

Scholars have ignored the particularly Roman reading that Tacitus (*Hist.* 4.83-84) gives to his account of the relocation during the Hellenistic era of the god Sarapis from Sinope in Asia Minor to Egypt. Wilcken (1922) persuasively established that the god was an invention from elements of Egyptian worship (see also Takács 1995, 5 and Stambaugh 1972, 27-8). As a result, scholars have dismissed Tacitus' account, though Plutarch (*De Is. et Os.* 361F-362A) gives a similar narrative. This interpretation has encouraged scholars to ignore how Tacitus clearly molds his account of the god's summoning on the *evocatio*, the traditional calling out of a city's tutelary deity in time of war. Furthermore, I will argue that Tacitus' thematic choice further demolishes the notion that the *evocatio* was merely an archaic rite confined to Italy, as many scholars had long held. Rather, the ceremony rested on universal Roman principles regarding the relationship between tutelary deities and the cities they guard.

Tacitus couches the removal of the god's statue in terms remarkably similar to those of Livy's account of the *evocatio* of Juno of Veii (5.22), emphasizing the *voluntas* of the gods in their own relocation. To suggest that Tacitus re-appropriated Livian narratives for his own historical works is perfectly plausible, as noted by Syme (1958, 685) and Ash (1998, 27-44), among others. Tacitus at 4.84 reports that "the god himself [his statue] boarded the ships, which had been drawn up to the shore, of his own will" (*deum ipsum adpulsas litori navis sponte conscendisse*) and sped the course of the Ptolemaic fleet in its return to Egypt. This mirrors how the statue of Juno in Livy was moved "lightly, easily, and intact" (*levem ac facilem tralatu fuisse, integramque*) (5.22.6-7). Tacitus also recounts the fear of Sinope's residents at the removal of their city's tutelary deity (the primary object of an *evocatio* being as a prelude to a sack, see Bassanof 1947, 31-33) and regards the matter as a public one, with the "manifest anger of the gods" (*manifesta caelestium ira*) compelling the king of Sinope, Sycodrothemis, to consent lest his kingdom suffer (4.84). In contrast, Plutarch recounts a successful attempt to purloin the cult statue by Ptolemy's agents and does not include any emphasis on the cult statue moving of its own accord. He places the account firmly in the realm of political intrigue between the Hellenistic kingdoms, though he does state that it took place "not without divine providence" (οὐκ ἄνευ μέντοι θείας προνοίας) (*De Is. Et Os.* 361F). Tacitus in his interpretation filters the affair through a particularly Roman perspective.

Scholars had long thought that the *evocatio* was limited to Italy proper—or were at least skeptical as to the historicity of examples outside the peninsula, particularly the seemingly exceptional choice to revive the ceremony for Carthage in 146 B.C.E. (see Ogilvie 1965, 374-5; Rawson 1973, 168-72). Hall (1973), however, has given compelling inscriptional evidence of a Roman *evocatio* at Isaura Vetus in Turkey as late as 75 B.C.E., whose phrasing closely matches that offered by Macrobius (*Sat* 3.9.7-8) for the *evocatio* of Carthage. Likewise, Gustafsson (2000) perceptively points out the lack of solid and consistent evidence for limitations that earlier scholars attempted to impose on the rite and instead argues that the only constant throughout our extant examples is the trope of ritualized conquest. In my view, Tacitus' account supports a still broader reading of the *evocatio* as a specific application of Roman principles governing the relationship between cities and tutelary deities. Tacitus exploits the trope of the *evocatio* to make his account of Sarapis' importation to Egypt cogent to his Roman audience.