

**Preliminary observations on the reception of
Flavius Josephus in Byzantine historical writings:
the accounts of John Zonaras, Niketas Choniates
and Michael Kritovoulos**

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Καὶ ῥεῖ γε ὁ νοῦς αὐτῶ, ῥεῖ δὲ καὶ ἡ γλῶττα μάλ' ἀπροσκόπτως, κατὰ τοὺς ἐν πεδίοις ἰόντας ποταμοὺς ἀλύπῳ καὶ ὁμαλῶ ρεύματι, καὶ μὴ διὰ πετρῶν τινῶν καὶ ῥηγμάτων ὀχληρῶς ἐπιτρέχοντας, καὶ τὸν νοῦν εὖ μάλα καὶ τὴν ἀκοὴν τῶν ἔγγιστ' αὐτοῖς προσέχειν ἀναγκάζοντας ἀεὶ καὶ ῥεῖ γε μὴν ἔτι ποτίμου τινὸς καὶ διειδοῦς τοῦ ὕδατος.

Theodore Metochites, *Περὶ Ἰωσήπου*, in: *Theodore Metochites on ancient authors and philosophy (Semeioseis gnomikai 1-26 and 71)*, ed. K. HULT, Gothenburg 2002, 146. 7-12 (treatise 15, section 1)¹.

The author who is so much admired for his mind and expression, both likened in this passage to a river which runs smoothly, is Flavius Josephus,

* This article is based on a lecture I gave at the Institut für Klassische Philologie, University of Bern. I would like to thank Professor Gerlinde Huber-Rebenich, Professor Katharina Heyden, Professor René Bloch and Dr Anthony Ellis for their invitation to present my work in Bern and for the stimulating discussions that gave me food for thought for this paper. I would like to thank also the anonymous reviewers of the journal for their useful observations.

1. *His thought as well as his tongue flow completely unhindered, like rivers which run through plains, effortlessly and with an even flow, not laboriously through rocks and rifts, forcing the minds and ears of those nearby to pay very close attention to them. And it flows with a drinkable and clear water* (Theodore Metochites, *On Josephus*, trans. K. HULT, in: *Theodore Metochites on ancient authors ...*, ed. HULT, 147). The translation is slightly amended at the beginning of the segment. The phrase *κατὰ τοὺς ἐν πεδίοις ἰόντας ποταμοὺς* is translated by HULT as: *like rivers whose course runs over level ground.*

the famous historian of the first century AD². This striking metaphor is included in the introductory section of a treatise, dedicated to Josephus, written by Theodore Metochites, the polymath and highly erudite scholar of the fourteenth century³. The elements praised by Metochites in this treatise are primarily the stylistic and linguistic virtues of Josephus' writings, such as the clarity and simplicity of his language, as well as his skill in the composition of orations. The patriarch Photios of Constantinople, a similarly highly learned Byzantine intellectual, in his well-known collection of book reviews, the *Bibliotheca*, also praises Josephus for his literary and stylistic qualities⁴. Byzantine literati and writers also showed a keen interest in Josephus' works as historical sources, particularly the *Jewish Antiquities* (henceforth: *Antiquities*) and the *Jewish War* (henceforth: *War*)⁵. Already

2. A comprehensive overview of Josephus' biography and oeuvre can be found in S. MASON, *Josephus and the New Testament*, Peabody 2003; *A Companion to Josephus*, ed. H. HOWELL-CHAPMAN – Z. RODGERS, Chichester 2016. For studies of Josephus and his writings against the contemporary historical context, see T. RAJAK, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, London 2002; *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. J. EDMONDSON – S. MASON – J. RIVES, Oxford 2005; *Josephus and Jewish history in Flavian Rome and Beyond*, ed. J. SIEVERS – G. LEMBI, Leiden 2005 particularly for investigations into the Josephus' literary production in Flavian Rome against his Jewish background. See also the older H. THACKERAY, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*, New York 1929 [repr. 1967]; L. FELDMAN, *Flavius Josephus Revisited: The Man, His Writings, and His Significance*, in: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, v. 2. Principat, 21.2, ed. H. TEMPORINI – W. HAASE, Berlin 1984, 763-862.

3. For general information on the life and works of Theodore Metochites, see the introductory sections in *Theodore Metochites on Philosophic Irony and Greek History: Miscellanea 8 and 93*, ed. and trans. P. AGAPITOS – K. HULT – O. SMITH, Nicosia 1996; *Theodore Metochites' Stoicheiosis Astronomike and the Study of Natural Philosophy and Mathematics in Early Palaiologan Byzantium*, ed. B. BYDÉN, Gothenburg 2003; *Θεόδωρος Μετοχίτης, Οί δύο βασιλικοί λόγοι*, ed. I. POLEMIS, Athens 2007; *Θεόδωρος Μετοχίτης. Βυζάντιος ἢ Περὶ τῆς Βασιλίδος Μεγαλόπλεως*, ed. I. POLEMIS, Thessaloniki 2013. See also M. HINTERBERGER, *Studien zu Theodore Metochites*, *JÖB* 51 (2001), 285-319.

4. Photios, *Bibliotheca*, ed. R. HENRY, v. 1, Paris 1959, cod. 47 and cod. 76 (Josephus). For Photios' treatment of Josephus, see also J. SCHAMP, *Flavius Josephus et Photios*, *JÖB* 32/3 (1982), 185-196.

5. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, ed. B. NIESE, in: *Flavii Iosephi Opera*, vols 1-4, Berlin 1885-1892; Flavius Josephus, *De bello Judaico libri vii*, ed. B. NIESE, in: *Flavii Iosephi Opera*, v. 1, Berlin 1895.

from the time of Eusebius of Caesarea, Christian writers employed Josephus' writings as sources for early Christian history, the contents of which perfectly complemented the books of the Old and the New Testaments.

Considering the great influence the works of Josephus exerted on both the Latin and the Greek literature in the Middle Ages, it is surprising that the reception of the Jewish historian in Byzantine texts has attracted limited attention so far. An exception, of course, is the valuable contribution of Heinz Schreckenberg, who, in a series of studies, examined the presence of Josephan material in late antique and medieval writers, both in the West and the East⁶. A helpful overview of the ways in which several Byzantine writers, particularly chroniclers and historians, employed Josephus' writings is offered in a study by Steven Bowman, published in 1987⁷. More recently, articles by Tomasso Leoni and Nigel Wilson on the textual transmission of the Josephan corpus have also touched upon the interest exhibited by Byzantine intellectuals in Josephus⁸. These studies have now paved the way for more thorough investigations into the impact of Josephus' writings on the Byzantine tradition, both on particular literary genres and particular authors.

The subject is certainly vast. My intention in this article is to make some preliminary remarks about the uses to which Josephan material is put in Byzantine historical writings, taking as case studies the twelfth-

6. H. SCHRECKENBERG, *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter*, Leiden 1972; IDEM, *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche und textkritische Untersuchungen zu Flavius Josephus*, Leiden 1977; IDEM, The Works of Josephus and the Early Christian Church, in: *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, ed. L. FELDMAN – G. HATA, Detroit 1987, 315-324; IDEM, Josephus in Early Christian Literature and Medieval Christian Art, in: H. SCHRECKENBERG – K. SCHUBERT, *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity*, Assen 1992, 1-138; IDEM, Zu Flavius Josephus: Plädoyer für eine neue Editio maior critica des griechischen Textes, *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007), 513-529.

7. S. BOWMAN, Josephus in Byzantium, in: *Josephus, Judaism ...*, ed. FELDMAN – HATA [see n. 6], 362-385.

8. T. LEONI, The Text of the Josephan Corpus. Principal Greek Manuscripts, Ancient Latin Translations, and the Indirect Tradition, in: *Companion* [n. 2], ed. HOWELL-CHAPMAN – RODGERS, 307-321; N. WILSON, Observations on the editio princeps and Two Neglected Manuscripts of the Greek Text, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, v. 23: *Special Issue: The Reception of Josephus in the Early Modern Period*, ed. M. GOODMAN – J. WEINBERG, 2016, 172-179.

century chronicle of John Zonaras, the thirteenth-century history of Niketas Choniates and the fifteenth-century history of Michael Kritovoulos. I selected these three texts, as they are indicative of the different ways in which Josephus' works were employed in Byzantine historical narratives. An issue to which I would like to draw particular attention is the references of these authors to Josephus, and their implications, some of which might not have been straightforward for the audience to understand. I shall try to demonstrate that, by referring or alluding to Josephus' texts, or even by appropriating aspects of Josephus' reputation, Byzantine intellectuals were attempting to assert their credentials as skilled writers.

Let us begin with the twelfth-century chronicle of John Zonaras, the so-called *Epitome of Histories*, a text which was very popular in the Greek-speaking world during the Middle Ages⁹. Zonaras' chronicle starts with the biblical Creation and ends in 1118, the year when the emperor Alexios I Komnenos passed away. The section of the chronicle dedicated to Jewish history contains abundant material from Josephus' *Antiquities* and *War*¹⁰. However, as has been shown by Benedikt Niese, the editor of Josephus' writings, and Theodor Büttner-Wobst, one of the editors of Zonaras' chronicle, Zonaras did not make direct use of the *Antiquities*. He had access to an epitome of the work instead¹¹. This epitome is the one exploited by

9. Ioannis Zonaras, *Annales*, ed. M. PINDER – T. BÜTTNER-WOBST, 3 vols, Bonn 1841-1897. General information on Zonaras and his chronicle can be found in H. HUNGER, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, v. 2, Munich 1978, 416-419; I. GRIGORIADIS, *Linguistic and Literary Studies in the Epitome historion of John Zonaras*, Thessaloniki 1998; A. KARPOZIOLOS, *Βυζαντινοί Ιστορικοί και Χρονογράφοι, τόμος Γ (11ος-12ος αι.)*, Athens 2009, 465-489; W. TREADGOLD, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, Basingstoke 2013, 388-399; T. KAMPIANAKI, Plutarch's Lives in the Byzantine Chronographic Tradition: The Chronicle of John Zonaras, *BMGS* 41 (2017), 15-29; EADEM, *John Zonaras' Epitome of Histories (12th Century): A Compendium of Jewish-Roman History and Its Readers*, DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford 2017; L. NEVILLE, *Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing*, Cambridge 2018, 191-199.

10. These are Books 1 to 6 of Zonaras' chronicle, which are included in Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1. The section of the work dealing with the Jewish past is discussed in KAMPIANAKI, *A Compendium of Jewish-Roman History*, 41-54 and 61-68.

11. Josephus, *Antiquitates*, v. 1, xxiii-xxvii. T. BÜTTNER-WOBST, Die Abhängigkeit des Geschichtschreibers Zonaras von der erhaltenen Quellen, in: A. FLECKEISEN, *Commentationes Fleckeisenianae*, Leipzig 1890, 121-170.

Niese for his edition of the *Antiquities*. It was published separately by the same scholar in 1896 on the basis of nine manuscripts that date from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries¹². In all the codices, the work is transmitted anonymously. It is unfortunate that the oldest manuscript that preserves this epitome, the thirteenth-century Vatopedianus 386, was unknown to the editor¹³. A new critical edition of this text should definitely take into account the Vatopedi manuscript. Niese tentatively dated the work to the tenth or the eleventh centuries, considering that it was employed as a source by Zonaras. In fact, however, this Byzantine epitome (henceforth: *Be*) could well be dated to earlier than the tenth century, as there is no secure internal, textual evidence to assist us in determining the exact period when the *Be* was written.

There are explicit differences between the *Be* and Zonaras' chronicle. The *Be* is precisely that: an epitome, an abridgement of the *Antiquities*. The anonymous author provides an accurate summary of Josephus' work, copying quite faithfully both the content and the language of his source. He uses the first-person singular and first-person plural in cases where Josephus does too¹⁴, and he also repeats almost word for word the preface and the epilogue of the *Antiquities*. He does not add anything of his own. Neither does he embed within his narrative material from external sources. The writer, moreover, accurately follows Josephus' division of his material into 20 books.

In his chronicle, Zonaras does not simply reproduce the text of the *Be*. His purpose is not to offer another summary of Josephus' work; instead, he tries to employ the material of the *Be* to form the basic compositional structure of his presentation of the Jewish past. In cases where the chronicler

12. *Flavii Josephi Antiquitatum Iudaicarum epitome*, ed. B. NIESE, Berlin 1896. Some information on this epitome can be found in SCHRECKENBERG, *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 128-130; IDEM, *Zu Flavius Josephus*, 518-519; D. LEVENSON – T. R. MARTIN, *Akairos or Eukairos? The Nickname of the Seleucid King Demetrius III in the Transmission of the Texts of Josephus' War and Antiquities*, *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 40 (2009), 307-341.

13. E. LAMBERZ, *Zwei Flavius-Josephus-Handschriften des Athosklosters Vatopedi*, *Rheinisches Museum* 139 (1996), 295-307.

14. See, for example, *Antiquitatum Iudaicarum epitome*, 1.10-11; 1.14; 139.34; 368.2; 368.12-15. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates*, v. 1: 5.4-5 (proem); 5.10 (proem); v. 2: 376.5 (Book 10, section 210); v. 4: 318.17 (Book 20, section 254); 319.7-12 (Book 20, sections 258-259) respectively.

has access to sources that furnish a new store of material, he systematically mixes this material with the information from the *Be*. Even if the external sources available to Zonaras are not directly connected to the main narrative line, he is determined to use it for his composition. For example, before recounting Alexander the Great's visit to Jerusalem, an episode that is included in Book 11 of the *Antiquities* (and Book 11 of the *Be*), Zonaras digresses from his narrative to provide a short summary of Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*¹⁵. Also, the biblical books of Judith and Tobit, which are not among those of the Jewish Torah, are left out by Josephus in the *Antiquities* and, consequently, from the *Be* too. Zonaras, however, who follows the Septuagint and has these books at his disposal, considers the stories of Judith and Tobit edifying and incorporates them into his chronicle¹⁶. The author, moreover, does not repeat the division into 20 books that we find in the *Antiquities* and the *Be*, preferring to include his entire narrative of Jewish history in the first one of the two extensive volumes of his chronicle¹⁷. As these remarks indicate, Zonaras treats the Josephan material he draws from the *Be* with great freedom, much greater than the unknown writer of the *Be*.

Looking carefully at the type of information that is commonly omitted from the *Be*, one can notice that its author is keen on heavily abbreviating or leaving out of his text many of the extensive speeches that appear in the *Antiquities* and that are attributed by Josephus to biblical figures. An indicative example is the section of the *Be* that is dedicated to the story of Joseph, on which Josephus seems to place special emphasis in his work¹⁸. The oration of Judah, who pleads with Joseph to show mercy towards their brother, Benjamin, and release him for the sake of Jacob, their father, is not picked up at all by the epitomator¹⁹. Likewise, Joseph's emotional speech

15. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 329.9-353.10. In general for Zonaras and Plutarch, see M. MANFREDINI, Due codici di excerpta plutarchei e l'*Epitome* di Zonara, *Prometheus* 18 (1992), 123-215; IDEM, Due codici di excerpta plutarchei e l'*Epitome* di Zonara (II parte), *Prometheus* 19 (1993), 1-25; KAMPIANAKI, *Plutarch's Lives*, 20-21.

16. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 247.1-260.15.

17. For the division of Zonaras' chronicle into volumes, see KAMPIANAKI, *A Compendium of Jewish-Roman History*, 38-40.

18. S.-J. PEARCE, Pity and Emotion in Josephus' Reading of Joseph, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133 (2014), 858-862.

19. The speech is included in Josephus, *Antiquitates*, v. 1, 111-115 (Book 2, sections

to his brothers, in which he reveals his identity, is summarized in only two lines of text in Niese's edition of the *Be*²⁰. Of course, omitting or abridging lengthy speeches was an easy way for the author of the *Be* to compress the narrative in his source. What is important to note is that this practice was certainly convenient for Zonaras. It is telling that, in the preface of his chronicle, Zonaras himself expresses his disapproval of historians who include in their works extensive orations (attributed, for example, to demagogues, generals and emperors)²¹. From this perspective, for Zonaras the *Be* was a particularly useful intermediary source, not only because it was a readily available abridged version of the *Antiquities*, but also because it largely eliminated a feature of Josephus' text – the presence of speeches – that did not accord with Zonaras' tastes.

Interestingly, the *Be* exhibited another feature that must have been much to Zonaras' liking. Following Josephus, the epitomator often provides an explanation of Hebrew names and terms. He mentions, for example, that the name *Melchizedek* (Μελχισεδέκ) means *just king* (βασιλεὺς δίκαιος) in Hebrew²², and that the term *babel* (βαβέλ) means *confusion* (σύγχυσις)²³. Drawing on the *Be*, Zonaras repeats these pieces of information in his own work²⁴. The chronicler is known to have had a keen interest in the origin and meaning of terms²⁵. Giving an account of the history of Rome, he pays attention to Latin terms that can be found in his sources, Dio and Plutarch, and frequently explains to his readers their meaning in Greek²⁶. In one of his other works, too – his commentary on canon law – Zonaras makes use of

140-158). It is absent from the corresponding section of the *Be: Antiquitatum Iudaicarum epitome*, 20.

20. See *Antiquitatum Iudaicarum epitome*, 20. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates*, v. 1, 115-116 (Book 2, sections 161-166).

21. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 5.20-21, 6.1-6.

22. See *Antiquitatum Iudaicarum epitome*, 6. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates*, v. 1, 44 (Book 1, section 181).

23. See *Antiquitatum Iudaicarum epitome*, 10. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates*, v. 1, 26 (Book 1, section 117).

24. See Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 34.20-22 (for *Melchizedek*) and 30.10 (for *babel*).

25. GRIGORIADIS *Studies* [n. 9], 197-198.

26. R. MACRIDES, Perception of the Past in the Twelfth-century Canonists, in: *Byzantium in the Twelfth-Century: Canon Law, State, and Society*, ed. N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, Athens 1991, 589-599, at 592 (footnote 15).

Latin terms, providing their equivalent in Greek²⁷. It would appear therefore that one of the reasons why Josephus' material appealed to Zonaras is because it satisfied his lexicographical interests.

This point brings our discussion to the manner in which Zonaras employs his Josephan material in general, using both the *Be* and the *War*. One of the key features of Zonaras' account of the Jewish past is the great emphasis he places on the connection of his text to Josephus. The chronicler makes repeated references to the *Antiquities* and the *War*, making clear that much of his information derives ultimately from these works. A search in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* database shows that Josephus is the most frequently cited author in Zonaras' chronicle, with Zonaras referring to the writer by name on fifty-three occasions. It is characteristic that, in cases where the chronicler wishes to enhance or confirm the veracity of what he says, he employs lengthy word-for-word quotations from the *Be*. This can be seen, for instance, in Zonaras' conclusion of the biblical story of Noah. The writer remarks that Noah died at the age of 950. To address the doubts his readers might have about Noah's longevity, he quotes *verbatim* an extensive passage from his source, which explains why Noah enjoyed such a long life²⁸. Also, recording the birth of Christ, he copies word for word the short section found in the eighteenth book of the *Antiquities* dedicated to the life of Jesus, the much-debated *Testimonium Flavianum*²⁹.

A further consideration is that Zonaras occasionally compares short pieces of information collected from the Old Testament with bits of text from Josephus. He closely examines his sources and indicates slight differences between the descriptions of a certain place or a certain event. For example, he makes a detailed comparison between the description of the Holy Temple

27. GRIGORIADIS, *Studies*, 185-190.

28. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 28.18-19. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates*, v. 1, 24 (Book 1, chapter 105).

29. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 2, 431.12-432.21. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates*, v. 4, 151-152 (Book 18, sections 63-64). The authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum* is widely contested: see K. OLSON, A Eusebian Reading of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, in: *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations*, ed. A. JOHNSON – J. SCHOTT, Washington 2013, 97-114; L. FELDMAN, On the Authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum* attributed to Josephus, in *New Perspectives on Jewish Christian Relations*, ed. E. CARLEBACH – J. SCHECHTER, Leiden 2012, 14-30.

of Solomon in the *Be* and its description in the Kings³⁰. He records the points on which the two accounts agree or disagree, and provides accurate references to the sections of the *Antiquities* where this material is included. He also pays considerable attention to the different terms or the different names given by the Bible and by Josephus for the same thing³¹.

The fact that Zonaras sought in these ways to stress the strong link of his chronicle to Josephus indicates the high esteem in which he held the works of the Jewish writer, considering them to be almost as reliable as the Bible. For the chronicler, the use of material derived from the *Antiquities* and the *War* clearly added importance, authority and appeal to his account. His numerous explicit references to the *Antiquities* and the *War* reveal not only his own appreciation of Josephus as a historian, but also that of his contemporary audience. The chronicler's intention was not simply to acknowledge the principal sources from which much of his Jewish material was taken, but, more importantly, to establish in the eyes of his readers the strong dependence of his text on Josephus' works.

Zonaras makes direct use of Josephus' *War*, a work that is dedicated largely to military history and is replete with information on strategies and military operations. Such subjects were not particularly appealing to the chronicler, who, in his preface, is critical of historians that discuss at length battles, army encampments and the geography of battlefields³². Understandably, therefore, he greatly condenses this kind of material from the *War*. It is characteristic, for instance, that the capture of Jotapata by Vespasian, an event to which Josephus pays great attention, is barely mentioned by the chronicler, who notes only that the emperor besieged the city for forty days and that Josephus, the head of the defenders, was taken prisoner³³. One point that the author makes clear, despite heavily abridging the Josephan text, is that the internal conflict among the Jewish sects of the time was the critical factor in the collapse of the war against the Romans and the destruction of the Holy City³⁴. This reflects Zonaras' understanding

30. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 146.16-147.5.

31. See, for instance, Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 21.19-20, 59.18-21, 69.18-19.

32. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 4.7-19.

33. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 524.9-13.

34. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 524.16-19, 525.12-21, 527.1-4.

of civil war as one of the core themes of Josephus' *War*. Noteworthy is also the fact that the chronicler describes in considerable detail the disastrous effects of famine and plague on the people of Jerusalem during the siege of the city³⁵. In fact, he takes from Josephus some of the harshest images, if not the harshest, that we can find throughout his chronicle, such as the image of mothers who *grabbed their infants' food out of their mouths* (ἀφήραζον ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ στόματος τὰς τροφὰς [...] βρεφῶν) or the image of children and young men who *were wandering around market places like shadows and collapsing* (ὡς εἶδωλα κατὰ τὰς ἀγορὰς περιήεσαν, καὶ κατέπιπτον)³⁶. It is evident that, on certain occasions, the chronicler acknowledged and appreciated some of Josephus' literary qualities: the vividness and effectiveness of his narrative.

Turning away now from Zonaras, I would like to devote the second half of this paper to the histories of Niketas Choniates and Michael Kritovoulos, who both draw on Josephus' *War* for their compositions. In his historical account, Choniates, who was born in c. 1155 and died in 1217, covers the events from 1118 to 1207, a very turbulent period which saw numerous emperors succeed each other upon the Byzantine throne³⁷. He recounts, of course, one of the most devastating events in the history of Byzantium, the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. In Choniates' *History*, we can find a direct reference to Josephus' *War* when the author recalls a coup, which took place in Constantinople in 1181, and, following that, the desecration of Hagia Sophia³⁸. As Choniates tells us, Maria Komnene, daughter of the late emperor Manuel I Komnenos, and her husband, Renier of Montferrat, revolted against Maria of Antioch, who

35. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 531.10-532.11, 534.5-21 respectively.

36. Zonaras, *Annales*, v. 1, 531.19-20, 534.8-9 respectively.

37. An investigation of Choniates' historical work is offered by A. SIMPSON in her monograph *Niketas Choniates: A Historiographical Study*, Oxford 2013. See also A. SIMPSON, *Before and After 1204: The Versions of Niketas Choniates' Historia*, *DOP* 60 (2006), 189-221; *Niketas Choniates: A Historian and a Writer*, ed. A. SIMPSON – S. EFTHYMIADIS, Geneva 2009; A. ΚΑΡΠΟΖΙΛΟΣ, *Βυζαντινοί Ιστορικοί και Χρονογράφοι*, v. 3 [as in n. 9], 699-728; A. SIMPSON, *From the Workshop of Niketas Choniates: The Authority of Tradition and Literary Mimesis*, in: *Authority in Byzantium*, ed. P. ARMSTRONG, London 2013, 259-268; NEVILLE, *Guide* [n. 9], 219-225.

38. Niketas Choniates, *Historia, pars prior*, ed. J. VAN DIETEN, Berlin 1975, 241.9-26.

ruled as queen regent for her young son, the emperor Alexios II. Defeated by the imperial troops, the rebels and their guards sought refuge in the Great Church of Constantinople. The imperial forces clashed with the army under the rebels' command in the outer narthex of Hagia Sophia: many soldiers were injured and one was killed. The two parties eventually reconciled and put an end to the hostilities. Choniates accuses the rebels of recklessly turning against the government. He also blames the imperial authorities for showing no compassion for Maria Komnene's supplications and for staining the house of God with blood, thus committing a serious transgression. Drawing on the *War*, Choniates refers to a historical exemplar, a leading figure in the Roman-Jewish war, Titus, the commander of the Roman forces during the siege of Jerusalem, with whom he compares the political authorities of his own time³⁹. The author juxtaposes the actions taken by the imperial government to those of Titus. He tells his readers that Titus persistently tried to save the Second Temple from destruction, as causing harm to such a magnificent work would be an *act hateful to the gods* (τι θεομισῶς)⁴⁰. To emphasise the sharp contrast between Titus and the imperial government of his time, he points out that the general acted thus, even though he was a pagan and did not know the God whose temple he was protecting. Contemporary Byzantine leaders, by contrast, even though they had a fear of God, showed no respect for the *most beautiful and holy temple* (τῷ καλλίστῳ [...] καὶ θείῳ ναῷ) of Hagia Sophia⁴¹.

In this passage, Choniates refers to the well-known episode narrated by Josephus in which Titus opposes the burning of the Temple saying that, even if the Jews took arms against the Romans, the Romans should not seek to avenge the Jews' material objects, let alone to destroy a monumental work that would be an ornament to the Roman state⁴². This episode exemplifies one of the main virtues that characterizes Titus, as portrayed by Josephus: his *ἐπιείκεια*, his clemency⁴³. This concept calls to mind, of course, the

39. SIMPSON, Workshop [n. 37], 263.

40. *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. H. MAGOULIAS, Detroit 1984, 136.

41. *Ibidem*.

42. Josephus, *War*, 543-544 (Book 6, sections 236-242).

43. There has been much discussion about Josephus' positive portrayal of Titus in the *War* and the writer's motivation behind it. For Josephus' presentation of Titus as a clement

Roman *clementia*, the *restraint of the mind when it is able to take revenge*, as *clementia* is defined by Seneca⁴⁴. Titus did not seek to enact revenge against the Jews by demolishing such a grand building, the Temple of Jerusalem, a meeting place which was of special importance to them. It is precisely a model of clemency that Choniates finds in Josephus' favourable portrayal of the Roman general; the implication is that, had the imperial government yielded to some extent to Maria Komnene's supplications, the pollution and violation of the Great Church of Constantinople would have been avoided.

In addition to employing the Roman general as a historical *exemplum* to criticize contemporary Byzantine leaders, Choniates also partly uses the entire episode where Titus argues against the destruction of the Temple as a literary prototype for the narration of Maria Komnene and Renier of Montferrat' coup. In his work, Josephus imaginatively recreates the scene of a war council in which Titus and his generals gather to decide what should be done with the Temple of Jerusalem. Recording the revolt of 1181, Choniates composes a scene of an assembly, which, much like the council of Titus, addresses the hostilities that may take place in a holy house, in this case the Hagia Sophia⁴⁵. The scene features Renier of Montferrat gathering his guards and troops outside the church and making a speech to them. During the council in Josephus' *War*, a number of Roman commanders urge Titus to destroy the Temple, should the Jews choose to take up arms and fight against them. In this case, they argue, it would be the Jews themselves who would

leader, see Z. YAVETZ, Reflections on Titus and Josephus, *GRBS* 16 (1975), 411-432, at 423-426. According to Mason, though, Josephus' praise of Titus' clemency might have come across to the contemporary Roman audience as ironic: see S. MASON, Figured Speech and Irony in T. Flavius Josephus, in: *Flavian Rome*, ed. EDMONDSON – MASON – RIVES [n. 2], 243-288. See also T. D. BARNES, The Sack of the Temple in Josephus and Tacitus, in: *Flavian Rome*, ed. EDMONDSON – MASON – RIVES, 129-144, in which it is argued that Josephus' account of the destruction of the Second Temple does not agree with the 'official' Flavian propaganda; J. RIVES, Flavian Religious Policy and the Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, in: *Flavian Rome*, ed. EDMONDSON – MASON – RIVES, 145-166, in which Josephus' presentation of Titus and the Second Temple is regarded as an attempt of the author to understand the contradictory policy of the Flavian emperors towards the Jewish tradition. A study of the different aspects of Titus' image, as constructed by Josephus, see J. S. McLAREN, Josephus on Titus: The Vanquished Writing about the Victor, in: *Josephus and Jewish history* [n. 2], 279-295.

44. Seneca, *De Clementia*, ed. and trans. S. BRAUND, Oxford 2009, 2.3.1.

45. Choniates, *Historia*, 238-239.

have provoked the burning of the Temple. In Choniates' *History*, Renier's speech to his followers includes similar statements, although the parallels between the corresponding passages are not linguistically identical. Renier urges his soldiers to oppose the imperial troops in Hagia Sophia, as it is the imperial forces who wish to attack and kill them. Renier argues that it is not an unholy act for someone to defend himself, implying that it will be the imperial government who will be to blame for the sacrilege that will take place in Hagia Sophia. It would appear that the Byzantine historian took some inspiration from the dramatized episode of the war council he found in the *War* and attempted to create himself a vivid scene that would enhance the dramatic effect of his narrative. Choniates appeals here to the most learned and rhetorically accomplished Byzantine readers, inviting them to acknowledge and appreciate the adaptation of elements of Josephus' account in his own.

The same is true for another passage in which Choniates draws on the *War*, the account of the siege of Didymoteichon in Thrace by the Bulgarian ruler Kalojan, in 1206⁴⁶. As Choniates recounts, the inhabitants of the city resisted the Bulgars, forcing Kalojan to leave with *his ambition thoroughly quenched by failure*⁴⁷. Alexander Kazhdan has noted that, when relating the siege of Didymoteichon, the author imitates the language used by Josephus for his narrative of the siege of Jotapata by Vespasian⁴⁸. Individual terms and phrases in the *War* that relate to the military manoeuvres of the Romans appear in Choniates in connection with the attack of the Bulgars. Vocabulary used to describe the opposition of the Jews in Jotapata is employed to show the valor of the defenders of Didymoteichon. The use of Josephan language in this case has a rhetorical function; Kalojan's forces are implicitly presented as being as great as those of Vespasian and the resistance of the locals as great and as brave as that of the inhabitants of Jotapata. Challenging his audience to recognize these literary allusions, Choniates seeks to emphasize in the eyes of his readers the magnitude of the siege of Didymoteichon.

46. Choniates, *Historia*, 632ff.

47. The quotation is found in: Choniates, *Historia*, 633, 53; *Annals*, trans. MAGOULIAS, 347.

48. Choniates starts using the *War* from: Josephus', *War*, 295ff. (Book 3, section 152ff.). See A. KAZHDAN, Looking Back to Antiquity: Three Notes, *GRBS* 24/4 (1983), 375-377; SIMPSON, Workshop, 263.

The third historical account I will discuss is that by the late Byzantine author, Michael Kritovoulos, a man from a notable family from the island of Imbros, who composed a history of Sultan Mehmed II, the conqueror of Constantinople⁴⁹. The five books of Kritovoulos' work, recount the events from 1451 to 1467, covering the demise of Constantinople in 1453, the conquest of other regions of Byzantium and the Sultan's attempts to rebuild the former Byzantine capital. Kritovoulos belonged to those local Greek aristocrats, who, after the fall of Constantinople, defected to the Ottomans. He was appointed by Mehmed governor of Imbros and retained his office until 1466, when the island was captured by the Venetians. He dedicated his history to the Sultan, commemorating his deeds and projecting a favourable image of the Ottoman ruler.

In the prologue of his work, Kritovoulos mentions Josephus by name, drawing a parallel between Josephus' *War* and his own historical account⁵⁰. The relevant extract is as follows: *εἰ δέ τινες ἐν καιροῖς ἰδίοις τῶν πραγμάτων ἐπιστατοῦντες μοχθηρὰ φύσεως κακοὶ γεγόνασι περὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν οὐκ εἰς δέον ἐχρήσαντο, οὐκ ἔστι τοῦτο τοῦ γένους ἀμάρτημα, ἀλλὰ τῶν κακῶς τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔδει χρησαμένων τοῖς πράγμασιν. οὐς καὶ δίκαιον μόνους εὐθύνειν, ἀλλὰ μὴ τοῦ γένους κατηγορεῖν, ὥσπερ δὴ καὶ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς νῦν ἐπαινεῖν καὶ τὰ τούτων ἔργα ἐκ παντὸς τρόπου θαυμάζειν τε καὶ κοσμεῖν καὶ μὴ διὰ τὴν ἐνίων ῥαθυμίαν τε καὶ κακίαν ἀποστερεῖν ἐθέλειν τούτους τῶν ἐπαίων καὶ τῶν ἄθλων τῆς ἀρετῆς. ἀλλ' οὐ δίκαιον. τοῦτο τοίνυν καὶ Ἰώσηπος ὁ Ἑβραῖος εἰδὼς φιλαλήθης ὢν καὶ τοῖς πράγμασι καλῶς ἐφιστῶν ἐπαινεῖ μὲν ἐν τῷ τῆς ἀλώσεως βιβλίῳ τὴν Ῥωμαίων τύχην καὶ ἀρετὴν καὶ τῷ λόγῳ φιλαλήθως ἐπαίρει, καθάπτεται δὲ τῶν ἐν τῷ γένει φανέντων κακῶν τοὺς τε μηδὲν ἠδικηκότας τῶν ὄνειδῶν ἀπαλλάττει· ὃ δὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς*

49. For some general information on Kritovoulos and his work, see D. R. REINSCH, Kritoboulos of Imbros: Learned Historian, Ottoman Raya and Byzantine Patriot, *ZRVI* 40 (2003), 297-311; M. ANGOLD, *The Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans*, Harlow 2012, 66-68; A. ΚΑΡΡΟΖΙΛΟΣ, *Βυζαντινοὶ Ἱστορικοὶ καὶ Χρονογράφοι. Τόμος Δ' (13ος-15ος αι.)*, Athens 2015, 315-347; NEVILLE, *Guide* [n. 9], 308-311.

50. For an analysis of Kritovoulos' preface, see H. SHAPIRO, Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate in Early Modern Greek, *Journal of Turkish Studies* 42 (2014), 285-316 (particularly at 290-293); M. DE BAKKER, Explaining the End of an Empire: The Use of Ancient Greek Religious Views in Late Byzantine Historiography, *Histos Supplement* 4 (2015), 127-171.

ἐξ ἅπαντος τρόπου ποιήσομεν μηδὲν ὑποστειλάμενοι τὸ παράπαν, ἀλλ' ἐν πᾶσι τό τε προσήκον καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν σώζοντες⁵¹.

It is no surprise that Kritovoulos finds similarities between Josephus' *War* and his own narrative of the expansion of the Ottoman Empire⁵². Indeed, there are striking similarities in the circumstances in which the two authors produced their historical writings. Both Josephus and Kritovoulos related the loss of a city landmark for their nation, entered the service of the conquerors and created their works supported by the patronage of the new rulers.

For Kritovoulos, the author of the *War* was a fine example of a historian who praised the remarkable achievements of the conquerors of his homeland, trying at the same time to display some of the virtues of his own people. As has been argued by Steve Mason, the Jewish writer 'distinguishes cleanly between the bad political choices made by some of his people and the national-ethnic character'⁵³. Josephus hints at one such bad political choice in the prologue of his *War*, when he says that, during the siege of Jerusalem, *those responsible* (οἱ αἴτιοι) for the current misfortunes of the Jews were given the opportunity by Titus to change their mind⁵⁴. Apparently, they did

51. Michael Kritovoulos, *Historia*, ed. D. R. REINSCH, Berlin 1983, 14.31-15.14. Cf. *History of Mehmed the Conqueror* by Kritovoulos, trans. C.T. RIGGS, Princeton 1954; repr. Westport 1970: *And if certain individuals, who in their own times had the responsibility for affairs, have by the depravity of their character misdirected the affairs of empire and have not made proper use of circumstances, this is not a fault of the nation, but of those who have badly and wrongfully misused their opportunities. They alone should justly be held responsible, and the nation should not be condemned. In the same way the good should now be praised and their good deeds admired in every way and honored. We should not desire to deprive them of praise and of the rewards of virtue because of the indolence and wickedness of others, for this would not be just. This is what Josephus, the Hebrew, a truthful man well acquainted with the facts, recognizes in his book about the capture [of Jerusalem]. He praises the skill and valor of the Romans, and exalts them very truthfully in his discourse. He also reproaches the evils which appeared within his own nation, but he frees from blame those who had done no wrong. This is what I also shall try by all means to do, not shrinking in the least but preserving in every respect what is fitting and true.*

52. For some observations on the use of Josephus by Kritovoulos, see Reinsch's introduction in Kritovoulos, *Historia* [n. 51], 56*-58*.

53. S. MASON, *Josephus' Judean War*, in: *Companion*, ed. HOWELL-CHAPMAN – RODGERS [n. 2], 13-34, at 26.

54. Josephus, *War*, 5, 9-11.

not do so. One can detect the subtle influence of Josephus' work on the way Kritovoulos tries to strike a balance in his account, extolling the martial skills of Mehmed and several Ottoman generals, while simultaneously portraying the Byzantines as brave and courageous. Following a line of thinking similar to that of Josephus, Kritovoulos notes in the excerpt quoted above that, if the rulers of a nation are not capable of managing the affairs of the state and do not handle political power as they ought, one should not blame the entire nation for the mismanagement of public affairs, but only the leaders who are at fault. This remark may be a veiled critique of the emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos and his counsellors, who, during the siege of Constantinople, turned down Mehmed's proposal to surrender the city and live in peace afterwards, retaining their belongings⁵⁵.

There is a particularly interesting point in the aforementioned extract of Kritovoulos' preface: the fact that Josephus praises the achievements of the Romans, the conquerors of the Jews, and condemns the mistakes of his own people is not explained in terms of his defection to the Roman side. Instead, it is ascribed to the fact that the Jewish historian was seeking to write the truth in his works, an idea that is stressed twice in this short excerpt: first with the use of the epithet *φιλαλήθης* (*truth-loving*) and secondly with the adverb *ἀληθῶς* (*truthfully*).

Before delving into Kritovoulos' text, it is necessary to say a few words about the characterization truth-loving that is very commonly attributed to Josephus in Christian sources, both Greek and Latin, as Schreckenberg indicated a long time ago in his book on the *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*⁵⁶. Christian writers would often highlight Josephus' commitment to truth for apologetic reasons: to account for and justify their employment of his works, despite the fact that he was a Jew. Several examples offer us an insight into the textual contexts in which the characterization of Josephus as a truth-loving author usually appears. We read in the ninth-century chronicle of George the Monk, for instance, that truth-loving Josephus recalls in his text

55. Kritovoulos, *Historia*, 41, 27-37. According to ANGOLD, *The Fall* [n. 49], 66, Kritovoulos favoured Demetrios Palaiologos, the brother of Constantine IX and despot of Mistras. After the fall of Constantinople, Kritovoulos attempted to promote the appointment of the despot Demetrios as governor of Imbros and Lemnos. His attempts, however, were not successful.

56. SCHRECKENBERG, *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition* [n. 6], 96-97.

both John the Baptist and Christ⁵⁷. The well-known ecclesiastical historian of the fourteenth century Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos reports that Christ was born in Bethlehem during a period when a census was being carried out, at a time when Roman Quirinius was governor of Syria. He notes that the census of Quirinius is also recorded by the truth-loving Josephus in his *Antiquities*⁵⁸. In his work on astronomy, another fourteenth-century scholar, Theodore Meliteniotes, relies on the testimony of Josephus, who is a *truth-loving man* (φιλαλήθης ἀνὴρ), to convince to his readers that the descendants of Seth, a son of Adam, indeed invented the *most noble science* (ὑπέροσμενον ὄντως μάθημα) of astronomy⁵⁹.

The belief that Josephus' works were truthful often emerges from other, equally explicit, statements. An indicative example is provided by one of the epistles of the fifth-century theologian, Isidore of Pelusium. Turning against the Jews, who *surpassed every wickedness* (πᾶσαν ὑπερβαλλόμενοι κακίαν) and *believed to neither the prophets, nor God himself* (οὐ μόνον τοῖς προφήταις οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ αὐτῷ τῷ Θεῷ), Isidore singles out Josephus because he offered a truthful paraphrasing of the Old Testament⁶⁰. A contemporary of Isidore's, Theodoret of Cyrus, in his exegesis of the Book of Daniel, underlines that Jews regarded Daniel as a prophet, as is attested by Josephus, who *could not bring himself to conceal the truth* (τὴν δὲ ἀλήθειαν κρύπτειν οὐκ ἀνεχόμενος), despite not being a Christian⁶¹. According to the twelfth-century chronicler, Michael Glykas, Jeremiah's prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem were fulfilled with the conquest of the city by the Romans, as is recounted by Josephus in the *War*⁶². Glykas tellingly adds that it was the truth itself that made a Jew, rather than a foreigner, record the misfortunes of his own people.

57. George the Monk, *Chronicon*, ed. C. DE BOOR, v. 1, Leipzig 1904, 324, 18-20.

58. Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in: *PG* 145, col. 661 (Book 1, chapter 10).

59. Theodore Meliteniotes, *Tribiblos Astronomique, Livre I*, ed. R. LEURQUIN, Amsterdam 1990, v. 1, 96.20-24 (chapter 1).

60. Isidore of Pelusium, *Lettres (1214-1413)*, ed. P. ÉVIEUX, v. 1, Paris 1997, epistle 1259, lines 1-12.

61. Theodoret of Cyrus, *Interpretatio in Daniele*, in: *PG* 81, col. 1544, 21-25 [The translation is taken from *Theodoret: Commentary on Daniel*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by R. HILL, Atlanta 2006, 327].

62. Michael Glykas, *Annales*, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1836, 443, 10-12.

This range of examples illustrates that phrases emphasizing the truthfulness of Josephus' writings are almost always connected with a prominent figure or a notable event in the history of Christianity. Even in a text of a 'scientific' character, such as the astronomical work of Theodore Meliteniotes, pointing to the truthfulness of the *Antiquities* serves doctrinal purposes: to make the audience believe that the origins of astronomical knowledge indeed go back to biblical figures, which implies that the study of the sky and the stars is not at odds with Christian teachings. Thus, one can conclude that, in the Byzantine literary tradition, statements about the truth hidden in Josephus' works relate to the Christian truth, a link which would have been understood by both writers and their audiences.

To return to Kritovoulos' narrative: the historian was apparently familiar with the reputation of Josephus as a truth-loving author. However, this virtue of Josephus does not appear here in connection with Christian history. Kritovoulos uses this established feature of the Josephan tradition in a distinctively unique way, stripping it of its religious connotations. As the Byzantine historian states, Josephus knew very well that it was unfair to fail to acknowledge the virtues of remarkable men and to exalt their achievements. It was unfair, in other words, to hide the truth. Josephus' *φιλαλήθειαν*, his commitment to truth, relates primarily to this: namely his desire to restore and preserve the historical truth in his writings. It was because of Josephus' aim of establishing the historical truth that he spoke highly of the Romans and exposed the faults of his own nation. The reason why Kritovoulos interprets Josephus' truthfulness in this way is that he seeks to downplay the impact of Josephus' personal ties with Vespasian and Titus, his benefactors, on his attitude towards the Romans in his history.

The Byzantine historian twists the common meaning of Josephus' characterization as a truth-loving author and links it to the historical truth in order to serve his own purposes. In a sense, he tries to project the virtue of Josephus' truthfulness onto himself. Indeed, Kritovoulos highlights in his prologue that, in all things, he *shall use the utmost care to tell the truth* (*τάληθοῦς πλείστον λόγον ποιούμενος*). At the end of his preface quoted earlier, he explains that, just like the writer of the *War*, he is going to record *what is fitting and true*. By likening himself to Josephus, he conveys the message that his admiration of the military skills and accomplishments of his own benefactor, Mehmed, should not be ascribed to his career in

the service of the Sultan, but to his commitment to truth and his wish to transmit the historical truth in his work.

Conclusions

It is now time to reach some conclusions. The accounts of Zonaras, Choniates and Kritovoulos give us an idea of the ways in which Josephus' writings were employed in Byzantine historical works: as sources of information and literary prototypes. Zonaras evidently regarded the *Antiquities* and the *War* as accurate and prestigious texts, the use of which would have a positive impact on his readers' perception and evaluation of his own chronicle. Hence, he frequently cites Josephus by name, drawing attention to the reliance of his narrative on the Jewish author. The use of Josephus by Choniates and Kritovoulos is more understated. In the case of Choniates, it is clear that the figure of Titus, as depicted in the *War*, provides him with a standard against which to assess contemporary leaders. However, only very learned members of Choniates' audience would be able to identify the sophisticated literary influences of Josephus' account in his own one. Kritovoulos makes a direct reference to "truth-loving" Josephus. Nevertheless, he plays with this commonplace in the Josephan tradition and implicitly adjusts its undertones to indicate that Josephus' propensity to speak the truth is connected to his desire to record the historical truth. He thus points to the historical truth that underlies Josephus' praise of the Roman conquerors and by extension the truth behind Kritovoulos' own favorable portrayal of Mehmed, his benefactor.

The repeated, explicit references by Zonaras to Josephus and the subtle adaptation of elements from the Josephan corpus and the Josephan tradition by Choniates and Kritovoulos exemplify the two ways in which Byzantine literati employed the works of a reputed author, such as Josephus, in their compositions. What is important is that both acted as means through which educated Byzantines sought to emphasize their superior scholarly knowledge and to assert their authority as accomplished authors. In a culture in which learned men recited their compositions and aimed to display their erudition to fellow intellectuals, the use of elements from the Josephan tradition might well earn them quite a few points in the battle of wits within their circle of cultivated acquaintances.

ΠΡΟΚΑΤΑΡΚΤΙΚΕΣ ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΣΕΙΣ ΣΤΟ ΘΕΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΠΡΟΣΛΗΨΗΣ
ΤΟΥ ΦΛ. ΙΩΣΗΠΟΥ ΣΤΑ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΑ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΑ ΚΕΙΜΕΝΑ:
Οι περιπτώσεις του Ιωάννη Ζωναρά, του Νικήτα Χωνιάτη και
του Μιχαήλ Κριτόβουλου

Το παρόν άρθρο επικεντρώνεται στην χρήση στοιχείων από τα έργα *Ιουδαϊκή Αρχαιολογία* και *Ιουδαϊκός Πόλεμος* του Φλαβίου Ιωσήπου από τους Βυζαντινούς ιστοριογράφους. Λαμβάνοντας ως παραδείγματα τον Ιωάννη Ζωναρά, τον Νικήτα Χωνιάτη και τον Μιχαήλ Κριτόβουλο, επισημαίνεται πώς οι Βυζαντινοί ιστοριογράφοι χρησιμοποιούσαν τον Ιώσηπο ως πηγή πληροφοριών και ως λογοτεχνικό πρότυπο. Είναι χαρακτηριστικό ότι ο Ζωναράς κάνει πάμπολες ονομαστικές αναφορές στον Ιώσηπο, γεγονός που αποδεικνύει ότι θεωρούσε τα έργα του αξιόπιστα και τα εκλάμβανε ως πηγές που θα προσέδιδαν κύρος στο κείμενό του. Ο Χωνιάτης και ο Κριτόβουλος χρησιμοποιούν τον Ιώσηπο με λιγότερο εμφανή τρόπο. Ο πρώτος παρουσιάζει λογοτεχνικές επιρροές από τον Εβραίο συγγραφέα που μόνο αναγνώστες με αξιόλογη μόρφωση θα μπορούσαν να αναγνωρίσουν. Ο δεύτερος αξιοποιεί ένα σύνηθες χαρακτηριστικό που αποδίδεται από Χριστιανούς συγγραφείς στον Ιώσηπο, την *φιλαλήθειάν* του, προσαρμόζοντάς το ώστε να υποδηλώνει την ιστορική αλήθεια του Ιωσήπου, και κατ' επέκτασιν την ιστορική αλήθεια που χαρακτηρίζει την δική του αφήγηση. Για να επιδείξουν στο κοινό την λογιωσύνη και την ευρυμάθειά τους, οι Βυζαντινοί συγγραφείς είτε χρησιμοποιούσαν σαφείς αναφορές στον Ιώσηπο, είτε αξιοποιούσαν τα έργα του με πιο σύνθετο τρόπο.