



## Summary :

The presence of a large expeditionary corps under emperor Julian I in Antioch, combined with the bad weather conditions in the area, caused a long alimentary crisis in the city during the years 362-363. The famine continued to affect the city even after the departure of the emperor. When exactly it ended is uncertain, and there is no information on the victims that it caused, in all probability.

## Date

Summer of 362 - spring of 363

## Geographical Location

Antioch (province of Coele-Syria)

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## 1. The outbreak of the famine

The emperor [Julian I](#) (361-363) arrived in the summer of 362 in [Antioch on the Orontes](#) in [Syria](#) to lead a campaign against the [Persians](#). The city was forced to sustain a great army, which proved to be a very difficult situation, especially for the financially weaker population. Thus the first reaction of the people upon the emperor's arrival was to notify him on their discontent concerning the high prices of basic alimentary products in the city. Julian promised to take care of this immediately in collaboration with the [curiales](#) of the city. Although the curiales promised to take measures to avoid the crisis, apparently they practically did nothing. Probably this had something to do with the high prices of grain producing great profits for them, since they belonged to the great landowners.

## 2. Measures and reactions

Julian also took legal measures to fight the increasing prices and the increasing lack of grain, without, however, any results.<sup>1</sup> Then, three months after his arrival, he published a decree (edict), setting a ceiling for the highest prices of a series of basic products. In approximately the same period a wave of drought destroyed the crops.<sup>2</sup> The unsuccessful legal regulation on the one hand, but mainly the particular climatic conditions turned the situation even worse. Prices rose abruptly until reaching the highest price allowed. The emperor ordered the import of a great quantity of grain from nearby cities like Chalkis and [Hierapolis](#) as well as from Egypt, paying for them from his personal treasury. Bread and grain in general became the only products available in quantity in the markets of the city. Nevertheless, this measure as well had eventually the opposite result.<sup>3</sup> The financially strong classes bought grain in the low, state controlled, price and sold their own production to the farmers of the surrounding areas in much higher prices. Furthermore, appreciable population masses were crowding into the markets of Antioch daily, in order to buy grain and bread in very low prices. According to the speculation of Julian himself, the price of these products would have been tripled without his interference. When the emperor eventually left for the south-east border, after a nine-month-sojourn in the city of Antioch, the crisis was still menacing.

We lack information on victims of this famine. The popular turbulence was intensive, whereas also the leading class of the city reacted negatively to the efforts of Julian, since they eventuated against their interests. The emperor composed the satiric work [Misopogon](#) to defend his policy; in this he answers with wit and humour to the accusations against him. We don't have any piece of information on this crisis after the departure of the imperial army from the city. Scholars, however, assume that the famine ended soon after.

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1. de Jonge, P., «Scarcity of Corn and Corn Prices in Ammianus Marcellinus» *Mnemosyne* 1 (1948) pp. 238-45.



2. Petit, P., *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au IVe siècle ap. J.-C.* (Paris 1956), pp. 110ff, mentions unfavorable conditions in the wider area.
3. Downey, G. «The Economic Crisis at Antioch under Julian the Apostate» in Coleman-Norton, P.R. (ed.), *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History* (Princeton 1951), pp. 315-9.

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### Bibliography :

	<b>Downey G.</b> , <i>A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest</i> , Princeton – New Jersey 1961
	<b>Petit P.</b> , <i>Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au IVe siècle après J.-C.</i> , Paris 1955
	<b>Durliat J.</b> , <i>De la ville antique à la ville byzantine. Le problème des subsistances</i> , Rome 1990, Collection de l' école française de Rome 136
	<b>Stathakopoulos D.</b> , <i>Loimos kai Limos. A Systematic Survey and Typology of Epidemics and Famines in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine World (284-750 AD)</i> , Wien 2000
	<b>Stathakopoulos D.</b> , <i>Famine and Pestilence in the late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire: A systematic survey</i> , Ashgate, London 2004
	<b>Downey G.</b> , "The Economic Crisis at Antioch under Julian the Apostate", P.R. Coleman-Norton (ed.), <i>Studies in Roman Economic and Social History</i> , Princeton 1951, 312-321
	<b>de Jonge P.</b> , "Scarcity of Corn and Corn Prices in Ammianus Marcellinus", <i>Mnemosyne</i> , 1, 1948, 238-245

### Webliography :

	Emperor Julian's «Misopogon»
<a href="http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/julian-misopogon.html">http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/julian-misopogon.html</a>	

### Glossary :

	<b>curiales</b>
Curiales were the members of the city councils (gr.: <i>boule</i> ) in the late Roman Empire. They belonged to the local aristocracy and were officials of the municipal administration, responsible for the normal functioning of the city's institutions as well as for local tax-collecting. A city's <i>boule</i> could count from 100 to 200 curiales, depending on the city's population.	