The first-century Jewish historian, Josephus, mentioned Nero’s wife, Poppaea Sabina, in two stories in which she supported the integrity and sacredness of the Jewish Temple, and was also involved with the release of imprisoned Jewish priests. She is described as “theosebês” (“a worshipper of God”). Josephus’ use of theosebês has sparked debate over the last few centuries and has led to a variety of interpretations about Poppaea’s connection to Judaism. This paper argues that by examining the actions of Poppaea through the lens of “eclectic religiosity,” much can be learned about her motivations in helping the Jewish people, as well as her possible involvement in protecting the Jewish population in Rome from persecution following the Great Fire of 64 CE.

There are many words one would use to describe Poppaea Sabina: beautiful, selfish, opportunistic, manipulative, clever, and witty. The negative attributes, however, are not as apparent within the descriptions of her by the first-century Jewish historian, Josephus. Although at the center of political intrigue, murder, and adultery, Poppaea supported the integrity and sacredness of the Jewish Temple, and was also involved with the release of imprisoned Jewish priests. Historians have often paid too much attention to Poppaea’s possible connection with Judaism and too little attention to the fact that, despite whether she intended to or not, Poppaea, through her friendship with Josephus, became a voice for the Jews in the ear of the emperor, and, as this study argues, possibly also a protector of the Jews against Roman persecution in the aftermath of the Fire of Rome in 64 CE.

Introducing Poppaea Sabina

The daughter of Titus Ollius, a quaestor during the reign of Tiberius (r. 14-37) and subsequent victim of his friendship with the conspirator Sejanus, Poppaea Sabina opted to take the name of her maternal grandfather, Poppaeus Sabinus, whose reputation was more distinguished than her father’s.¹ Her mother, also named Poppaea Sabina, was renowned for her beauty, and eventually suffered for it when she committed suicide after being falsely accused of adultery by Emperor Claudius’ wife, Messalina in 47.² Inheriting her mother’s attractiveness,
Poppaea was credited with introducing the practice of bathing in milk to stave off wrinkles, and even a style of cosmetics was later termed “Poppaean.” Extravagance followed her wherever she went and her obsession with physical appearance was so great that after looking in the mirror one day, she prayed for death before her beauty faded.

Poppaea’s beauty combined with her charm and wit connected her to powerful men. She first married Rufrius Crispinus, an equestrian who commanded the Praetorian Guard under Claudius (r. 41-54), and with whom she bore a son. During this first marriage, or possibly during her second to M. Salvius Otho, Poppaea caught the eye of the emperor Nero. Despite the fact that both Poppaea and Nero were each married to other people, Nero became completely enamored with her, and their affair began sometime around 58. It is unclear from the sources as to whether Poppaea, after her divorce from Rufrius Crispinus, had married Otho as a cover for her relationship with Nero, or whether she had already been married to Otho, and his boasting of her beauty and charms aroused the interests of the emperor. Regardless of the details, Otho was relocated to Lusitania as governor, and Poppaea, “a woman of all advantages except an honest spirit,” was wed to Nero twelve days after his divorce from his wife, Octavia in 62. Nero’s “chief harlot,” as Tacitus called her, had become the empress.

No biographer of Nero, ancient or modern, has neglected to mention the power and influence his mother, Agrippina the Younger, held over him. According to Plutarch, Nero’s infatuation with Poppaea was so great, Agrippina felt threatened that Poppaea could replace her as the power over Nero, and therefore attempted to prevent Nero from marrying her. Once the affair between Nero and Poppaea began, however, Poppaea endeavored to “establish her ascendancy,” by persuading “Nero to get rid of his mother, alleging that she was plotting against him.” Agrippina was murdered in 59, and until her own death in 65, Poppaea remained the dominant force over Nero.

Much like her mother, and those who she was supposedly responsible for eliminating, Poppaea met an early death. Whether intentional or not, the cause for Poppaea’s death was that Nero kicked her while she was pregnant. Although dead, Poppaea’s influence continued as...
Nero sought to replace her with both men and women who resembled her physical beauty. After the death of Poppaea, Nero was so distraught, that upon learning of a woman who resembled Poppaea, he sent for her and kept her by his side. Even after this woman, Nero found a young boy who also resembled Poppaea in appearance, whom he called Sporus, and had him castrated and then treated “in every way like a wife.” These two reactions of Nero after Poppaea’s death may have been used by Dio to add to the idea that Nero was a corrupt and degenerate princeps, but they also demonstrate something about Poppaea. Even before, but especially after, the death of Agrippina, Poppaea was a dominant influence on Nero’s life. This well-known influence that she wielded over Nero forced ancient historians to mention her in their accounts of him, and their depictions of Poppaea paint a mixed picture of her character, yet are virtually unanimous on her physical beauty and Nero’s passion for her. This influence, while capable of doing great harm to her enemies, also proved to do great good for many of the Jewish minority living in Rome.

**Crossed Paths: The Princess and the Priest**

The majority of sources that portray Poppaea Sabina in a negative light do so, no doubt, on account of her connection to Nero, who was later depicted as a great tyrant. In her “Tacitus and Women’s Usurpation of Power,” Francesca Santoro L’Hoir argued that Tacitus may have used such derogatory language with Nero in order to interpret the fall of the Julio-Claudian dynasty in line with his beliefs concerning the proper exercise of masculine and feminine power. The similarities between Nero and Greek tyrants of old are greater than seems historically reasonable, and Tacitus’ overemphasis on the lifestyle of Nero conjures images of tyrants past, confining the emperor to be forever remembered as an example of unprecedented tyranny. While the negative memory of Nero impacted the histories of those connected to him, the accounts are not all negative, however, and Josephus, in particular, has left an assessment of Poppaea that has garnered much attention and debate. Josephus was by far the most generous in his compliments of the empress, mostly because he neglected to mention some of the negative attributes. The first-century Jewish historian mentioned the favor of Nero that Poppaea enjoyed in addition to her influence to benefit the Jewish people. Of all those who wrote on Poppaea (and whose works...
have survived), Josephus seems to be the only one who had actually met her in the flesh. Through the friendship of an actor named Aliturus, a favorite of Nero, Josephus was introduced to Poppaea. He described the meeting in his *Vita* that “[t]hrough him [Aliturus] I was introduced to Poppaea, Caesar’s wife, and I took the earliest opportunity to ask her to free the priests. Having received large gifts from Poppaea in addition to this favor, I returned to my own country.” The Poppaea who emerges from Josephus’ accounts is one who had influence over Nero, and compassion for the Jews. By examining two specific incidents from Josephus’ *Antiquitates Judaeicae* and *Vita*, one discovers a woman whose history is tied to the history of the Jewish people.

Josephus mentioned in his *Vita* that he had arrived in Rome in 64 in order to free Jewish prisoners who had been sent by the procurator Felix to appear before Nero in Rome on trumped-up charges. Felix had been the procurator of Judaea from c.52-59, and it is difficult to know for certain who these priests were that Josephus mentions, but a theory can be posited from Josephus’ account of the end of Felix’s reign in his *Antiquitates Judaeicae*. During Felix’s administration, Josephus described a dispute between the Syrians and Jews over rights within Caesarea. The disagreement erupted into violence, and Felix intervened with troops, killing many Jews. Immediately following the incident, Felix sent the leaders of both sides to Rome to plead their cases before the emperor. Shortly thereafter (c.59), Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus as procurator, and during the transition, Jewish leaders from Judaea went before Nero to accuse Felix of mistreatment. In addition to bringing charges against Felix, could these Jewish leaders have been in Rome also to support those who Felix had sent earlier in connection to the dispute with the Syrians? If these Jewish leaders had been unsuccessful, perhaps Josephus’ trip in 64 was another attempt to free these Jewish captives. The identities of those who Josephus goes to liberate are never explicitly given in his account, but whether the men involved were the same as those Felix sent in connection with the Syrian dispute is not the most important part of the story. These priests are demonstrative of the fact that the procurators of Judaea made a habit
of sending Jewish embassies to the capital in hopes of solving disputes among the Jews, and in an effort to shift the responsibility up the chain of command.

During the last year of Festus’ administration, there was another incident that brought a Jewish delegation to Rome in 62. In his *Antiquitates Judaicae*, Josephus told the story of how King Agrippa II had built a large dining room onto the Hasmonaean Palace, which overlooked into the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. While he dined, Agrippa enjoyed watching the activities of the priests. The Jewish priests responded to this invasion of religious privacy by erecting a wall in order to obscure Agrippa’s view into the Temple interior. This wall not only blocked Agrippa’s view of the sacrifices, but it also made it more difficult for the Roman guards positioned in the outer court during festivals to observe the Temple as well. Agrippa and Festus ordered the priests to take down the wall. In response, the priests petitioned Festus to appeal the request to Nero, and after given permission to do so, left for Rome. Josephus records that “Nero, after a full hearing, not only condoned what they [the priests] had done, but also agreed to leave the building as it was, showing favor to his wife Poppaea because she was a worshipper of God [*theosebês*] and pleaded on behalf of the Jews.”

Shortly after sending the Jewish delegation to Nero, Festus died and was replaced by Albinus, the procurator under whose administration Josephus would travel to Rome and meet Poppaea Sabina who had previously shown such kindness to the Jews.

Josephus’ use of *theosebês* has incited debate among historians about Poppaea’s official affiliation with Judaism and her motivations for assisting the Jewish people on at least two separate occasions. *Theosebês* is a compound word: the combination of *theos* (god) and *sebomai* (feel awe; worship), and most literally means: “worshipper of a god” or “very religious.” Within his *Antiquitates Judaicae*, Josephus used the term *theosebês* at least five times, however, only one of the examples, Poppaea, is not a known observer of Judaism, and because of this, the translation of *theosebês* in connection to Poppaea has varied. Why Josephus chose to use this word to describe Poppaea has sparked debate for some time, and has produced a vast array of theories. Shelly Matthews correctly remarked that “[s]cholars tend to read this ascription
[theosebês] as an historically accurate reflection of Poppaea’s motive and proceed to debate the
degree of Poppaea’s attachment to the Jewish religion connoted by the term theosebês.” Matthews then succinctly summarized the broad spectrum of interpretations from Ludwig Friedländer’s conclusion that Poppaea was a full-fledged Jewish proselyte to E. Mary Smallwood’s dismissal of Poppaea’s motives as nothing more than pagan superstition. Within this spectrum, Margaret Williams took a middle road suggesting that Poppaea had some kind of pious attachment to Judaism without making an actual conversion, while Steve Mason suggested that one possibility may be that Josephus’ use of theosebês was meant to be ironic, “intended to provoke howls of laughter from his audience.” All of these have attempted to clarify Josephus’ words within the context of the later histories that painted such a starkly different picture of Poppaea’s character.

Another interpretation of Josephus’ use of theosebês came in 1897, before much of the recent debate, by the French scholar, Philippe Fabia. Fabia suggested that Poppaea practiced what he called “religiosité éclectique” – eclectic religiosity – a suggestion echoed in similar fashion by Rudolf Hanslik’s “als exzentrische Frau” in the Pauly-Wissowa. E. Mary Smallwood called these terms “valiant attempts” to reconcile Poppaea’s adultery, murder, and pagan practices with Judaism – a difficulty that Fabia admitted when he stated that it would have indeed been an “étrange pieté.” Although seemingly dismissed by both Fabia and Smallwood, there may be more to Fabia’s idea of eclectic religiosity than Fabia, Hanslik, or Smallwood realized, and the key to fully understanding Poppaea’s connection to Judaism may be connected to an incident that Josephus failed to even mention in his long histories: the Great Fire of Rome.

The Great Fire of Rome

The Great Fire of Rome in 64 had unforeseen and disastrous consequences for the reign of Nero. In the aftermath of the destruction, the Christian movement, although in its infancy, found itself at the very center of imperial politics, and embers of conspiracy and rebellion would soon engulf the entire Empire in civil wars not seen since the end of the Republic nearly a
century earlier. In 64, the city of Rome caught fire, and while the sources that mention the Great Fire vary on the extent of the fire’s damage, the fire was severe enough to render many homeless and to rouse the population to call upon the emperor for action.49

In mid-July 64, a fire began in the Circus Maximus and, carried by the wind, spread quickly, consuming portions of the city over the next six days.50 Climbing the Palatine Hill and reaching the foot of the Esquiline, Tacitus recorded that the fire spared only four of the fourteen districts of Rome, completely leveling three, and allowing only a few dilapidated buildings to remain in seven.51 Dio reported nearly two-thirds of the city was burned, including the whole Palatine Hill.52 In the aftermath of the fire, Tacitus reported that Nero opened the Campus Martius, several imperial buildings, and even his own Gardens, as temporary housing for the “helpless multitude.”53 In addition to assisting those whose lives had been devastated by the fire, Nero gave orders for the new buildings and streets to be constructed in ways that would retard a future fire’s spread.54 Despite Nero’s efforts to assist the homeless and build a more durable capital, rumors soon circulated that Nero had been responsible for the fire’s outbreak. Nero’s massive new palace, the Domus Aurea, which was to be built on the ashes of the fire, only encouraged the spread of these rumors.

“A disaster followed, whether accidental or by the treachery of the princeps is uncertain (both versions have authors), but it was more dreadful than all the things that had ever happened to this city by the violence of fire.”55 With these words, Tacitus began his account of the Great Fire of Rome. Although no fan of Nero, Tacitus did not quickly place blame upon the emperor for the fire, as later historians like Dio and Suetonius did, rather he recorded that both sides to the story had voices. Unfortunately, only the more scandalous side has come down to us after Tacitus.56 For the purposes of this study, however, the true arsonist is not as important as those who were actually linked to the crime: the Christians. Again, Tacitus, as the most detailed source for the fire and its aftermath, gives an account of Nero’s efforts to punish someone for the fire. After being unable to quash the rumors about his involvement in the fire, Tacitus stated that Nero fastened the guilt upon a group “whom the crowd called Christians.”57 The forms of punishments...
meted out against the culprits, namely being covered with the skins of wild beasts and attacked by dogs, crucified, and burned alive as lamps, were most likely chosen as visual connections to the stories associated with the gods whose temples had been destroyed in the fire. The Christians became the scapegoat Nero hoped would assuage the anger of the Romans.

**The Fire, the Christians, and the Jews**

Nero’s blame upon a minority sect of Judaism, called Christians, has invited questions about the possible involvement of Poppaea because of her close affiliation with Josephus. Philippe Fabia, a year after suggesting Poppaea’s eclectic religiosity, surmised a possible connection when he wrote that since “Poppaea was on friendly terms with the Jews,” she may have suggested the Christians as an alternative to the entire Jewish population of Rome because Romans were unable to distinguish between Jews and Christians, and because the Jews hated the Christians. Fabia’s linking of Poppaea to the Fire implies a very close connection and knowledge of the inner-workings of Judaism on her part, as well as a desire to build upon what Fabia emphasized as the hatred of Jews toward the Christians in the first century. Even before the Great Fire of 64, imperial officials had already established a precedent of using the Jewish minority as scapegoats for problems that arose within the capital, and had expelled Jews from the city of Rome during the reigns of both Tiberius (r. 14-37) and Claudius (r. 41-54); both expulsions were carried out as blanket punishments against all Jews for reasons connected to individual Jews. The idea that Nero would attempt to target the Jewish minority in order to shift blame from himself is certainly a possibility, but this is not what happened. Nero targeted the Christians, not only a minority of a minority, but also a minority possibly unknown to Nero or anyone else not intimately involved in Jewish affairs.

While Fabia’s theory that the Jewish hatred of Christians played an integral role in their blame for the Fire holds little weight, his suggestion of eclectic religiosity may shed some light on this incident. Poppaea Sabina is similar to other powerful Roman women who had taken an interest in the diversity of religious and cultural beliefs within the Empire. Julia Mamaea (180-235), empress and mother to the emperor, Alexander Severus (r. 222-235), was interested in...
Christianity and evidently met with the famous Christian scholar Origen. Eusebius referred to Mamaea as a “theosebestatê gunê,” usually translated as “religious woman,” the same term as Josephus’ theosebês in reference to Poppaea; both uses were not intended to convey a specific religious affiliation, but rather a general feeling of religious interest. In addition to this very specific example of Mamaea, and no doubt many others, there were two other famous women in the first century who dabbled in other religious beliefs: Pomponia Graecina was acquitted on charges of “foreign superstition” in 57, and Flavia Domitilla was exiled for “atheism” and drifting into “Jewish ways” in 95. Later traditions attribute specifically Jewish or Christian conversions to these two women, but there is difficulty in doing so with Poppaea Sabina. As has already been seen in the debate surrounding Poppaea’s Jewish sympathies, it is difficult to reconcile Josephus’ designation of theosebês as being distinctly Jewish with what is also known about Poppaea’s lifestyle, astrological beliefs, and burial practices.

It is no secret that in addition to Poppaea’s apparent sympathy for Jews found in Josephus’ account, she was also interested in astrology, a practice at odds with being either a good Jew or good Roman. Tacitus was certainly no fan of Nero, or of those with whom he surrounded himself, and in his Historiae, described astrologers as un-Roman and “a race of men untrustworthy by the powerful, deceitful to the hopeful, who in our state will always be forbidden and retained.” Combined with her personal life, which included adultery and murder, Tacitus reemphasized the un-Romanness of Poppaea by remarking that at her death, she was “not cremated according to the Roman custom, but was embalmed, stuffed with spices in conformity with the customs of foreign kings, and buried in the tomb of the Julians.” This final act of Poppaea could be interpreted to mean that the traditionally read text of Tacitus that claims Christians were the scapegoat to squelch the rumors surrounding the Fire had been interpolated by later Christian copyists, and the true victims of Nero’s wrath were actually the followers of Isis. This theory interprets Poppaea’s embalming with spices as an indication that she was not a Jewish sympathizer, but rather an Egyptian one. The idea that Egyptians, rather than Christians were targeted by imperial authorities is not a completely unthinkable conclusion given the
similarities that many ancient authors drew between Egyptians and Jews. Tacitus mentioned Tiberius’ interdiction against the rites of both Jews and Egyptians, whom he labeled as “tainted with that superstition.”\textsuperscript{75} Suetonius also grouped both Jews and Egyptians together into the categories of “foreign cults” and “superstition.”\textsuperscript{76} However, one need not create elaborate theories to fit the evidence at hand. Concerning Poppaea’s burial practices in the context of the use of embalming by Romans and Egyptians from the late Republic through the early Empire, Derek Counts concluded, “Thus it appears that embalming was appropriated with other foreign \textit{exotica} and absorbed into a traditional Roman cultural context… Like an ornate marble sarcophagus or a literary account of extravagant expenditure for a burial, an embalmed body carried with it a sense of \textit{exotica} and, in that role, might simply be viewed as an artificial manifestation of status.”\textsuperscript{77} The emphasis on status may be at the forefront to understanding how Poppaea properly fits into the histories of Judaism, Christianity, and the early Empire.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Fabia’s “eclectic religiosity” may prove to be the best way to reconcile the diversity of interpretations on Poppaea as well as explain how a minority sect of Judaism found itself at the center of imperial policy following the Great Fire of 64. Aligning the attributes of Poppaea from both the positive and negative sources, she is, in summation, a woman very concerned with her physical appearance, status, and power. Not unlike many celebrities today, she was interested in a diversity of religious and cultural experiences. Perhaps more aware of the assortment that the Empire offered, Poppaea sampled what seemed most interesting or beneficial to her, and which demonstrated her elite status within society. Is this so different than celebrities today like Madonna, who was raised Roman Catholic, embraced Kabbalah, and has most recently been studying Islam? Statements like “I think it is important to study all the holy books. As my friend Yaman always tells me, a good Muslim is a good Jew, and a good Jew is a good Christian, and so forth. I could not agree more. To some people this is a very daring thought,” combined with rumors that she “often wears white clothes because they attract ‘positive energy’”\textsuperscript{78} fail to place Madonna within the strict confines of any religious affiliation. One could certainly argue that this
“eclectic religiosity” would attract some press – as is evidenced by the fact it made news headlines.

It is not extraordinary that Poppaea would dabble in such irreconcilable beliefs as astrology and Judaism. Labeling Poppaea Sabina as an adherent to Judaism would be going beyond the evidence, but a woman who, fascinated by Judaism’s uniqueness, impressed by the young and confident Josephus, and interested in intervening to protect the Jewish minority from her husband’s desperate wrath, could certainly be called theosebês by a man who benefited from her eclectic religiosity. If Josephus had wanted to remove any doubt that Poppaea was an adherent to Judaism, he would certainly have used a more deliberate term or expression, such as phoboumenos ton theon (one who fears God) or prosēlutos (proselyte), as he had done in his description of Fulvia, “an honorable woman, who had come to embrace Judaism.” It seems likely that Josephus looked back on his experience with Poppaea and recognized that her friendliness to him combined with her interest in Judaism’s uniqueness freed Jewish priests and maintained the integrity of the Jewish Temple. With this in mind, Josephus presented an image of Poppaea framed within this hindsight, and unattached to the negative attributes he had already ascribed to her husband, Nero. Josephus explicitly stated in his Antiquitates Judaicae that his mission would be to present a history of the Jews untainted by his often hostile feelings about Nero, and his account of Poppaea would appear to demonstrate the success of that endeavor.

There are still many unanswered questions, but the evidence certainly allows a considerable amount of speculation on Poppaea’s involvement in protecting the majority of those within the Jewish community in the aftermath of the Great Fire. The historical precedent of the imperial government using Jews as the scapegoat for rowdy behavior in the capital lends weight to the possibility that following the fire, the Jews would again have found themselves at the mercy of Roman suspicions. Given that Poppaea had very recently met with Josephus and was impressed enough to shower him with gifts, she may have encouraged Nero to seek a way to shield the majority of Jews from harm, while still allowing him to shift the blame onto someone else. Tacitus’ account states that the Christians were called so by name, and even if there was yet
to be an obvious divide between Jews and Christians in the eyes of the Romans, there was apparently some distinction by 64. Regardless of what her motivations were, Poppaea’s influence shielded Jews from imperial harm, and whether she wished to or not, her “eclectic religiosity” had made her a protector of the Jewish people.

Bibliography

**Primary Sources**


**Secondary Sources**


---

1 Tacitus, Annales 13.45; Suetonius, Nero 35.1.
2 Tac., Ann. 11.2.
3 Juvenal, Sat. 6.462.
4 Cassius Dio, Epitome Historiae Romanae 62.28.1; Pliny, Naturalis Historia 28.183.
5 Two sources cite that she had shoes of gold made for the mules that drew her: Cass. Dio, 62.28.1; Plin., HN 30.14.
7 Tac., Ann. 13.45.
8 Nero was married to Claudia Octavia, his stepsister and daughter of Emperor Claudius.
9 Plutarch, Galba 19.2.
10 It is uncertain whether Poppaea was married to either Crispinus or Otho when she met Nero, as the stories differ slightly in the sources.
12 Tac., Ann. 13.46.
14 Suet., Ner. 35.4.
15 Tac., Hist. 1.13: principale scortum.
16 Plut., Galb. 19.2.
17 Tac., Ann. 13.46.
24 Although Josephus is the most kind in his assessment of Poppaea, even Tacitus had some nice things to say in his Ann. 13.45.
25 Josephus, Vita 16.
26 Jos., Vit. 13.
28 Josephus, Bellum Judaicum 2.270.
29 Jos., Ant. 20.182.
Josephus’’ use of gunaike (wife) suggests a date of 62, since that is when Nero and Poppaea were married, and the same year Festus died and was replaced by Albinus.


Matthews, *First Converts*, 34.


Tac., *Ann.* 15.40.

53 Tac., Ann. 15.39.
54 Tac., Ann. 15.43.
55 Tac., Ann. 15.38: “Sequitur clades, forte an dolo principis incertum (nam utrumque auctores prodidere), sed omnibus, quae huic urbi per violentiam ignium acciderunt, gravior atque atrocior.”
57 Tac., Ann. 15.44: “Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat.”
58 See Champlin, Nero, 122-126.
59 Philippe Fabia, “Le Règne et la Mort de Poppée,” Revue de Philologie, de Littérature, et d’Histoire Anciennes, 22, no. 4 (Oct. 1898): 336-37: “Poppée était en relations amicales avec les Juifs, si l’on considère qu’ils haïssaient les chrétiens et que, confondus ordinairement avec eux par les Romains, ils ne furent pas inquiétés cette fois, la persécution s’explique de la façon la plus naturelle, non par une lubie de Néron, qui ne connaissait pas assez les chrétiens pour songer de lui-même à les mettre en cause, mais par une suggestion de Poppée.” This idea of Poppaea suggesting the Christians is also suggested in Paul Maier’s historical novel, The Flames of Rome (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981), 298-303, in which Poppaea intercedes to protect the Jews, and so Tigellinus, the Praetorian Prefect, suggests the Christians (302).
60 Philo, Legatio ad Gaium 24 (159-161); Jos., Ant. 18.65, 81ff.; Tac., Ann. 2.85; Suetonius, Tiberius 36; Louis H. Feldman, Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 47ff, 302-4; See also the discussion below on the connection of the Egyptians and Jews in Tacitus and Suetonius.
62 Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica 6.21; Jerome, De Viris Illustribus. 54; Paulus Orosius, Historiae adversum paganos 7.18.7.
63 Euseb., Hist. eccl. 6.21
64 Paulus Orosius, a fifth-century historian, called Mamaea a “Christian,” but his history, which is much later and more of an apologetic work, is the only one that does.
65 See chapter 2 of Matthews, First Converts.
66 Tac., Ann. 13.32.
68 For Pomponia Graecina: The connection of Pomponia to Christianity was first made in the sixteenth century by Justus Lipsius and has become the traditional argument carried on through the Loeb Classical Library translation by John Jackson in 1937 (n. 3 for Tac., Ann. 13.32). For Flavia Domitilla, Eusebius calls her a Christian in his Hist. eccl. 3.18 and is repeated by Jerome in his Epistula 108.7. Much like the case of Poppaea Sabina, however, there is much to debate concerning the meaning of terms used.
69 Tac., Hist. 1.22.
71 Tac., Hist. 1.22.
72 Tac., Ann. 16.6: “Corpus non igni abolitum, ut Romanus mos, sed regum externorum consuetudine differtum odoribus conditur tumuloque lulorum infertur.”


Counts, “Regum Externorum Consuetudine,” 202. In a similar tone, John Jackson, the translator for the *Loeb Classical Library* edition of Tacitus’ *Annals*, wrote concerning Poppaea’s burial (16.6, n. 2): “Merely an extravagance of remorse.”


As used in *Acts* 13:16 & 26 in reference to those who attended synagogue but were not full-fledged members of the community.


Jos., *Ant.* 18.82.

Jos. does not hide the cruelty and tyrannical behavior of Nero: *Ant.* 20.152-153; *BJ* 2.250-251.