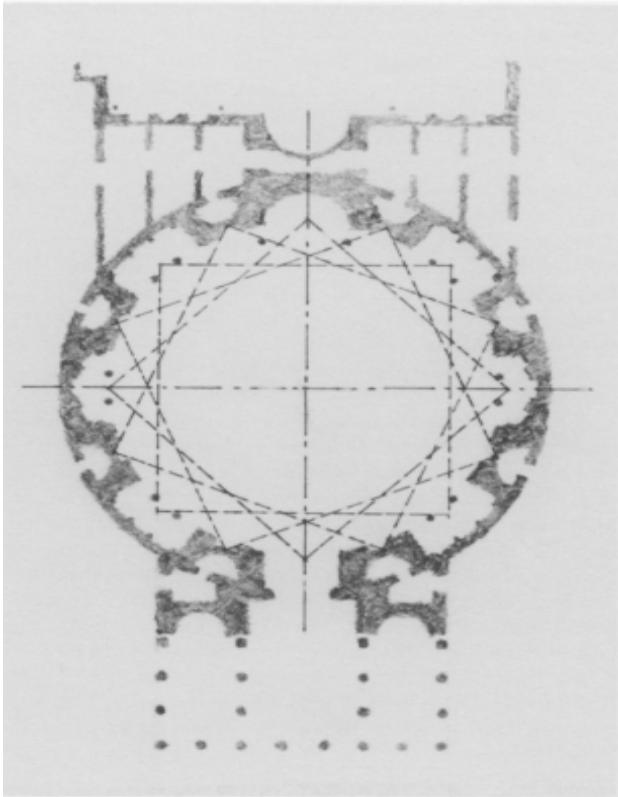
⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 58

⁴⁹ McDonald, *The Pantheon*. 28. While the reliefs no longer exist MacDonald consults the drawings of Ronald Micklewright and B.M. Boyle.

⁵⁰ Indra Kagis McEwen, “Hadrian’s Rhetoric I: The Pantheon,” 61.

therefore must be in the North. The gods who inhabit the regions of the North include Jupiter and also Janus, who, of course, is the god of doorways, of beginning and end.”⁵¹

The oculus, the central opening in the dome, and sometimes referred to as “the great



eye” is 8.9 m in diameter. The rotunda has no windows and can only be entered through the porch and through the great bronze doors. The lack of windows not only limits distractions, but also allows that single light beam to draw visitors to the structure’s center. Surrounded by the busy Campus Martius, the absence of windows allows the visitor to enter the structure and begin to experience the religious space. The oculus symbolizes that the one physical relationship that the visitor should make in the Pantheon is with the heavens and oneself.

Through the oculus, light stretches 42 meters to the ground. The oculus symbolizes the connection between the heavens and the earth, or the sun and the earth.⁵²

Boatwright’s analysis of Hadrian’s building projects posits that employment opportunities, improvements in the city’s hygiene, entertainment, communications, and habitable space were created or enhanced as a result.⁵³ Her primary focus is on the urban and historical context, and administrative changes in Rome. This thesis has a

⁵¹ Ibid, 61-62.

⁵² MacDonald, *The Pantheon*, 24.

⁵³ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 6-7.

different focus. It connects Hadrian's building with his religious policy. Furthermore, it will be argued that Hadrian's building not only shed light on his religious views but how they shaped the people's religious perception. Such an analysis leads to a better understanding of the social order and of power in Rome.

Hadrian lived during a time of change. His city was "restricted by physical extent...the people were densely packed, with a population estimated as high as one million."⁵⁴ His city was growing and Rome's population was becoming more diverse. He would not have had one consistent and fully--formulated religious policy, rather it would have been a more dynamic policy allowing for flexibility. Hadrian was leading a changing empire, no longer one in expansion. One of the major characteristics of Hadrian's religious policy was syncretism, the merging of different religions, cultures and schools of thought. While not completely abandoning the Roman religious structure, he carefully incorporated provincial deities and traditions, and tolerated the practice of foreign cults in the provinces. Hadrian's religious policy was developed in order to gain the loyalty of the provinces and strengthen the support of the people, who lacked wealth or political power within the city of Rome.

"One of the most important things about the Pantheon is that it was created at this time, at a turning point in history, when rites and rules drawn from a very long past were not yet abandoned, but when the surge of a new and utterly different age was already being felt."⁵⁵ McDonald is explaining the empire at a crossroads of change. The Pantheon symbolizes Hadrian's empire. Agrippa's name and the remnants of his

⁵⁴ Ibid, 7.

⁵⁵ MacDonald, *The Pantheon*, 89.

original structure adorned the front side of the building representing the old, and the grand rotunda adorned the back. The structure was symbolic of the intentions of Hadrian. Visitors of the Pantheon would enter a familiar entrance, with the classic rectangular shaped courtyard. They would be surrounded by reliefs of the benefactor Hadrian, but they would see the inscription with Agrippa's name reinstated by Hadrian. Upon entering the rotunda, through the large bronze doors, one would enter a circular-domed room illuminated only by the light emitted by the oculus, opening towards the heavens. Romans would be enclosed in this circular room, with no access or view of the outside world and would presumably undergo a transformative religious experience, in that they would feel a connection to the divine and the empire.

The rotunda symbolizes the new Roman Empire and the circular shape represents unity, Hadrian's goal for the empire. McDonald discusses this concept:

The Pantheon rotunda is a metaphor in architecture for the ecumenical pretensions of the Roman Empire, the girdling cornices a statement in architectural form of the nine-thousand-mile boundary that later surrounded the Greco-Roman world, the world of which Roman government at its best felt itself to be the steward. The Pantheon rotunda, its entrance gained by passing along and through the traditional architectural forms of that world, revealed a great symbol of the dominion of Rome in one poignant visual experience.⁵⁶

Hadrian's religious policy was shaped around the incorporation of different cultures and beliefs into a Roman imperial culture, or at least around tolerating the gods of the provinces. This is evident in his Pantheon, which represents the connections between

⁵⁶ MacDonald, *The Pantheon*, 88-89.

the gods and the state. The nature and image of the gods in the provinces, was continually being changed, but the acknowledgement and respect towards them would be continuous. The Pantheon further establishes this point, since it was used as a temple, but not in the traditional sense. It would sometimes be used to hold judicial proceedings.

Hadrian's Temple of Venus and Roma, a major building project in Rome the city, stood at the edge of the Forum Romanum. The planning for the temple began as early as 121, but it was not completed until after Hadrian's death, most likely completed and dedicated by Antoninus Pius in 136 or 137. The Hadrianum was apparently built during this later time.⁵⁷ The Temple was destroyed in a fire in 307 and was later rebuilt by Maxentius. The dating of the temple's completion is difficult due to the lack of stamped bricks.⁵⁸ According to Dio (69.4.2), Hadrian sent the architect Apollodorus his plans for the Temple of Venus and Roma, asking his opinion. Apollodorus recommended that it ought to have been set high and hollowed out underneath so that the building might accommodate surrounding buildings, as well as the cult statues which were too large for the building. Dio suggests that Hadrian was not pleased with this response, perhaps ordering the architect's death.⁵⁹ Boatwright observes, "The aedes even in ruin does not dominate the Sacra Via, and its substructures toward the Colosseum do contain chambers."⁶⁰ The Temple of Venus and Roma was inside an area that was supported on a large platform from the top of the Sacra Via to the Flavian Amphitheatre. The

⁵⁷ D.E. Strong, "Late Hadrianic Architectural Ornament in Rome," *Papers of the British School at Rome*, V 1 (1953): 122-123.

⁵⁸ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 124.

⁵⁹ Dio 69.4.

⁶⁰ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 118-119. Boatwright discusses MacDonald's work also and he suggests that Hadrian modified his original plans after Apollodorus' criticisms.

surrounding buildings referred to by Dio must have been these two buildings.

Boatwright provides a detailed description of the Temple but: “There has yet to be a definitive monograph of the Hadrianic Temple of Venus and Roma. The overall plan, elevation, and identification are available through various sources and dating methods.”

The following description of the temple has been created using the summaries of Boatwright and Guven, who consulted the Italian works of Andrea Barattolo.

The Temple of Venus and Roma stood on the Velia at the far east end of the Forum Romanum. It stood near the site of the *vestibulum* or ceremonial court of the Domus Aurea where a colossal statue of Nero had formerly stood. The temple was elevated by a constructed platform, “creating a visual backdrop of the east,” and overlooking the Sacra Via and the Forum. There was a significant slope in the ground. The plan was called pseudodipteral decastyle in the Ionic fashion, which caused it to appear Greek rather than Roman. “At both ends, a roomy terrastyle in-antis pronaos preceded the double cellas placed back to back. The temple had seven steps and twenty columns on the long sides.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 124.

Each of the twin rectilinear cellae was flanked with parts, carrying six columns, and each flanked with side aisles covered in marble. “It is generally assumed that the eastern cella was that of Venus and the western cella, facing the Forum, was that of

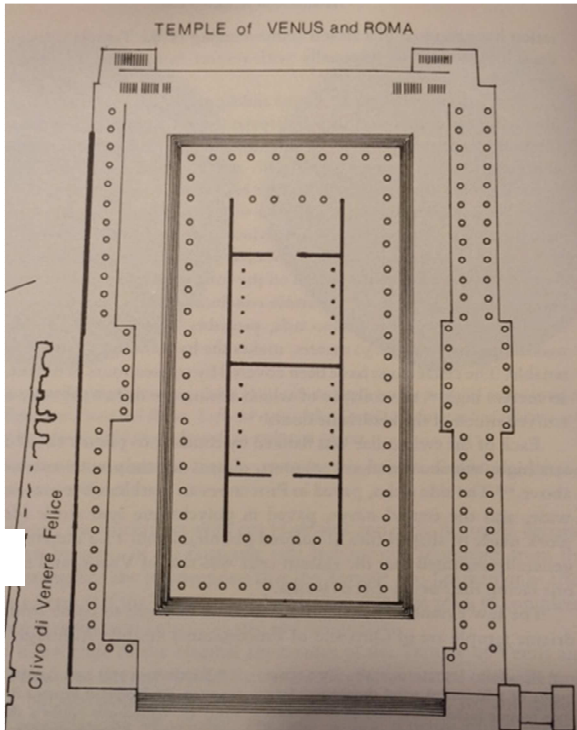


Figure 4: Temple of Venus and Roma (from *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, Boatwright)

Roma.”⁶² Each apse contained five niches, alternately square and semicircular, with columns and entablatures in front of them. In the central niche of each apse was the statue of the goddess herself — Venus in one and Roma in the other.⁶³ “In accordance with Roman theory in such matters, it was necessary to build a separate cella for each goddess, in this case not side by side, but back to back, that of Venus facing east, and that of Roma west.”⁶⁴

Existing fragments of entablature were made from Luna marble. It is suggested that there were two teams of carvers creating the temple’s decorations- one using more eastern forms and the other more Roman ones. The aedes were each treated differently. The north had a single row of gray granite columns with white marble Corinthian capitals. The south had two rows of gray granite columns. All of the columns were the same diameter. Each row of columns was intersected by “a pavilion of five bays resembling a propylaeum and projecting a little

⁶² Ibid, 125.

⁶³ Dio, 69.4.3

⁶⁴ Platner and Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, 522.

from the lateral porticoes.”⁶⁵ They seem to serve as decoration only, for there were no real passageways. There was a wide staircase in the west, with no colonnade. Staircases existed on the platform’s northeast and southeast corners, providing access to the temenos.⁶⁶

The Temple of Venus and Roma was the largest temple ever built in the city. Although it did not contain any of the modern curvilinear shapes present in much of Hadrian’s architecture (like the Pantheon and the villa at Tivoli), it contained many unique features, including the Greek elements and coupling the deities of Venus and Roma in one religious structure. Hadrian’s penchant for Greek culture is present in the temple architecture and décor, as well as the selection of Venus and Roma as the temple’s deities.

The temple broke tradition with imperial temple architecture and was more imperial than dynastic in nature. The Temple of Venus and Roma represents Hadrian’s new order. The temple was “a Greek mass set in a Roman space,”⁶⁷ and it served to appeal to the people of Rome and pay tribute to the Greek East. The temple faced the city center on one side, and the expanse of the Roman world on the other. While the temple was built for the Romans, it was purposefully placed and decorated to lay the foundation for the new state cult, Venus and Roma. Boatwright claims that Hadrian was

⁶⁵ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 123.

⁶⁶ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 122-133. and Suna Guven, “A Vision of Imperial Unity: The Temple of Venus and Roma,” *METU Journal For Architecture* 10:1-2 (1990): 19-30. Both authors used the architectural descriptions of Andrea Barato to create their summary of the structures. Barato’s sources are in Italian.

⁶⁷ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 132.

signaling with this structure the unity of the empire, rather than Roman imperial domination.⁶⁸

Venus was the principal goddess of Rome mother of Aeneas, and Roma was traditionally celebrated outside of Rome. Roma was primarily present in the provinces and was “an important component in the articulation of the ideology of the imperial cult.”

⁶⁹ Ronald Mellor argues in his work that Roma was a “transmitter” or mediator between the cult of Roman emperors and the Hellenistic cult of the kings.⁷⁰ Hadrian’s choice to share the dedication of Venus and Roma was innovative. The two usually were worshipped in isolation, and Roma had never received a temple in the city of Rome. The new cult was intended to appeal to Rome. Rives explains:

In this Hadrianic temple, Venus’ associations were no longer with the current dynasty, but with Rome as a whole. Even more strikingly the goddess of ‘Rome’ shared the dedication of the Temple of Venus. There had long been cults in the Greek world, so too more recently in the Latin west; even in Rome there was a minor cult of the ‘*Genius* of the Roman people.’ But this was the first time that ‘Rome’ received a cult in the city. Here, in what was later known as the ‘temple of the city’, eternal Roma was represented, enthroned and holding her right hand the Palladium, symbol of Rome’s eternity.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., 133-134.

⁶⁹ Guven, “A Vision of Imperial Unity: Temple of Venus and Roma,” 23.

⁷⁰ Ronald Mellor, *The Worship of the Goddess Roma in the Greek World* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1975), 24-25.

⁷¹ Rives, *Religions of Rome*, 259.

Venus had always been established in Rome, under different specializations. She was known as Venus Victrix, Venus Genetrix, and many other names. Her specialization always identified her as a patroness of triumph, and associated her with military success. Hadrian's creation of the cult of Venus Felix changed the status of Venus. She was less specialized in this context, and took on the role of a popular goddess of "fecundity and prosperity." The likeness of Venus Felix was present in Hadrian's temple.⁷² Hadrian's decision to dedicate the Temple of Venus and Roma in 121 during the festival of the Parilia gives insight into his intentions. The Parilia was a festival commemorating the foundations of the city. From 121 on the festival was called the 'Romaëa.' Hadrian's actions show us that he wanted to celebrate the city itself.⁷³ The city had been losing its place as the center of the Roman world. Other centers were beginning to emerge and gain imperial attention. By creating a temple of this grand a scale, and introducing a new cult, Hadrian was preparing for the new imperial world that was emerging. ⁷⁴ Hadrian was giving those living in Rome a sense of pride by restoring the old with elements of the past and the present, while they faced declining importance.

The Temple of Venus and Roma provides evidence to suggest that Hadrian was using Greek architecture and the creation of new cults to develop his religious policy. A self-proclaimed Philhellene, Hadrian incorporated elements of Greek architecture and religion into intentionally selected areas of the city center of Rome. Yet he did not

⁷² Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 131.

⁷³ On the Parilia in general, see now F.E. Romer, "Reading the Myth(s) of the Empire. Paradoxography and Geographic Writing in the *Collectanea*," in K. Brodersen, ed., *Solinus – New Studies* (Heidelberg, Verlag Antike e.k., 2014), 79-83.

⁷⁴ Rives, *Religions of Rome*, 259.

innovate in a way to conquer and dismiss traditional Roman culture, but rather chose to marry the new with the old. In doing this, Hadrian was cleverly attempting to gain the support of the traditional Romans while still being able to celebrate the value of the provinces by incorporating their gods and architecture into the city center. Spending much of his time outside of the city limits, and being a descendent of Roman colonists in Spain, Hadrian was well-rounded in his knowledge of the religious structures of the provinces.

His Temple of Venus and Roma demonstrates his worldliness and awareness of the changing times. Hadrian's religious policy was most likely developed from this awareness. Hadrian may not have been aware of all of his intentions behind his building projects. Some of his intentions may have been a result of his interactions and growing knowledge of his own empire. He valued change and he valued growth. He was the first emperor to wear a beard, the so-called Greek philosophical beard. He chose to publicize his image as new, yet still maintained most of the traditional imagery of the emperor. He was able to juxtapose his endeavors promoting change with a traditional element to legitimize his actions to the people. The Temple to Venus and Roma embodies this theory and provides evidence for the structure and motivation behind Hadrian's religious policy.

Hadrian's Obelisk to Antinous contributes to a more personal understanding of the Emperor. Antinous was a favorite of the Emperor Hadrian and died in Egypt.

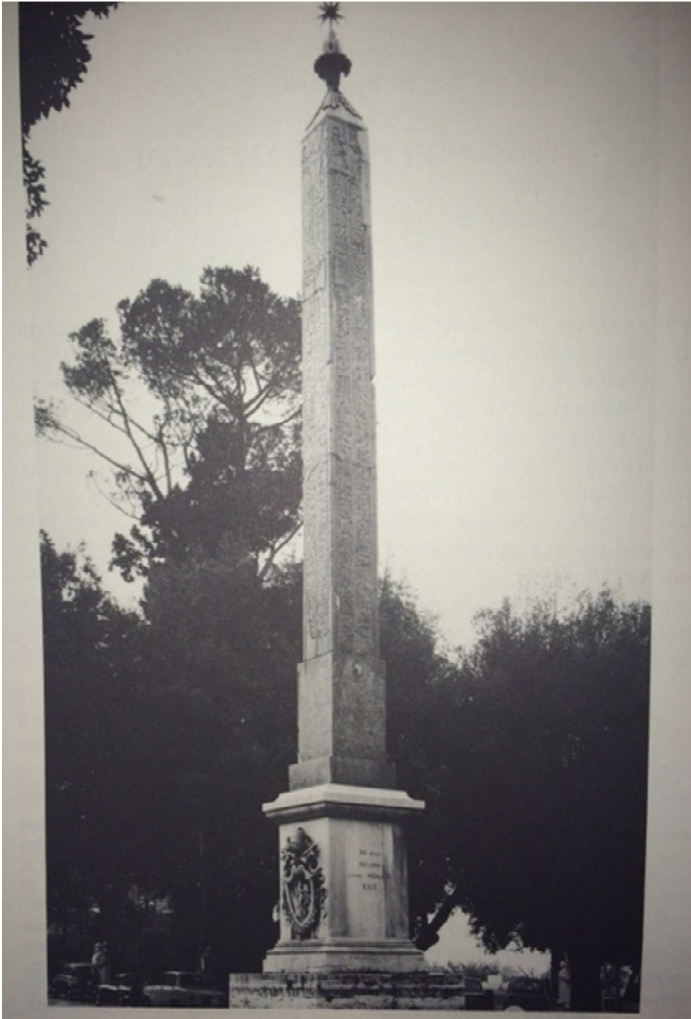


Figure 5: Obelisk of Antinous (Pincian Hill)

Hadrian honored Antinous by building a city on the spot where he died and naming it after him; and he set up statues, or rather, sacred images of him, practically all over the world.⁷⁵ The obelisk is also known as the obelisk of Monte Pincio, Rome, AD 130. The inscription was composed in hieroglyphs for Emperor Hadrian to commemorate his favorite, Antinous, who drowned in the Nile.⁷⁶ The obelisk was found in the 16th century outside Porta Maggiore, yet it is believed to have been relocated from its previous position either in Hadrian's villa or somewhere in or near Rome.⁷⁷ There is evidence to suggest that it was located in

the Campus Martius in Rome, and served both as an honorary monument and a funerary monument.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Dio 69.11.4

⁷⁶ Henry Honeychurch Gorringe, *Egyptian Obelisks* (Bengaluru: Nabu Press, 2011), 135.

⁷⁷ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of Rome*, 239.

⁷⁸ Lise Vogel, *The Column of Antoninus Pious* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) 27-28.

The obelisk inscribed on all four sides with hieroglyphic text. The inscriptions imply that it commemorates the death of Antinous and decrees that he will now be worshiped as a god in all places. On the North Pyramidion an inscription establishes Hadrian's cult of Antinous⁷⁹:

How desirable is the praise, which is made to (?) Osirantinoos, the justified. His heart rejoices greatly when he has recognized his own form, when he was reborn and saw his father Har-[achte]. He [praises him?] and says: Praise to you, Har-achte, the highest of the Gods! You who listen to the prayers of the Gods, of men, of the transfigured ones and of the dead. Hear (also) the entreaties that I entrust to you. Give recompense for that which your beloved son has done for me, your son (Hadrian) the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, who founded a doctrine in the temples with which the gods are pleased for all men, [Hadrian] [the beloved of the Nile and the Gods], the Lord of Diadems who lives, is safe and healthy, who lives forever [just like the Sun] [in] a fresh beautiful youthful age, while he is a possessor of fortune (?), the ruler of every country, while the great ones of Egypt and the nine bends (Libya) lie under his sandals united, likewise among them he is the lord of both lands. They are daily subjects to his orders (?), while his power reaches all the way to each border of this land on its four sides. Bulls and their cows join together happily (and) they produce much, which they bear for him, in order to gladden his heart and that of the (Nile), the

⁷⁹ All translations were from Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*. Boatwright used the translations of Erman, in his article "Die Religion der Agypter" (1934).

father of the Gods, impregnates the fields for them, and makes for them a great ocean at its time in order to flood both lands.

This inscription reveals Hadrian's self-image, as well as his desired, and perhaps achieved, public image. He is referred to as "the ruler of every country" and a "lord of both lands", (this phrase is the standard Pharonic claim of ruling over both upper and lower Egypt) emphasizing his unification of the provinces. His religious influence is seen when the inscription discusses the doctrine he created in the temple, with which the gods were pleased. His divine presence in Egypt was great and one can assert that he had support from the people, and was influenced by them as well. This will be discussed in the section on Tivoli below.

The other sides of the obelisk describe specific honors and specifications of his cult. The inscription on the east side reads:

Osirantinoos, the justified-- he became a youth with a beautiful face that delighted the eyes...strength with clever (?) heart like one with strong arms he received an order of the Gods at the time of his passing. All uses of the hours of Osiris were repeated in him, including all of his passing. All uses of the hours of Osiris were repeated to him, including all his work as a mystery; his writings circulated, while the whole land was in...and...and...Such a thing has not earlier been done to this day- and similarly his altars, his temples, and his titles, and he breathed the breath of life. His respect came about in the hearts of men. The lord Hermopolis, lord of holy writings, who rejuvenates his soul like that [of]....in their time, by night and day, in every time, in every second – while there is love

for him in the hearts of his servants and fear [for him] [in] everyone....and his praise among all men, while they praise him. He takes his seat in the hall of the just, the transfigured ones, the excellent ones who are in the court of Osiris...in the land of Hades, while the lord of eternity (?) makes him justified. The set up his words on earth, because (?) their heart is delighted by him. He does wherever he wants. The doorkeepers of the regions of Hades say to him, Praise to you; they loose their bolts, they open their doors before him in endless many years, while his lifespan is that of the [sun (?)][never] going away [forever].

This part of the inscription reveals that cult of Antinous is associated with worship of the Egyptian god Osiris, god of the dead. It suggests the Antinous is forever in the care of Osiris and his cult will be for those of the just. Hadrian's religious policy clearly accepted and respected the greater gods of the provinces, especially Egypt, although whether the people of Rome would have is quite a different matter. The inscription implies that Antinous was forever alive as a deity and would forever be recognized. Hadrian's love for Antinous was strong, and dictated the ruler's actions in the building of the many structures dedicated to Antinous.⁸⁰ With Antinous' death came Hadrian's infatuation and assimilation to Egyptian religious figures.

The south side of the obelisk mentions Antinous as a healer and provides information about the Antinoopolis festivals:

Antinoos, who is there (i.e., deceased) ...a festival place (?) has been made in this city in Egypt, which is named for him, for the strong (youths) who are in this

⁸⁰ Royston Lambert, *Beloved and God* (New York: Zebra, 1996), 123.

land, and for the rowing crews and for the... of the whole country and likewise for all the persons who are (?) with (?) the God Thoth, while there are prizes for them and crowns of flowers for their heads; they reward with every good thing. They place on his alters, they bring....daily which as daily (?) offerings (?). Praise is spoken to him by the artisans of Thoth according to the breadth of excellence. He goes from his city to many temples in the whole country and he hears the requests of those who pray to him, and he heals the needy ill by sending them a dream. He completes his work amongst the living. He takes on



Figure 6: Obelisk of Antinous (West side inscription)

every (?) form which his heart [desires(?)]...the true seed of the God is in his limbs...body healthy...of his mother; he was lifted up to a place of his birth by...

This part of the inscription discusses Thoth, the god of magic and mystery. There were indications from ancient sources that Hadrian was initiated into magic at Fayum, right before Antinous' death.⁸¹ This suggests that Hadrian had an affinity for participating in foreign cults and rituals of Egypt, even before he lost Antinous to the Nile. While one can conclude that the loss of Antinous ignited Hadrian's

⁸¹ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 244.

passion for the Egyptian religious practice, he was interested in their practice before his death.

The final side of the obelisk, the west, gives descriptions of the foundation of Antinoopolis and describes the Temple of Osirantinoos. There are several words which cannot be read.

[Antinoos] who is there (i.e. deceased), and who rests in this place, which is in the field of the lands (?) of the master (?) of....of Rome, has been recognized as (?) a God in the divine places of Egypt. Temples have been founded for him, he has been adored as a god by the prophets and priests of Upper and Lower Egypt, and by the inhabitants of Egypt, all of them as there are. A city is named after his name, and the troops of Greeks that belong to it and the...of the inhabitants of the temples of Egypt, who come [from] their cities; fields are given to them so that with them (?) they might make their lives very (?) good. A temple of this god, who is there called Osirantinoos the blessed, is found in it and is built of good white stone, with sphinxes around it, and statues and numerous columns, such as they were made by the Greeks. All gods and goddesses give him the breath of life and he breathes as one rejuvenated.

This inscription adds to the discussion of Hadrian's philhellenism. He was building in the Greek style Roman buildings throughout Egypt. His name was on many of the buildings and inscriptions, and in doing this he was unifying the empire. He incorporated foreign deities, with his creating of new or revamped deities, and he also placed these structures throughout the empire. Antinous was present

throughout Egypt and the Greek East. Remnants of the structures dedicated to him can be found through Egypt, Italy, and Greece.

Hadrian's obelisk was an announcement of sorts in honor of Antinous. Like the Pantheon and the Temple of Venus and Roma, he used the obelisk as a marker of a new order. While idea and customs could be lost in translation, building structures and imagery could be understood by all. The obelisk shows Antinous in Egyptian form, interacting with Egyptian gods. A large element of Hadrian's religious policy was to present the new empire to the people of Rome and to the provinces as diverse, and ever connected with the city of Rome. Hadrian chose to present the Pantheon with its original façade and inscription to the Roman people, while introducing them to the domed rotunda. He also carefully selected the location to implant the temple of his new cult, Venus and Roma, into the traditional Roman area, but with traditional Greek features. When he was building in Egypt, he introduced a new cult but in the Egyptian language and monumental style. His choices reveal his religious policy. Hadrian intentionally chose not to take on an imperialistic image, he wanted to influence the masses by introducing the displaced and diverse imagery to the empire. He was aware of the fact that too much change could lead to dissent and therefore introduced foreign imagery and influences in the form of architecture. The image would not have been as intrusive as people or words.

V. Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli

Hadrian began construction on his villa at Tibur in 117. The villa sat on 250 acres in ancient Tibur, modern day Tivoli, Italy. The villa was Hadrian's retreat from Rome, and in his later years the place in which he resided permanently until death. It was common for emperors to have a site to retreat to outside of the city. The site was continuously under construction during Hadrian's reign, and if he had survived longer, it would undoubtedly have become larger. While Hadrian was motivated to appeal to the people with his the buildings in Rome and in the provinces, his villa was built for him.⁸² The *SHA* mentions Hadrian's villa as a place commemorating his travels and interests. "His villa at Tibur was marvelously constructed, and he actually gave parts of it the names of the provinces and places of the greatest renown, calling them for instance, Lyceum, Academia, Prytaneum, Canopus, Poecile, and Tempe."⁸³ Tivoli presents the ruler's personal affections and interests, and allows a more personal perspective of his religious policy to be understood. Due to the expanse of the villa, which will be described below, the focus of my analysis is on the villa's Serapeum-Canopus complex, which reveals many details of the ruler's interests and is mentioned in the ancient sources. It can provide a good sample of the villa's elaboration on Hadrian's religious thinking.

In Hadrian's day, villas lined the Roman countryside and seashore. The distance from Tibur to Rome is about 20 miles. The area of Tibur offers gorgeous views and well

⁸² William L. MacDonald and John A. Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 23-25.

⁸³ *Vita Hadriani* 26.5

watered orchards. This was one of the most sought after sites for a luxury villa in the second century.⁸⁴ Villas are typically used as a retreat for rest or leisure, hence their distance from the city, but it is speculated that he used his villa as an official residence. One inscription from a statue dedicated to Hadrian in December 135 by the cities of Hispania Baetica suggests that imperial benefactions were granted inside the villa.⁸⁵ The size of the rooms in the villa, suggest they were intended to accommodate many people. Boatwright also states that, "The Villa had its own staff of accountants. This was an imperial court, no mere retreat."⁸⁶ The villa was uniquely Hadrian's: an architectural and artistic innovation, a representation of his diverse empire and travels, a place to conduct business, and a place to embody religious ideas. Hadrian spent many of his years traveling, and approximately 11.5 years either at the villa or in Rome. The *SHA* describes how he spent his time:

Then, as was his custom during periods of tranquility, Hadrian withdrew rather too negligently into the country near Tibur, turning the city over to Lucius Aelius Caesar. Following the usual custom of men fortunate enough to be wealthy, the emperor built palaces there and devoted himself to banquets and to collecting statues and paintings; in the end, not without some misgivings, he provided there everything that was luxurious and lascivious.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*, 4-7.

⁸⁵ E. Mary Smallwood, *Documents of Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966), #117.

⁸⁶ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 141.

⁸⁷ *Sextus Aurelius Victor's Brief Imperial Lives*, trans EB Echols (Exeter, N.H. 1962)

He was at home from midsummer 118 until April 121, and then again from 125 to summer of 128. Upon his arrival in Italy in 132, he remained there until his death.⁸⁸

The villa rests 4km southwest of modern Tivoli on high ground. Tibur was protected on the east, north and north-west by the river and it commands the entrance to its upper course, with an extensive view over the Campagna. The site was chosen for its expansive horizon and secluded location. It was far from other villas, and therefore had room to expand. The villa had access to the great quantities of water, which were needed to complete Hadrian's design and vision.⁸⁹

The villa was arranged in a series of complexes, each self-contained. This was probably a result of two different building series. According to analysis of the brickstamps, the dates of construction are: 117-125, 125-133. During the initial campaign, the site of the original villa was remodeled. The structures built at this time were the "Biblioteche-Ospitali Tempe; Peristilio di Palazzo (Great Court) and surroundings; Slasa a Palstri Dorici (throne room) complex, including the Winter Palace and the trilobite Cenatio; the Heliocaminus baths; Caserma dei Vigili; and Terme Grandi."⁹⁰ During the second campaign, "the more traditional embellishments of villas were added: pavilions, groves, exedrae, and the like."⁹¹ These structures were grouped into complexes: "Piazza d'Oro; Terme Piccole; Serapeum-Canopus; Pretorio and

⁸⁸ MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*, 6.

⁸⁹ MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*, 9.

⁹⁰ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 142-143.

⁹¹ MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*, 12.

Vestibule complex; Accademia; Roccabruna and adjacent terraces; and the Nymphaeum and Villa Fea, theatres and palaestrae.”⁹²

An outline of the villa was present from the start. Some scholars describe the villa’s layout as disorderly, but there is clear intention in the layout. Like many of Hadrian’s buildings, there was not only aesthetic consideration made during construction, but also experiential. MacDonald and Pinto explain that there was a consistency in Hadrian’s concept: “deliberate plays of contrast between nearby buildings and among half-open and enclosed spaces, enchain[ed] for diversion of senses.”⁹³ Most of the principal enclosures were set apart, and gardens and terraces were used as transitional spaces, as well as for reflection or a place of enjoyment and leisure.

MacDonald and Pinto created a system for reading the plan of the villa by dividing the parts into eight different categories: I. The Residential Core, II. Beside the Residential Core, III. The Northern Gap, IV. The East-West Group, V. The Angled Extension, VI. The Southwest Axis, VII. The High Ground, and VIII. The Water Court Area. (See Figure 7).⁹⁴

⁹² MacDonald and Pinto, 11-12.

⁹³ MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian’s Villa and Its Legacy*, 37-40.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39-43.

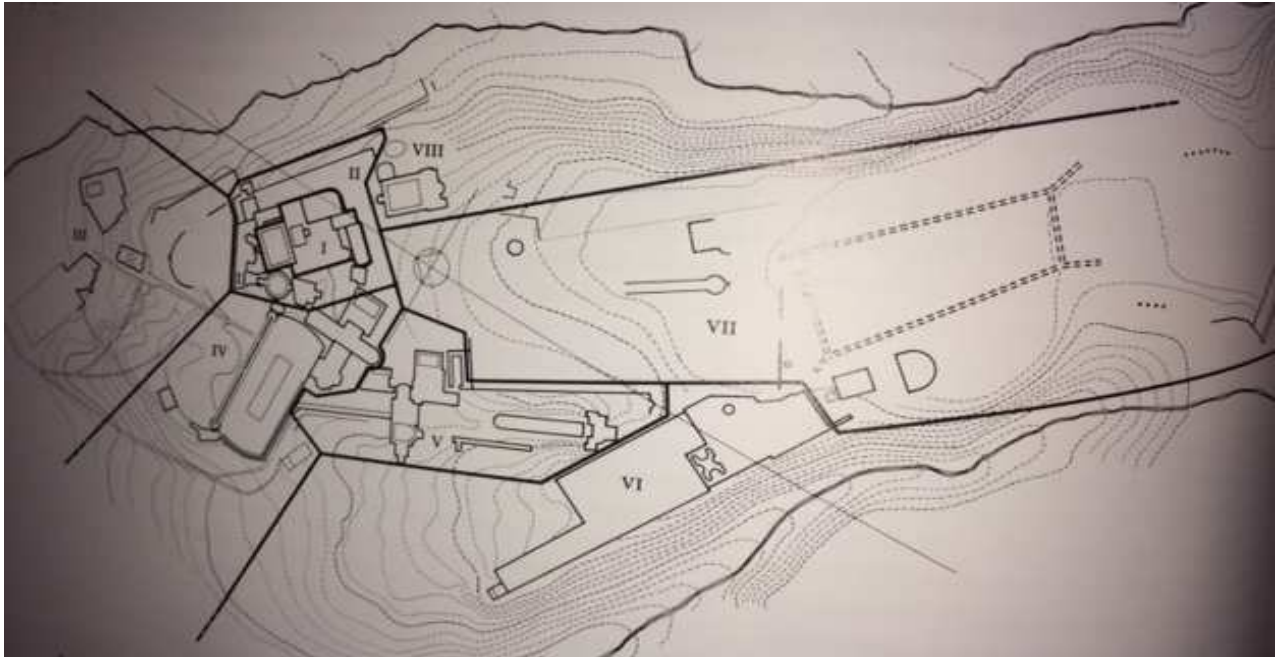


Figure 7: MacDonald and Pinto's Villa Zones

The Residential core, zone I, was a compact assembly of rectangular features, unlike the adjacent buildings. This area is the most traditional section of the villa, probably rebuilt from the original villa. The area beside the Residential Court, zone II, is more contemporary. This section touches the core's perimeter, but ignores the plan lines of the residence completely. The Northern Group, zone III, includes the Fountain Court and the Doric Temple, and Northern Theatre. This section contains remains of a large cluster or buildings, which are speculated to have been used for military function. In the East West Group, zone IV, is divided into two parts. The first part contains the Ambulatory Wall, the East-West terrace, and the service quarters. The second includes the cross-shaped plan of the Arcaded Triclinium, Stadium Garden, and Peristyle Pool Building. The Angled Extension, zone V, includes the baths, the Central Vestibule, the Canal Block, and the Scenic Canal and Triclinium, the long axis of the Central Service Building, and the Upper park west wall. The Southwest Axis, zone VI, contains the

West Belvedere, the West Walled Terrace, and the Southern Range. The High Ground, zone VII, contains the Upper Park and its buildings, the Underground galleries, and the Southern Theatre and Hall. The High Ground's location and underground access makes it difficult to gather evidence; therefore this area's structure is highly speculative. The Water Court Area, zone VIII, was created after the other buildings. This area contains a major nymphaeum and a pool, and an oval arena. There is also an axial water channel separated by planted areas.⁹⁵

The overall themes of the villa are privacy, tradition, travel, and innovation. The chosen location of the villa allows for seclusion and each interior space of the villa is self-referential.⁹⁶ The villa's architecture presents a full spectrum of Roman architecture. There is a large presence of columns, arches, and vaults of the traditional order. The classical forms are presented in new ways. The use of the curvilinear architecture, overall layout, and water usage, present Hadrian's innovation in architecture. The creativity of Roman architecture is abundant in the villa. The Serapeum-Canopus, located in zone V, The Angled Extension, contains many of the villa's themes and the various architectural forms, and therefore will be examined in

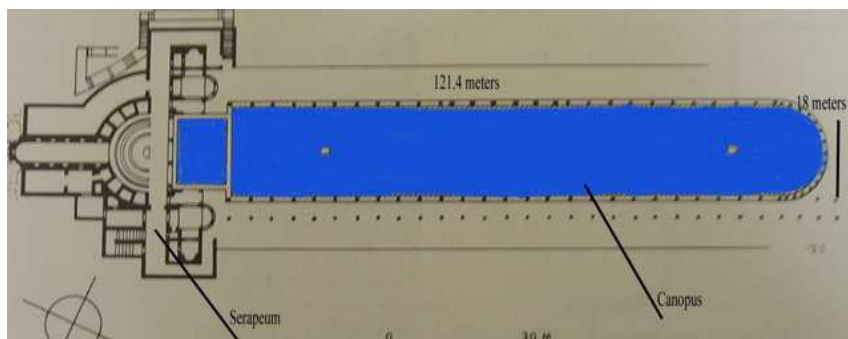


Figure 8: Serapeum- Canopus (Credit: Dartmouth)

detail. In addition, the Serapeum-Canopus, also known as the Scenic Triclinium, was chosen for analysis because of the images and

⁹⁵ MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*, 40-46.

⁹⁶ Catherine Barrett, "Hadrian and the Frontiers of Form" *Journal of Architectural Education* 3 (2003):

sculptures found within its structure, and the evidence it can provide toward Hadrian's religious affiliations and interests.

The Serapeum-Canopus measures 121.4 meters long by 18 meters wide. The Canopus is a long pool located in the center of a narrow valley adjacent to the West Terrace. It rested in a long small valley enclosed by a buttress wall in the eastern side and substructures and a series of rooms for the service personnel on the opposite side. The pool's construction is believed to have occurred between 123 and 124 AD, evidenced by the pool's brick stamps.⁹⁷ The pool was originally surrounded on the east by a colonnade of Corinthian columns, and on the west by Caryatids and a Silenus. This colonnade was adorned with Roman copies of Greek sculptures identified as Ares, Athena, Hermes and a reclining figure of the Nile and one of the Tiber. On the east end, within the basin, a pedestal exists on which there is evidence that a statue of a crocodile once stood. Also on the east end, another pedestal once held the statue of Scylla with victims.⁹⁸

The water basin leads to a monumental building in the form of a half-domed apse grotto, decorated with niches, fountains and waterworks. This area is believed to be the Serapeum. This half-domed area was most likely used as a banquet hall. A

⁹⁷ MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*, 110.

⁹⁸ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 145.



Figure 9: Modern day Serapeum-Canopus (Credit: osu.edu)

rectangular pool extends from the main building complex. On each side of the pool rests two pavilions, each with several barrel vaulted rooms. Mosaics and marble were used to ornately decorate the vault and its walls.

Several rooms were located on the backside of this building. Frescoes are present on the western side and used to decorate a long room. In the hill behind the Canopus were found a water basin and small aqueduct that supplied the water.⁹⁹

The Serapeum-Canopus has many Egyptian and Greek allusions, and demonstrates Hadrian's ingenuity, with its half-domed shaped structure. Hadrian spent many years in Egypt, where he lost his love Antinous to the Nile. After his death, Antinoopolis was founded, the cult of Antinous was begun, and construction on the temple to Serapis commenced. The Canopus pool represents the Nile. Serapis, god of the underworld, is the namesake of the domed portion of the Triclinium. This area would have been used for banquets and parties, and other social functions.¹⁰⁰

The statuary around the Canopus was diverse, many modeled or copied from statuary in different structures. The Caryatids and Sileni allude to the Porch of the

⁹⁹ MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*, 111-114.

¹⁰⁰ MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*, 107-109.

Maids on the Erectheion on the Athenian Acropolis. The Sileni are modeled after the stage decorations at the theater of Dionysus in Athens. There is also a statue of Hermes, the Olympian god who was the messenger of the gods and then patron of boundaries and travelers.¹⁰¹ The Amazons are copies of statues at the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus; they are identified as Mattei type. The Mattei Amazon was depicted wounded on her thigh and leaning on her spear for support, though usually depicted as lively.¹⁰²

There were a total of 35 statues, either whole or in fragments, found at the site. These statues range from imperial figures, gods and goddesses, territorial references, and mythological and legendary references as well. The complete list of statuary found in or near the Serapeum-Canopus consists of: Hadrian, Julia Domna, Antinous, Dionysus, Athena, Hermes, Isis, Apis-Isis, Ptah, priest, figure sacrificing, caryatid (4), Tiber, Nile, crocodile, river god, panther's head, Silenus, amazon, satyr, Scylla group, warrior, male portrait, child's head, and a draped female figure. The selection of statues depicts the eclectic nature of imperial art during this time, and the imperial use of the statue of Julia Domna shows the continued imperial use of the villa after Hadrian's death.

Hadrian's villa provides us with the personal elements of Hadrian's religious policy. Hadrian was conscious of the impact architecture had on the viewer/visitor, and used this impact to illustrate the changes in Roman culture and imperial motivation. His villa encompassed many aspects of his other building projects, showing that he not only

¹⁰¹ Alexander Stuart Murray, *Manual of Mythology* (India: Nabu Press, 2010), 45-46.

¹⁰² B.S. Ridgeway, "A Story of Five Amazons", *Bryn Mawr*, 78 (1974): 1-17.

built to influence the people, but he truly believed and applauded the changing world. His villa was also a place where the princeps and the elite would interact; therefore the villa, allows us to see how he would have visually represented the world of Rome and interacted with those of the same class.

The shape of the villa provides very little apparent structure or symmetry, yet it was intentional. In the expansive empire, Hadrian was used to traveling throughout the provinces. He knew the empire was not a grid-like structure of order; it was created by the campaigns of his predecessors. He built his villa into the landscape, selecting favored building elements that independently existed, but still could be accessed and joined through various gardens and aesthetically pleasing visuals. This is symbolic of his travels and his intentions with the provinces. While he was striving to unify the empire, Hadrian was not trying to create a single race. Hadrian's purpose was to influence the provinces' ability to assimilate to Roman culture, while still maintaining their customs and independence. Hadrian in turn would incorporate, intentionally and as result of his own interests, provincial culture into his own amalgamation of them.

The Serapeum-Canopus was a representation of Hadrian's travels and affections. Theories exist that this complex was also a memorial to his beloved Antinous. There is speculation that the obelisk dedicated to Antinous stood somewhere in the complex, based on the inscription, but the evidence is not developed enough to make any conclusions.¹⁰³ Even so, the area did have Egyptian influence as well as statues dedicated to Antinous; therefore it may not have received the title of a memorial

¹⁰³ Boatwright explains the Hannestad and Schmidt-Colinet theories (1973), but she explains there is not enough evidence to draw a conclusion.

to Antinous in the past. However, Hadrian's intentions could have been to commemorate his lover and represent his cult.

The pool and its surrounding statuary are the decorative and scenic portion of this structure. Having a likeness to the Pantheon's domed structure, the Serapeum represented Hadrian's innovative side. It would have been where people congregated and interacted most. The Serapeum would have been used for social events with the elite, which then reveals how Hadrian presented himself to his own class. Not only did he want to present himself as cultured and worldly, but he may also have chosen his statuary to evoke questions or to ignite conversation of different cultures and provincial practices in a social setting.

Through examination of his villa, we can determine that Hadrian's religious policy extended into his personal life. He was a man who had no boundaries between his diplomatic efforts and home life. He remained consistent and was on a personal mission to unify the empire, celebrate the new imperial world, and influence all classes to embrace change.

VI. Hadrian and Greece

No other provincial city could match the extent of the imperial generosity conferred upon Athens by Hadrian. Hadrian was a self-proclaimed Philhellene; at a young age he was called *Graeculus* and held the archonship of Athens prior to his principate.¹⁰⁴ As princeps he built a strong connection with the city of Athens. The *SHA* describes this affection: “He bestowed many favours on the Athenians and sat as president of the public games.”¹⁰⁵ Dio elaborates on Hadrian’s relationship with the Greeks:

Hadrian completed the Olympieum at Athens, in which his own statue also stands, and dedicated there a serpent which had been brought from India. He also presided at the Dionysia, first assuming the highest office among the Athenians, and arrayed in the local costume, he carried it through brilliantly. He allowed the Greeks to build in his honour the shrine which was named Panhellenium and instituted a series of games in connection with it; and he granted to the Athenians large sums of money, an annual dole of grain and the whole of Cephallenia.¹⁰⁶

Hadrian contributed to Athens architecturally, constructing quality and meaningful structures. This section will examine the Olympieion of Athens, Hadrian’s arch, and his library. These structures were selected because of their grand scale, visibility and function in everyday life, and location in Athens. The city’s agora was rebuilt by the

¹⁰⁴ *Vita Hadriani*, 1.5

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 13.1

¹⁰⁶ Dio 69.16.1-2

princeps and the structures within allow us to analyze Hadrian's relationship with Greece and its role in the development of Hadrian's religious policy. In addition, the Olympieion was selected because it has been theorized that it was a counterpart to the Temple of Venus and Roma.¹⁰⁷ This section reveals how Hadrian's love of Greece, his most beloved province, reflected his political intentions and contributed to his religious policy.

Hadrian visited Athens in 124-125, 128-129, and 131-132.¹⁰⁸ He spent more time in Athens than any other city of the provinces. He was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries and participated in public games on his first visit.¹⁰⁹ Most of Hadrian's benefactions are dated to his third visit to Athens (131-132). During this time Hadrian established the Panhellenion, a league of Greek cities with its center in Athens, created the penteteric Panhellenic games, dedicated the Olympieion after six centuries of incompletion, built the Temple of Hera and Zeus Panhellenios, and the Library of Hadrian.¹¹⁰

The Panhellenion was a great accomplishment by Hadrian, but will only be briefly discussed. This organization is worth noting because Hadrian's extensive attention to Athens and his building projects were seen by the representatives of this league when they traveled to Athens for their meetings. The members of the league would have been wealthy participants in governmental, cultural, political, religious, and other civic roles that were required to engage in Roman politics, which was increasingly necessary

¹⁰⁷ Suna Guven, *A Vision of Imperial Unity: The Temple of Venus and Roma*, 19-30.

¹⁰⁸ Anthony Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor*, 12.

¹⁰⁹ *SHA* 13.104

¹¹⁰ *SHA* 13.6, Dio 69 16.2, Pausanias 1.18.9

for Greeks. The Panhellenion was a league of Greek cities, which focused on religious, cultural and political activities. The Panhellenion had representatives from multiple cities and they were required to have already held office and to collaborate on making decisions and discussing municipal changes. The membership included Achaia, Macedonia, Thrace, Crete-and-Cyrene, and Asia. The league allowed for public figures living in separate and distinct political communities to intermingle and share ideas.¹¹¹ The league's focus was to honor the imperial house and enjoy Athenian daily life, while discussing issues of the territory. The religious charge of the league included the administration of the cult honoring Hadrian of the Panhellenion and the supervision of related games. The league also oversaw imperial policy towards Christians.¹¹² This league is representative of Hadrian's religious policy, for he consistently sought ways to promote collaboration within the empire. The league also provides insight into his motivation for renewing city-centers and architecture around the provinces. Religious and social activities increased, and Athens was solidified as the center of the Greek East because of the establishment of this league. Hadrian wanted to improve the empire structurally, but he wanted to use those structures to represent his new religious policy, as well as his presentation of a new Rome.

In 131/132 the Olympieion was dedicated and the Panhellenion was established. At the Olympieion, statues from around the world were dedicated by the Panhellenion members. There were many different bronze statues, some created in the likeness of Hadrian, and some called "colonies," each representative of its donor's province. The

¹¹¹A. J. Spawforth and Susan Walker, "The World of the Panhellenion. I. Athens and Eleusis," *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 75 (1985): 80-81.

¹¹² Ibid, 82.

dedication of the temple was associated with the imperial cult, but Hadrian was not worshipped in conjunction with Zeus Olympios. Hadrian himself donated a chryselephantine statue of Zeus to be placed in the aedes. He also donated four large statues of himself to stand in the entrance.¹¹³

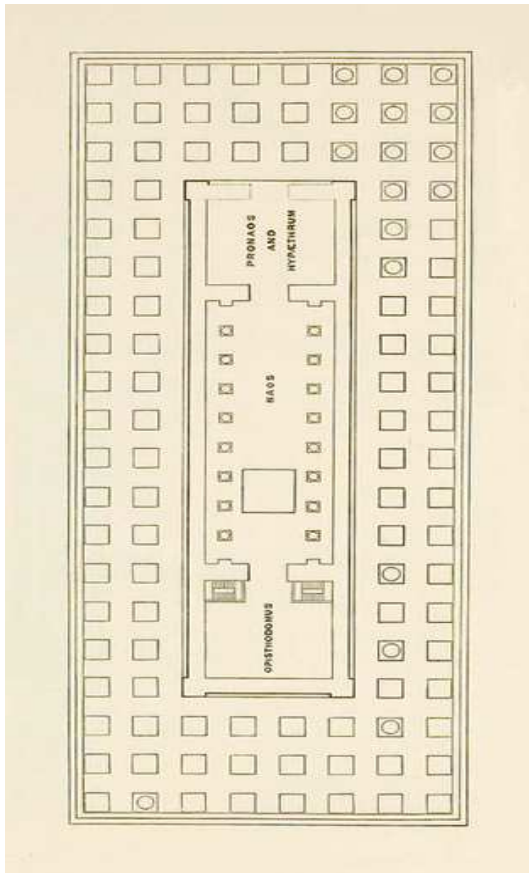


Figure 10: The Olympieion, Athens (Credit Guven Abramson)

The Olympieion in Athens stood unfinished for over 600 years. Boatwright discusses his completion of the temple as a way for Hadrian to plant himself forever into the local history.¹¹⁴ In 132, the Temple of Olympian Zeus was formally dedicated. It had been over six centuries in the making.¹¹⁵ The original foundation of the temple provided the plan and dimensions for Hadrian's completed temple. The statuary in the temple was located in the oblong cella, which held a colossal gold and ivory statue of Zeus.¹¹⁶ Vitruvius described the temple as having eight columns across the front facade and two rows of columns on each side of the inner cella. This cella

held the cult statue. A portion of the temple was open to the sky.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Benjamin, Anna S. "The Altars of Hadrian in Athens and Hadrian's Panhellenic Program," *Hesperia* 32:1 (Jan-Mar 1963), 58.

¹¹⁴ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of Rome*, 151.

¹¹⁵ Anthony Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor*, 223.

¹¹⁶ Pausanias 1.18.6

¹¹⁷ Vitruvius, III 2.8, VII

Only ruins exist of the temple today. Dietrich Willers, a German archaeologist, has developed the most complete description of the Olympieion, using the evidence from Pausanias with archaeological and excavation reports of the area. Boatwright has provided a description of this building based on his work, combined with references to the ancient sources:

Hadrian used massive terracing to build up the low ridge on which the temple sits, employing an architectural technique characteristic of Roman architecture. A new wall of rusticated blocks demarcated the temenos, like the “fire walls” and other precinct walls of the great imperial fora at Rome. Typically Roman in its inward focus, the Olympieion’s temenos wall had only one off-centered opening, the entrance in the northeast. Inside the Olympieion, columns on pedestals were set very close to the polished temenos wall. The entire area was paved, through which careful preservation of earlier shrines and monuments like that of Cronos and Rhea, or bronze statues of Zeus could be viewed (cf. Paus. 1.18.7). Hadrian also put on display a large snake from India (Cass. Dio 69.16.1), a reminder of Rome’s far reach.¹¹⁸

The Olympieion and the Panhellenic league help to reveal Hadrian’s religious policy within the eastern provinces. Hadrian’s work in Rome’s city center and in Tibur reveals his desire to maintain traditional Roman elements and incorporate innovative ideas and practice into them. He also had a deep respect for all things Greek and therefore was striving to create a secondary center for the empire at Athens. While he

¹¹⁸ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of Rome*, 152.

was trying to keep the city of Rome as a symbol of the power that built the empire, he was making Greece a cultural center as a symbol of his new and culturally diverse empire. Greek culture was becoming a status symbol, along with the innovations and new traditions that were being implemented both in politics and in architecture. The members of the Panhellenion would travel to Athens and return to their own cities with ideas and stories of the new center there. This philhellenic culture underpins Hadrian's intentions and lends to the idea that every educated Roman citizen should receive a Greek education, studying rhetoric, literature, and philosophy.¹¹⁹

In the Olympieion, Hadrian placed his image into the context of the traditional Greek religious imagery, although there is only one statue of Zeus and four of Hadrian in the finished temple. Hadrian, although not identifying himself as Zeus the Olympian, associated himself dramatically with Zeus Panhellenios. Hadrian was completing a structure that was centuries in the making, and he added decorative elements (statuary) of the new imperial mode. Hadrian was building a religious shrine for all of the provinces. By marrying the past with the present, elevating members of the elite, and making his image available to all viewers, Hadrian was building religious policy into diplomatic policy and the political development of the empire.

Hadrian did not rely solely on religious architecture to develop his imperial policy. He built his famous library at Athens in 131. It was located on the north side of the Acropolis, north of the agora. Pausanias describes his encounter with the library:

¹¹⁹ Suna Guven, "A Vision of Imperial Unity: The Temple of Venus and Roma," 23-24.

Hadrian constructed other buildings also for the Athenians: a temple of Hera and Zeus Panellenios (Common to all Greeks), a sanctuary common to all the gods, and, most famous of all, a hundred pillars of Phrygian marble. The walls too are constructed of the same material as the cloisters. And there are rooms there adorned with a gilded roof and with alabaster stone, as well as with statues and paintings. In them are kept books. There is also a gymnasium named after Hadrian; of this too the pillars are a hundred in number from the Libyan quarries.¹²⁰

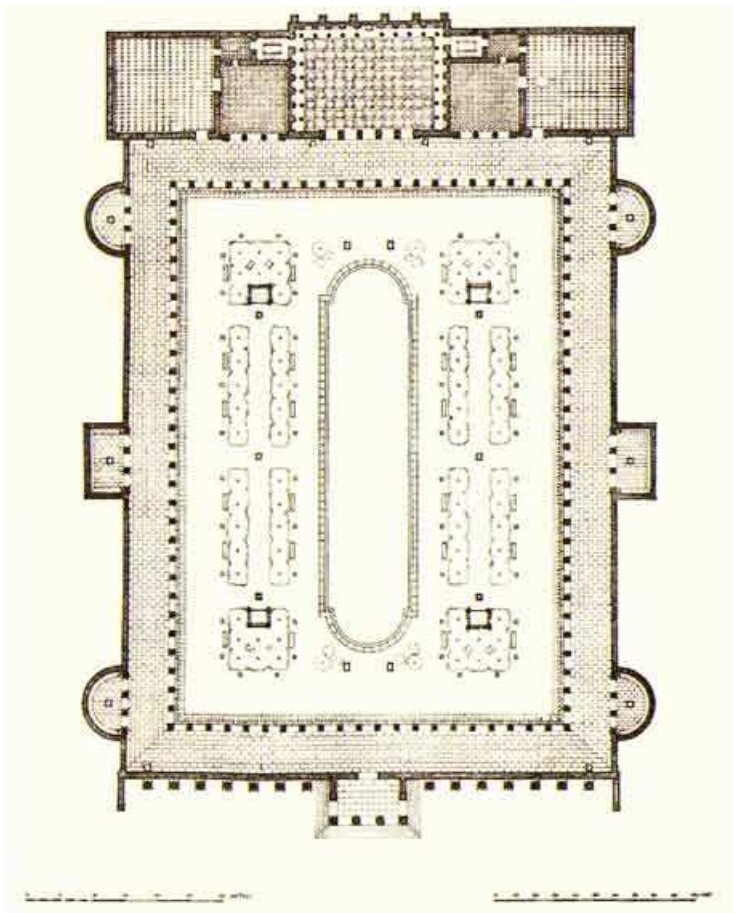


Figure 11: The Library of Hadrian in Athens Plan (credit duke.edu)

The library was fully integrated into the existing buildings in Athens. It was designed to combine Roman and Greek elements. It was contained by a temenos wall. The library was built on a strong central axis. Behind the colonnades of the long sides, there was a symmetrical garden enclosure that was surrounded by four porticos with small exedrae. A long pool rested in the center of the garden. The entrance was marked by a tetrastyle propylon at the west end of the axis. The east end of the axis was a symmetrical row of rooms. The exterior façade

¹²⁰ Pausanias 1.18.9

consisted of Corinthian columns, on freestanding pedestals, and above the entablature and cornices. These columns provided an architectural context for statues that were placed above each column.¹²¹

The interior is more in line with the Greek architectural plan. Two-thirds of the interior was taken up by the central court. The perimeter of the central court contained a quadriporticus of a hundred columns. The height of the interior would have encompassed three stories. There were two large outer rooms in the east that originally had ramps for banks of seats, which suggests the existence of an auditorium.¹²² There was a hall of marble in the east as well, now called the "Marble Hall". This structure was common in Greek architecture, and often contained statuary and decorative features, and opened off a quadriporticus. Boatwright compares the structure to that of a bath or a gymnasium, and felt that the visitors at the time would have seen it as a center of learning.¹²³ Archaeologists observe that the architectural form of the complex is modeled on the Temple of Peace in Rome, one of a series of imperial fora constructed by Vespasian. Platner and Ashby describe the building:

...being rectangular in shape with the same orientation as the other imperial fora. Its length was 145 metres, and its width about two-thirds as much, although its north-east boundary is uncertain. It had an enclosing wall of peperino lined with marble and pierced with several gates. The peperino blocks have left impressions on the concrete of the basilica of Constantine, the north-west side of

¹²¹ T.L. Shear, Jr., "Athens: From City-State to Provincial Town", *Hesperia* 50 (1981): 356 - 377.

¹²² Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of Rome*, 156

¹²³ Ibid 157.

which was set against it. At the south-east corner there was an entrance from the Sacra via through a monumental passageway.¹²⁴

Although little remains of the Temple of Peace in Rome and the library in Athens, their descriptions are similar, and it would be consistent for Hadrian to emulate admired Roman architecture within Athens. Since Pausanias did not come out and say that Hadrian's library was in fact a library, its actual use is up for interpretation. Hadrian chose to model the library after a Roman temple, which shows him trying to implant Roman imperial structures into the Greek landscape.

Although the building has been called the "library" of Hadrian, the structure provided the people of Athens with a new public forum and cultural center. The presence of a garden and courtyard and auditorium suggests its function as a learning center intended for collaboration, rather than just a home for books. By building this education center, Hadrian was able to foster and influence the learning of the upper-class citizens. Since Athens was the cultural center of the East since the 5th c. BC, he would have had an interest in shaping the intellectual life of educated people, and Hadrian may have had some say in the texts, art, and sculpture of the library.

The arch of Hadrian and the altars dedicated to him provide insight into the people's perspective of the ruler. We have looked at how Hadrian presented himself to the provinces, now we must look at how he was accepted. The arch was dedicated to Hadrian, shortly after the dedication of the Olympieion, by the Athenians in order to honor him and his many benefactions. Claims have been made stating that Hadrian

¹²⁴ L. Richardson, Jr., *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Baltimore: JHU press), 1992.

was the commissioner of the arch, but the evidence leans strongly toward Athenian commissioners: (a) the architecture was not typical of a Roman arch, (b) the material does not match that of Hadrian's buildings, and (c) there are similar arches built by Greeks at Eleusis.¹²⁵

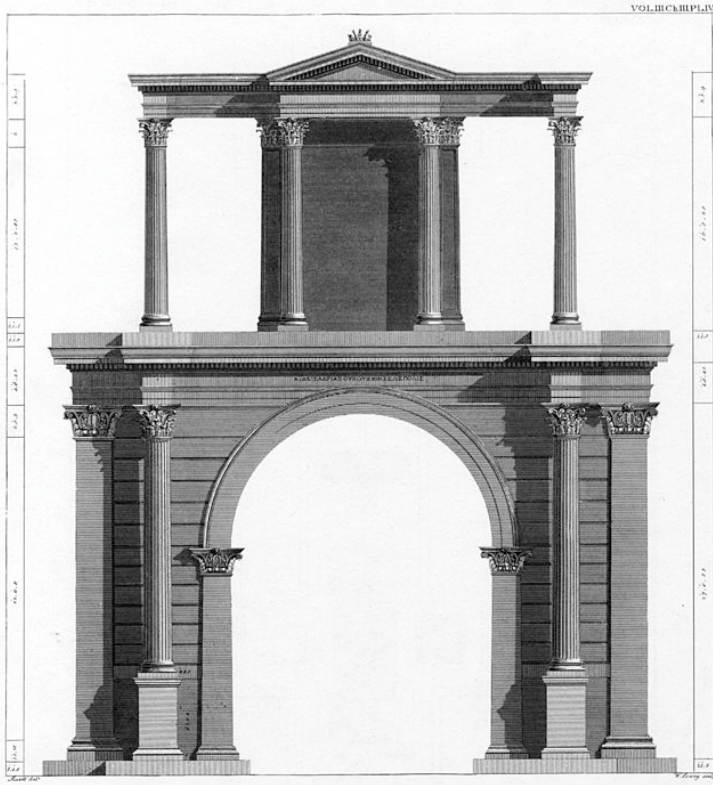


Figure 12: The Arch of Hadrian (rendering by Stuart and Revett)

The arch (pictured in Figure 11) stands 18m tall, 13.5m wide, and is 2.5 m deep.¹²⁶ It has two distinctive levels. It was constructed from Pentelic marble, the same material used in other famous Athenian monuments. The first level has a passageway 6.5 m in width. Two sets of Corinthian pilasters frame the passageway. Originally two smaller Corinthian columns were attached to each side of the doorway.

The upper level had three sections and each section was separated by Corinthian pilasters with ionic cornices. Two pilasters framed the opening, and were connected to Corinthian half columns, supporting the triangular pediment. The opening of the

¹²⁵ A. Adams, "The Arch of Hadrian at Athens", in S. Walker and A. Cameron, eds. *The Greek Renaissance in the Roman Empire*, (London)1989: 10-11.

¹²⁶ Stuart and Revitt analyzed and produced the only measurements and drawing of the east façade known to date.

passageway contained a thick stone wall. The arch resembles an isolated building façade with a colonnaded attic.¹²⁷

The arch contained two inscriptions, one on each facade. It is important to understand the locations of the arch in order to understand a viewer's perspective when encountering the structure. The arch was built on the road that connected central Athens to southeastern Athens, termed "Roman Athens" or "Hadrianoupolis". The arch was built near the Olympieion and a short distance from the acropolis. It was not part of a wall or a gateway at any point, it functioned as other triumphant arches once did. The inscription facing the acropolis on the western face reads:

This is Athens, the ancient city of Theseus.

The inscription on the eastern face of the arch, facing the Olympieion, states:

This is the city of Hadrian and not of Theseus.¹²⁸

The arch and the inscriptions demarcate the old Athens and the Hadrianic Athens, also known as Hadrianopolis. In the *SHA* there is evidence that there was a part of Athens named after him: "Hadrian called many cities Hadrianopolis including Carthage and a part of Athens."¹²⁹ The association of Hadrian and Theseus shows that Hadrian had contributed much to Athens and was respected for it. Some scholars posit that Hadrian was not only associated with Theseus, but in fact replaced him as founder.¹³⁰ Theseus was an Athenian king and hero, who traveled through his own

¹²⁷ A. Adams, "The Arch of Hadrian", 83-85.

¹²⁸ A. Adams, "The Arch of Hadrian", 11-14.

¹²⁹ *SHA* 20.4

¹³⁰ J.H. Oliver translator of the inscriptions, found in A. Adams' explanation of the translation.

territory committing heroic deeds and acts. While Theseus was the founder and hero of ancient Athens, Hadrian was the founder and hero of new Athens.

The arch reveals another aspect of Hadrian's religious policy: his success. While Hadrian was assimilating Roman and Greek culture to one another, he needed the support of the people. This arch demonstrates the respect and honor the Athenians and other provincials paid to Hadrian, and this respect and honor was heightened because the arch was dedicated shortly after the dedication of the Olympieion. The arch also serves to show the progressive attitude of the day. The Athenians were willing to materialize the divide between old and new with the arch with which they were celebrating the Roman leader in their city center, though they did not borrow Roman forms to honor the Roman emperor.

Finally, the altars to Hadrian in Athens contribute to our understanding of the people's perception and overall attitude to the princeps. In developing his religious policy, it is possible, even likely, that Hadrian was reviving or strengthening the imperial cult, thereby rehabilitating the cult practiced by all provinces and peoples of the empire. The presence and number of the altars are testimony to that revival of the imperial cult in Athens. Anna Benjamin offers a monographic overview from altars dedicated to Hadrian in Athens.¹³¹ She concludes:

Under Hadrian the cult of the emperor in the Greek world was closely associated with the emperor's program of Panhellenism. The connection between the imperial cult, a main instrument in the unification of the Roman

¹³¹ These inscriptions are located in the Epigraphic Museum, Athens.

Empire, and the emphasis on the unity of the Greek peoples is natural, and Hadrian's willingness to accept divine honors and his encouragement of Panhellenism have, among many complex motives, the common purpose of the consolidation of the empire.¹³²

Ninety four inscriptions were found, dated to 131, from altars that were dedicated by people all over the Greek world to Hadrian Olympios. These altars were used for religious devotion, sacrificial offerings, or praising the deity of the temple, sanctuary, or building in which the altar was found. Pausanias confirms the presence of these altars as well as statues of Hadrian around the peribolos, which were dwarfed by a colossal statue erected by the Athenians.¹³³ This arrangement demonstrates the Greeks affection for the Roman ruler, and suggests that he provided interest in and respect for their deities, practices, and rituals. Benjamin states that "The list below of altars to Hadrian reveals that the most widely spread and popular epithet assumed by Hadrian was Olympios or Zeus Olympios and not Panhellenios."¹³⁴ The title choice taken by

¹³² Anna Benjamin, "The Altars of Hadrian in Athens" *Hesperia* 32 (1963), 57.

¹³³ Pausanias I.18.6

¹³⁴ Benjamin, "Altars to Hadrian", 59

Hadrian therefore suggests that Hadrian was aligning himself with true Panhellenic god, Zeus Olympion. In doing this, he was diverting worship offered to himself, to the traditional Greek cults of Zeus.

The altars bearing Hadrian's name represent Hadrian's presence in Athens, with a positive connotation. Hadrian was reviving the imperial cult, which he used as an



Figure 13: Altar to Hadrian in Athens (Cornell Library)

assimilation technique to gain the support of the Greek elites and people. Hadrian was therefore succeeding in his efforts to unify the empire. Religious policy and imperial unification were inseparable under Hadrian. His time in

Greece influenced his work at

Rome and in the provinces. Not only did he have a personal affection for Greece, but he also had respect and admiration for its culture. Greece had been dependent on Roman power for more than 250 years, and it gladly accepted the imperial attention, which benefitted it. The creation of the Panhellenion opened doors for Hadrian, and provided him with a diverse and receptive audience. He rebuilt the Athenian agora and implanted Roman features within. His dedication of the Olympieion and its association with the Panhellenion strengthened the connections among province, ruler, and religion. The people accepted his efforts, as demonstrated in his arch and in the 94 altars

bearing his name. Hadrian wanted to foster new composite culture, and in Greece some people were indeed receptive to what he had to offer.

VII. Hadrian in Judaea

So far we have examined Hadrian's buildings at Tibur, in Rome, and in Athens. He was trying to develop a diverse and innovative empire, and he was accepting of others, he was well traveled and cultured. It would be unfair to leave the reader with this glorified perspective of Hadrian. His actions in Judaea reveal the elements not tolerated in his otherwise liberal religious policy. Hadrian's decision to build Aelia Capitolina and erect a temple to Jupiter on the site of the Temple of God in Jerusalem may not have been as ill intended as perceived by the Jews. What it perhaps demonstrates is Hadrian's ignorance of Jewish practices and Judaism which was shared by most of the Romans. It must be noted that there was a widespread anti-Semitism within the Roman upper classes.¹³⁵ This section offers a brief description of Bar Kokhba's revolt and its causes, discusses Hadrian's reasons for building Aelia Capitolina and the temple of Jupiter, and analyzes what the Jewish perspective offers to an understanding of Hadrian's religious policy.

Hadrian had started his principate at a time when animosity towards the Jews existed. Hadrian's religious policy was developed by and appealed to a world of pagan religions, comprised of non-exclusive cults, multiple deities, local temples and shrines, and worship without specific doctrine. Hadrian was in the process of innovating and combining old and new elements of pagan religion in the East as elsewhere.

During the second Jewish revolt (AD 115-117), Trajan decreed many restrictions for the Jews, which banned them from entering Jerusalem. In the early period of his principate Hadrian allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and gave them permission

¹³⁵ Tacitus, *Histories* 5.2.5

to rebuild their destroyed temple. Hadrian's relationship with the Jews was one of accommodation, not of acceptance.¹³⁶ Boatwright states that the Jews' distinct practices had always made their integration into Graeco-Roman life awkward. Their monotheistic practices and their lack of education in Greek rhetoric was disturbing to polytheistic Romans.¹³⁷ Hadrian's relationship with the Jews was maintained more on the basis of compliance than assimilation or acceptance. This co-existence would come to an end in 132.

The Jewish revolt of 132 was not the first time the Jews had expressed their unhappiness for Roman rule. Josephus attributes the first Jewish Revolt in 66 to "religious tension," when the catalyst was the sacrifice of birds by Greek inhabitants of Palestine in front of a synagogue.¹³⁸ The Jews revolted, and it ended after Titus' legions besieged and destroyed parts of Jerusalem. Herod's Temple was burned down as well as Jewish strongholds within the city, and a good portion of the Jewish population was enslaved and captured.¹³⁹

The Second revolt began in 115 (ended in 117) in Cyrene, located in Libya, as Trajan was expanding the empire farther to the East. In this revolt the rebels destroyed many temples, including those to Hecate, Jupiter, Apollo, Artemis, and Isis. They also destroyed civic structures, the Caesareum, the basilica, and the thermae. The Greek and Roman population was exterminated.¹⁴⁰ Mary Smallwood argues that there is a convincing amount of evidence suggesting that Bar Kokhba's revolt was

¹³⁶ E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule* (Leiden:EJ Brill, 1976), 380-394.

¹³⁷ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of Rome*, 196.

¹³⁸ Josephus, *The Jewish War* 268.

¹³⁹ E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 265-273.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 389-399.

“not a sudden and unexpected outbreak but the culmination of a period of mounting unrest, in part stemming from this second revolt.”¹⁴¹

Bar Kokhba revolted from 132 until 135, but it should be acknowledged both that there had been years of discontent, and that religion played a large role in the lasting hostility between the Romans and the Jews. The revolt was ignited after Hadrian left Rome and declared the orders to attack. Dio claims the Jews were making weapons of poorer quality for the Romans in order to use them once Hadrian refused to approve them for Roman use because of their poorer quality. Dio gives a fairly thorough description of the events during the Bar Kokhba revolt. He claims that once Hadrian had created the opportunity the Jews were ready for revolt. They did not want to approach the Romans on an open field, but instead they tried to occupy positions of advantage around the country, using mines and walls to strengthen them.¹⁴² The Romans were not initially bothered, but according to Dio, once fighting broke out and Jews all over the Roman world began to show signs of disturbance, “gathering together and giving evidence of great hostility to the Romans, partly by secret and partly by open acts; many other nations were joining them through eagerness for gain; and the whole earth was becoming convulsed over the matter.”¹⁴³

Hadrian first sent Julius Severus, dispatched from Britain. Severus fought the rebels in separate groups because of his lack of soldiers, and also deprived them of

¹⁴¹ E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 434.

¹⁴² Dio 69.12-14.

¹⁴³ Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 433.

food by shutting their supply lines off. Although this was a slow process, very few of them survived. Dio claims fifty garrisons and 985 of the Jews' most renowned towns were destroyed. "The whole of Judaea was made desolate, an event to which the people had had indications even before the war."¹⁴⁴ The Roman army suffered great losses as well, and that is why in his letter to the Senate at the end of the war Hadrian left out the regular salutation, "If you and your children are in good health, it is well; I and the legions are in good health."¹⁴⁵ Werner Eck believes the revolt caught the Romans off guard, causing Hadrian to dispatch legions, which were unsure of the enemy's tactics. They were prepared physically because of Hadrian's intense concentration on training and maintaining a powerful army, and his leadership assisted with the army's success in war. The Roman victory certainly could not be attributed to their anticipation of the war.¹⁴⁶

In his account of the revolt Eusebius, a Christian writer, discusses the leader and namesake of the rebellion, Bar Kokhba. Eusebius seems to think the man was a fraud:

The Jews were then led on by one Barchochebas, signifying a star, but who was in other respects a murderer and robber. But by means of his assumed title among a degraded race, now reduced to the condition of slaves, he

¹⁴⁴ Dio 69.14.12.

¹⁴⁵ Dio, 69.14.3

¹⁴⁶ Werner Eck, "The Bar Kokhba Revolt: The Roman Point of View," *Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999): 78-79.

pretended to do many miracles, as if he were a light descending upon heaven, whose object was to cheer them in their oppression.¹⁴⁷

This account is examined by Smallwood who analyzes the phrase “signifying a star.” A prophecy in Numbers says that “there shall come forth a star out of Jacob” that will lead Israel to victory. Therefore although Eusebius paints him as a criminal and a fraud, a large number of Jews dissatisfied with Roman politics and attitudes, would have followed him, especially if they were familiar with the prophecy.¹⁴⁸

The war eventually devastated the Jews, entirely eliminating the religious independence they had hoped for. The war also took the promised land which the Jews associated with their place of worship. Following the war, Hadrian built the colony of Aelia Capitolina on the site of Jerusalem.

Rendel Harris describes the city of Jerusalem in the year 140, several years after the fighting. “Jupiter was installed in the Temple area, Aphrodite perhaps on the burial-place of Christ, statues of Hadrian were in attendance on Jupiter, and there is some suspicion that Adonis...re-appeared at an ancient grotto of his in Bethlehem.”¹⁴⁹ Eusebius discusses the expulsion of the Jews after the war, when they could only see their holy land from afar. The expulsion of the Jews from this sacred land was devastating in itself, but the Jewish holy sites laced with Roman idols and religion transformed their holy land into a Roman landscape, making it even more difficult for the Jews to look back on it. Harris also discusses the prophecies of

¹⁴⁷ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 125.

¹⁴⁸ Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 440.

¹⁴⁹ Rendel Harris, “Hadrian's Decree of Expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem.” *The Harvard Theological Review* 9 (1926), 205.

the Jews and the border of Israel as an important factor in their religious beliefs; in this way the aftermath of the war was just as devastating to the Jews as the war itself.

Most scholars believe the cause of the revolt was Jewish piety and their devout allegiance to the tenets of their religion. “It is an insult to the religion which is held to be the one truth to be treated as a sect among so many others. It is better to be proscribed and persecuted for this violence is a sign of divine origin.”¹⁵⁰ There were various ways in which the Romans impinged upon Jewish piety and religion.

Boatwright suggests that the revolt was caused by Hadrian’s decision to build Aelia Capitolina. The Emperor “brazenly suppressed local mores and expressly prohibited the native population from this symbolic spot.”¹⁵¹ Another contributing factor was that of circumcision, which Romans may have confused with castration

Mainstream Greeks and Romans believed that circumcision was impure and barbaric, and did not accept the practice. While the ancient sources do not explicitly say that Hadrian issued a prohibition on circumcision, he tightened the laws on castration, which he considered murderous. There is speculation that Hadrian misunderstood the difference between castration and circumcision. Smallwood argues that the ban on circumcision could have been in place at the end of the first revolt in the early 70s, long before Hadrian. It would not have been a punishment solely for the Jews, as other religions and other peoples practiced it as well. For example, circumcision was a well-known Egyptian custom.

¹⁵⁰ Ernest Renan, “The Emperor Hadrian and Christianity,” *The North American Review* 9 (1978): 502.

¹⁵¹ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of Rome*, 197.

There is also evidence in Jewish literature that there was a ban on circumcision before the revolt. A ban on circumcision could have led Jews to practice the ritual illegally, since a man who “obliterated his circumcision, forfeited a share in the life to come.”¹⁵² If so, this circumvention of Roman law would have resulted in legal punishment, though it would have been viewed by the Romans as a legitimate punishment for a population that was breaking the imperial law; such a ban by the Romans would have undermined the national and religious unity of the Jews. It also violated the long-standing Roman practice of accepting Judaism based on its great antiquity, which would contradict previous agreements between the Jews and the Romans, allowing them religious liberty.¹⁵³ It can be inferred that Hadrian was not issuing or continuing the ban in order to interfere with a religious practice per se, but he considered himself to be saving male infants from bodily harm. Hadrian considered circumcision, in all probability, as an act of mutilation.

Previously Hadrian had contributed many public works to the benefit of Jewish locations. In 130 he built roads from Jerusalem to Jericho, Damascus to Petra, and to Gaza. He established the Hadrianeum in Caesarea and one in Tiberias.¹⁵⁴ But his decision to build Aelia Capitolina and erect a temple to Jupiter in Jerusalem, in place of the city and temple that were destroyed, revealed a malignant hostility to the Jewish population, at least as far as they were concerned. This decision, while perhaps not the sole cause, was one of the important contributing causes of the Bar Kochba revolt. Dio states:

¹⁵² Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 430-431.

¹⁵³ Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 433.

¹⁵⁴ Dio, *Eptiome* 69.11.1

In Jerusalem, he founded a city to replace the one which had been destroyed and called it Aelia Capitolina, and he erected a capital to Jupiter on the site of the Temple of God. This caused a long and serious war, since the Jews objected to having gentiles settled in their city and foreign cults established there.¹⁵⁵

Smallwood argues that there was a Roman legionary settlement in the area, and that there had been a presence of pagan shrines for years. Therefore the fact that the Jews chose to revolt over the pagan presence is dramatized.¹⁵⁶ While the causes may not be completely known there was evidence of Jewish and pagan unrest, and a clash of some kind was probably inevitable. Hadrian's pattern of carrying out building projects in the provinces supports the argument that Hadrian did not intend to punish or upset the Jews with his actions, but did intend presumably to reduce practices he considered barbaric.

In keeping with his major building programs elsewhere, it would not have been out of character for Hadrian to try to rebuild Jerusalem as a way to unify it with the rest of the empire. He was being consistent with his previous architectural plans and acting on his desire to innovate and adjust ancient practices to imperial concerns. It is possible that Hadrian either was unaware of the insult to the Jews or he was intent on righting the wrong he considered circumcision to be despite the offense he gave to the Jews because of it. It is also possible that Aelia Capitolina was not the sole reason for revolt on the part of the Jews.

¹⁵⁵ Dio, *Eptiome* 69. 12.2

¹⁵⁶ Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 434.

Based on her explanation of the relevant evidence, Smallwood posits four reasons for the colony's foundation: to further Hadrian's Romanization of the Empire, to appease the Jews by restoring their destroyed city, to suppress Jewish nationalism by providing a secular city, and to counteract Jewish restlessness with a military foundation.¹⁵⁷ The establishment of Aelia Capitolina is entangled with the Bar Kochba War. Construction of the colony was most likely initiated before 132. It was a military colony and settlement for veterans, including the members of Legio X Fretensis. The Jewish people were barred from entering the colony. Hadrian had planned to make the colony self-sufficient; building materials and water were drawn from the vicinity. Boatwright describes the colony as distinctly Roman, with no sign of a Hellenizing policy.¹⁵⁸

Little visual evidence of Aelia Capitolina or the temple to Jupiter remain on the ground. Coinage from the colony depicts the image which Hadrian wanted to project to the people in the region. One coin depicts Hadrian as founder of the colony, plowing with bull and cow.¹⁵⁹ Another coin depicts Jupiter Capitolinus seated behind Minerva and

¹⁵⁷ Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, 435.

¹⁵⁸ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of Rome*, 199.

¹⁵⁹ G.F Hill, *British Museum Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Palestine* (London, 1914), 80.

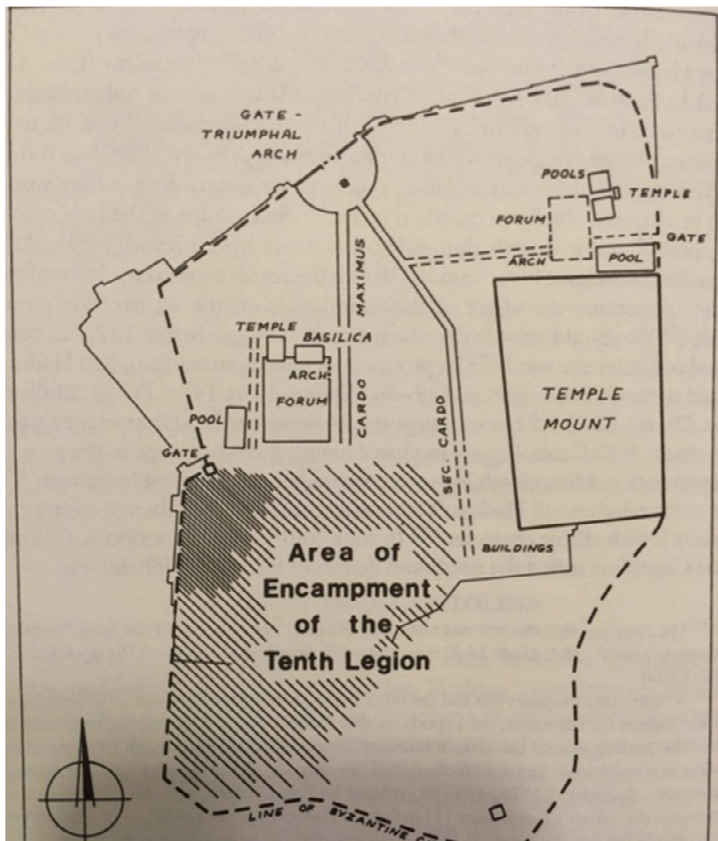


Figure14: Aelia Capitolina Plan (Boatwright)

Juno.¹⁶⁰ The coinage displays Hadrian as understanding the people and celebrating the patron gods.¹⁶¹

Boatwright offers a description of colony's plan from a collection of the skimpy architectural resources:

The city's plan was determined by the location of the Fretensis camp in Jerusalem's southern sector, by the site's countours, by a pre-existing rough grid established by Herod

Agrippa, and by the political

orientation of the province, whose capital was north of Caesarea. The main city entrance was a monumental three-bayed arch, now known as the Damascus Gate, which opened onto a paved court with a freestanding column within the city. This ensemble, originally constructed by Herod Agrippa, was rebuilt and rededicated by the colony's new decurions. On the basis of Jerusalem's depiction on the mid-sixth-century Madaba map, it is usually assumed that from the oval court ran two wide and colonnaded streets, one running south to the camp and the other southwest to a small plaza near the northwest corner of the Temple Mount. Just to the west of the main north-south street and separated

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 82

¹⁶¹ Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, 198.

from it by a monumental wall (1.5 meters wide) pierced by a triple arch, was the main forum of Aelia Capitolina. This probably housed the new colony's Capitoline temple.¹⁶²

Statues of Jupiter and Hadrian rested on the Capitolium and near the temple. Other buildings included two public baths, a theater, a nymphaeum of four porticoes, a monumental gate of twelve entrances, and a quadrangular esplanade. There was also a triple arch found near the north gate.¹⁶³

Hadrian's interaction with the Jews and his actions in Judaea reveal the flaws in his religious vision. While Hadrian strove to accept and incorporate provincial religious practices and figures, Jewish religion proved to be too barbaric in the view of Hadrian and the Romans as well. The other provinces were able to maintain their characteristic practices, but the Jews had to suspend or hide theirs. Jewish practice and doctrine were too far removed to be assimilated with the polytheistic religions of the Roman Empire. Hadrian worked hard to incorporate different deities and foster cults that served to advance his cultural plan. The Jewish religion did not fit into his conception of religion, and he could not be tolerant to a people that practiced circumcision, refused to participate in the civic religion, and was unable in principle to participate in the military because of the Sabbath (although Jews certainly did serve in the Roman army).

Hadrian was also unable to rely on the imperial cult in this area. As monotheists, the Jews could not worship before statues of the emperor or images of

¹⁶² Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of Rome*, 200.

¹⁶³ Ibid 202-203.

other deities. This stipulation prevented them from celebrating the city and empire itself. Traditional Roman practices had been to absolve the Jews from this responsibility, but this practice seems to have clashed with the means Hadrian was using to unify the Roman Empire as a whole. Jewish practice harshly clashed with Hadrian's mission, and therefore even if his intention to build the colony and temple was to bind the Jews more closely to the empire, his ignorance shows a flaw both in his leadership and in his plan to unify the entire empire.

VIII. Conclusion

Hadrian's structures are so numerous it would be impossible to analyze all of them in one thesis. His travels led him to many different provinces and allowed him to interact with the diverse population of the empire. His goal was to unify the empire through religion and architectural culture. On the whole, he was successful in unifying most of the empire through his tolerance and celebration of cultures. The goal of the foregoing analysis of some of Hadrian's building projects was to illustrate his religious policy. Four main elements are evident.

First, Hadrian's choice of building projects in Rome demonstrates that Hadrian used religion to gain public support at home. Rome was losing its position as the center of the empire. Hadrian had the monuments he commissioned for the capital incorporate aspects of the city's glorious past in new monuments to the empire's present successes in order to reassure Romans everywhere that they were respected. The first element of his religious policy was, then, to maintain and enhance traditional Roman practices and images; he used religious symbols in order to achieve political ends.

Second, Hadrian's building projects in Rome also unveil another element of his policy. He built the Pantheon with a domed rotunda, he dedicated the Temple of Venus and Roma to a new cult, and he maintained all Egyptian elements of the obelisk of Antinous, even in its setting at Rome. The second element of his religious policy was to incorporate symbols of new and different religions in small and manageable increments into Rome's traditional religious monumental landscape. He did not overwhelm the people with overly modern architecture, but presented just enough innovation to catch the interest and support of the people of Rome.

Third, Hadrian's projects in Athens reveal his desire to create a new cultural center to celebrate and incorporate philhellenic ideals into his re-conception of the Roman Empire. Greece was a cultural center at the time, and Hadrian supported it in the imperial context. He wanted the new empire to have a new cultural center. His vision respected and pleased both the Athenians and other Greeks, as seen in the multiple dedications to him throughout Greece, and helped to shape the intellectual life of the empire. His creation of the Panhellenion repaid his efforts and further enhanced the presence of the Greeks within the empire. Therefore the third element of his religious policy was to incorporate diplomacy and religious policy into a unity.

Finally, Hadrian's villa at Tibur provides us with the fourth element of his religious policy. He himself had to be immersed in other cultures in order for his policy to be successful. Even at his home he surrounded himself with images from his favorite places, of his favored deities, and of reminders of his travels. In his quest to develop a unified empire during his principate Hadrian traveled widely and immersed himself intellectually in its many cultures. When he was not traveling he reinforced that immersion by surrounding himself at Tibur with reminders from all over the empire in a complex and coordinated vision of a unified empire replete with elements from its many diverse parts.

Hadrian's time in Judaea reveals a great exception in his policy. Hadrian would celebrate all that he was interested in and understood. Yet Judaism did not fit into his mold. He was unable to establish a relationship with the Jews through shared religious concerns, and therefore his peaceful rule was tarnished with revolt. In the end, there was no room in Hadrian's world for the monotheism or doctrine of the Jews.

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X. Appendix

Images of Statuary at Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli:

Figure 1: Caryatids (McDonald and Pinto, 1995)



Figure 2: Crocodile in the Serapeum (Sullivan, 2005)



Figure 3 and 4: Hermes Front and Rear View (Sullivan, 2005)

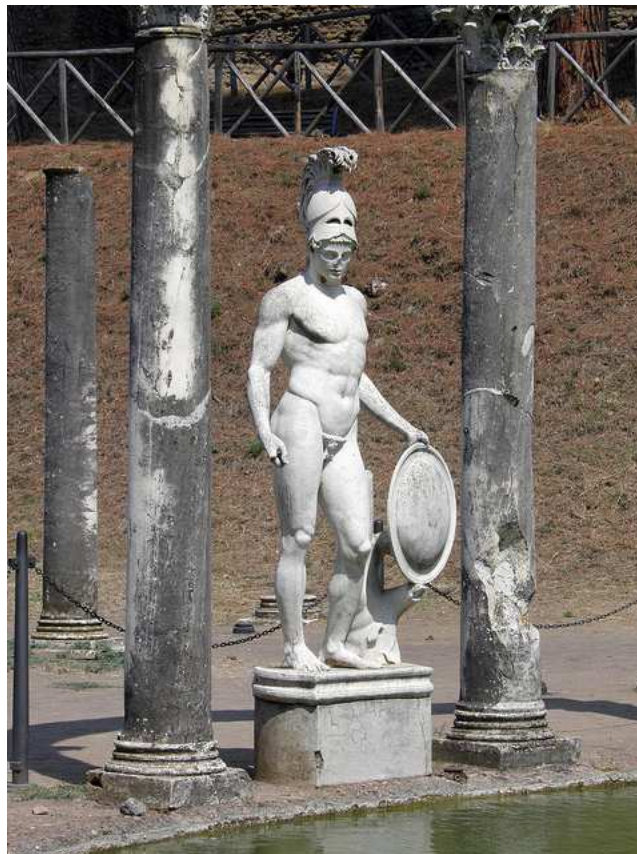


Figure 5: Statue of Antinous as Osiris (McDonald and Pinto, 1995)



Figure 6: Statue of Ptah (McDonald and Pinto, 1995)



Figure 7: Statue of Amazon (Sullivan, 2005)



Figure 8: Caryatid (McDonald and Pinto, 1995)

