

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/20137> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Marciak, Michał

**Title:** Izates and Helena of Adiabene : a study on literary traditions and history

**Date:** 2012-11-20

## Conclusions to Part 1

In part 1 we have analysed Ant. 20:17-96 as a piece of literature, that is, as a consciously planned literary product of Josephus that has its own structure, meaning and purpose. This is apparently a new approach to Ant. 20:17-96 the novelty of which becomes even more acute if we contrast our results with the previously prevailing approach towards the Adiabene narrative.

A prevailing trend in the previous scholarship on Ant. 20:17-96 was to attempt to identify the sources underlying Josephus' narrative<sup>522</sup>. Basically, two main approaches on the matter can be distinguished. Namely, the issue of sources of Ant. 20:17-96 has been discussed either starting from the other material in Josephus' writings with a Parthian setting (and so touching on Ant. 20:17-96 only secondarily) or as a distinctive subject devoted exclusively to Ant. 20:17-96<sup>523</sup>. The second approach is a later development and can be found only in publications of L.H. Schiffman, D. Barish, M. Frenschkowski, I. Broer, and A. de Jong.

A number of early scholars, like Schemann, Hölscher, Täubler and Widengren, who applied to Josephus the methods of Pentateuch source-criticism (which was at its height in 19<sup>th</sup> c. Germany), postulated the general affinity between Ant. 20:17-96 (or at least its parts) and other accounts devoted to Parthian affairs. More specific on the matter were Hölscher and Widengren. Hölscher connected Ant. 20:17-96 with other accounts of Parthian affairs in Ant. 18-20, but especially with the story of Asinaeus and Anilaeus (Ant. 18:310-379). Hölscher suggested six parallels between Ant. 20:17-96 and Ant. 18:310-379 that could indicate a common source of both texts<sup>524</sup>. They are as follow: the mention of Nisibis (Ant. 18:312 and 379, Ant. 20:68) and the reference to Dahae and Sacae (Ant. 18:180, Ant. 20:91) in both stories; thirdly, the same typically Jewish moralistic instruction; fourthly, Oriental customs are emphatically explained to readers; fifthly, both stories are reported in a context into which that they do not directly fit, thus they account for long digressions; sixthly, both stories are not separate cases of interest in Parthian affairs within Ant. 18-20. In turn, Widengren pointed to similarities between the summary Neo-Babylonian chronicles of the Seleucid period and the three following accounts in Josephus on Parthian affairs: Ant. 18:39-52, Ant. 18:96-105 and 20:69-74<sup>525</sup>. The scheme of such summary chronicles includes the king's name, the regnal dates and selective events of the king's reign, and, according to Widengren, can be also found in Josephus' three-above-mentioned accounts on the Parthians, where the king's name and the most important events from the king's reign are indeed given, though not the regnal dates. As a result, Widengren suggested that 20:69-74 was modeled on Neo-Babylonian chronicles.

It is true that Ant. 20:17-96 and Ant. 18:310-379 share some similarities, but there are substantial differences between them, too. Ant. 20:17-96 covers chronologically the lifespan of Izates, son of Helena, but in Ant. 18:310-379 we can find only snapshots from the lives of Asinaeus and Anilaeus. What is more, Izates, son of Helena, is presented as an unambiguously positive character while Asinaeus and Anilaeus are controversial figures, and in the end their life story serves as an example illustrating human downfall. Lastly, the topic of conversion makes the Adiabene narrative unique, it has no parallel in Ant. 18:310-379 whatsoever. Furthermore,

---

<sup>522</sup> Barish 1983: 11-22 has an exhaustive overview of research until his own days. More recently, publications of Schiffman 1987, Frenschkowski 1990, Broer 1994 and de Jong 2012 (forthcoming) have to be included.

<sup>523</sup> Theoretically, some conclusions on sources of Ant. 20:17-96 can also be deduced from earlier scholarly research aiming at establishing the provenance of larger tracts of *Antiquitates Judaicae*. E.g. Bloch 1879: 150-156 considered most of the material in Ant. 18-20 to be based on oral sources. In turn, Schemann 1887: 19-26 assigned Ant. 20:17-96 to the anonymous Universal History. However, most of such large-scale studies on Josephus' sources are nowadays out-of-date, and more specific references to Ant. 20:17-96 in fact emerge only while focusing on accounts concerned with the Parthian kingdom.

<sup>524</sup> Hölscher 1904: 69-70; Hölscher 1916: 1983-1984.

<sup>525</sup> Widengren 1957: 214-215; Widengren 1960: 41.

similarities between both stories, such as geographical and proper names, are natural for stories whose plots concern the same setting. Taking all this into consideration, we have to say that none of the similarities suggested by Hölscher can sustain the weight of his theory. The same refers pretty much to the theory of Widengren. There is nothing more natural for political history than to mention the name of a king and some important events during his reign, and this can hardly be a characteristic of only one type of literary tradition. What is more, as Widengren recognized himself, the third element of the Babylonian chronicles (regnal dates) is lacking in Josephus' texts (Ant. 18:39-52, Ant. 18:96-105 and 20:69-74) which makes a supposed use of Babylonian chronicles less than likely.

A turning point in research on sources of Ant. 20:17-96 came with E. Täubler who proposed a two-source theory for Ant. 20:17-96 that has influenced the research ever since<sup>526</sup>. Because of the role played in the narrative by two Jewish 'missionaries', Ananias and Eleazar, Täubler called the primary source of Ant. 20:17-96 a *Missionsbericht* and characterized it as a kind of travelogue of an itinerant Jewish missionary ("Bericht eines herumreisenden Missionars")<sup>527</sup>. This source had a religious character and was used throughout the bulk of the narrative, while the other source underlying Ant. 20:69-74 was considered to be an anonymous Parthian source which was also used for the other accounts of Parthian affairs in Josephus (especially Ant. 18:39-52 and Ant. 18:96-105). Täubler's idea of a *Missionsbericht* did not find any acceptance among scholars and it is not hard to see why. Although Täubler does not express it explicitly, his theory seems to be based on the model of the journeys of Paul<sup>528</sup>, although there is one fundamental difference between Acts and Ant. 20:17-96. Ant. 20:34-48 is not a story about the missionary achievements of Ananias and Eleazar, but about Izates' path to Jewish piety; both Jewish teachers indeed play important, yet still only supporting roles in Izates' choices. Thus, Täubler's theory concerning the character of sources underlying Ant. 20:17-96 is untenable, but his very idea of two different sources underlying Ant. 20:17-96 has made its way into scholarly publications.

A very prominent place in research on the sources of Josephus' Parthian accounts belongs to Schalit<sup>529</sup>. His primary focus was, however, on the story of Asinaeus and Anilaeus, and consequently his regard for Ant. 20:17-96 was only of secondary use to him. According to Schalit, both stories came from the same source which included many primarily independent stories in Aramaic that were later joined together since they were chronologically, geographically and thematically closely related. At some point, this corpus was translated into Greek before it came into the hands of Josephus to be integrated into Ant. 18-20. Consequently, most of Schalit's argumentation focused on finding Aramaisms that could indicate an Aramaic *Vorlage* of Ant. 18:310-370<sup>530</sup>. In fact, it centers around one Greek phrase κτείνω κτιῶν, which, being itself highly problematic, can be, according to Schalit, best understood as an Aramaism גברא קטילא. As far as Ant. 20:17-96 is concerned, the only piece of evidence concerns the prayer of Izates in Ant. 20:80 which Schalit, by comparison with other Josephan prayers, considers not to be shaped by Josephus and consequently attributes it to his sources which he in turn believes to be the same as

<sup>526</sup> Täubler 1904: 24-26, 62-65.

<sup>527</sup> Täubler 1904: 64.

<sup>528</sup> Likewise Schiffman 1987: 308-309, n. 5.

<sup>529</sup> Schalit 1965: 163-188; Schalit 1973: 367-400.

<sup>530</sup> Similarly N.G. Cohen 1975/76: 30-37 aims at strengthening Schalit's hypothesis of an underlying Aramaic source for this passage by pointing to several more Greek expressions which might be unusual in Greek and so can be best understood as Aramaisms. The phrases in question are as follows: ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων ἀνδρῶν in 18:361 (understood as an Aramaism: גוברין יהודאין (גיברין בלחמה), μαγίμω ἀνδρῶν in 18:379 (אנשי בלחמה). Furthermore, N.G. Cohen argues that the description of the profession of Anilaeus and Asinaeus, expressed by words: ἰστῶν μαθήσει ποιήσεως and ταλασιουργεῖν in 18:314 are mistakenly understood as being used of a spinning wool craft and come from a mistaken understanding of its Aramaic source. An Aramaic-Hebrew root קלה ("to plait", "twist", "weave") may also have a military connotation and in this case would mean that both brothers were apprenticed to armorers who manufactured scale armor for cavalry (the cataphracts). This assumed profession would better fit the whole context of this story.

those of 18:310-370<sup>531</sup>. Further, Schalit, like Täubler, recognized two different sources underlying Ant. 20:17-96, though he put their character differently than Täubler. According to Schalit, one source should not longer be considered as a travelogue of an itinerant Jewish missionary, but as a conversion story focused on royal protagonists and the other source presented a political history of the Adiabene royalty; and both sources were joined together at the Adiabene royal court as an apologetic document aiming at its non-Jewish subjects to convince them that their country politically profited from the conversion of the royal house.

Schalit's contribution deserves a few comments. First, the question as to whether or not Ant. 18:310-370 was primarily composed in Aramaic is not of direct relevance to Ant. 20:17-96. Secondly, a specific link between Ant. 20:17-96 and Ant. 18:310-370 is more assumed than proven<sup>532</sup>. Surely, both stories are concerned with Parthian affairs in general, but the whole issue of a common origin and/or transmission as suggested by Schalit is so complex, and, at the same time, our evidence is so meager that there is no way to verify it<sup>533</sup>. Thirdly, Izates' prayer has been thoroughly researched by other scholars after Schalit whose results did not agree with his conclusions at all; this is because they show that Izates' prayer in Ant. 20:80 is stylistically and thematically close to other Josephan prayers and as such should be attributed to Josephus' agenda and not to his sources<sup>534</sup>. Finally, Schalit's idea about two sources underlying Ant. 20:17-96, one being of a religious character and the other reporting a political history, turned out to be his most lasting legacy. It was accepted by Schiffman<sup>535</sup> and Barish<sup>536</sup>, authors of the two most systematic treatments of the Adiabene narrative to date.

While both Schiffman and Barish accept the two-source theory as formulated by Schalit, they differ when it comes to the judgment of Josephus' involvement in forming the narrative as it is transmitted in Ant. 20:17-96 (also the approach of both scholars clearly reflects the next stage in Biblical exegesis, the so-called *Redaktionsgeschichte* that came to life in Germany in the 1950s and became widespread in the subsequent decades). Specifically, Schiffman, in analyzing the meaning of the text, ascribes the entirety of its authorship not to Josephus but to "Josephus' source" or, put in another way, to "the author of the account of the House of Adiabene"<sup>537</sup>. In this way, Josephus' contribution is reduced to a role of someone who displayed "a marked tendency to copy anything from any source that is nominally relevant to this discourse"<sup>538</sup> and has indeed nothing to say on the topic of his own<sup>539</sup>. In contrast, Barish suggested that Josephus' involvement in composing the narrative can be proven, and it went much further than just coping sources whose message could be relevant to his agenda<sup>540</sup>. According to Barish, Josephus imposed the *πρόνοια* motif upon his sources as a connecting link between the otherwise unrelated thematic material<sup>541</sup>.

The last trend in recent research on sources of the Adiabene narrative that we need to mention goes back to those earlier scholars like Hölischer and Widengren who paid attention to the Parthian background of the Adiabene narrative. Both Frenschkowski and de Jong pointed to a number of literary themes in Ant. 20:17-96 that they claim to be specifically Iranian<sup>542</sup>. According to de Jong, their appearance shows "extensive and extensively detailed knowledge of Parthian

<sup>531</sup> Schalit 1965: 172-174.

<sup>532</sup> So Schiffman 1987: 309, n. 7; Ge. Herman 2006: 16.

<sup>533</sup> So Barish 1983: 21.

<sup>534</sup> Barish 1983: 63-65 and Jonquière 2007: 202-203.

<sup>535</sup> Schiffman 1987: 294-298, 307-208.

<sup>536</sup> Barish 1983: 20-66.

<sup>537</sup> Schiffman 1987: 306-307.

<sup>538</sup> Schiffman 1987: 307.

<sup>539</sup> Similarly D.R. Schwartz 1982: 243-244.

<sup>540</sup> Barish 1983: 45-66. A similar approach concerning Josephus' narrative skills in Ant. 20:17-96 can be found in the publication of Broer 1994: 147-149, 156-162.

<sup>541</sup> Barish 1983: 66.

<sup>542</sup> Frenschkowski 1990: 213-233; de Jong 2012. For a similar approach to other Josephan passages on Parthian affairs, see Ge. Herman 2005 and Ge. Herman 2006.

society”, and this leads him to conclude that the parts of the narrative that are not specifically devoted to Jewish subjects reflect a source that came from the Parthian Empire itself<sup>543</sup>.

What can be said, then, about the sources underlying Ant. 20:17-96 and how does it matter for our understanding of Ant. 20:17-96 as a conscious literary product?

1. If Josephus did not entirely rely on his personal memory (and this is the case with the Adiabene setting), he must have used sources. Yet, Josephus’ sources in Ant. 20:17-96 have never been named either by Josephus or any other ancient source, and we do not know any other ancient text that contains enough parallel material to be a good candidate for Josephus’ supply of knowledge. This can be contrasted with the situation of Josephus’ sources in Ant. 1-11, where we have the counter narrative in the form of the Biblical text, and therefore we can easily compare Josephus’ use of that source<sup>544</sup>. Therefore, no specific candidate for Josephus’ written sources can even be tentatively suggested. As for oral transmission, there is a good possibility that Josephus had access to members of the royal house of Adiabene during his stay in Jerusalem, as well as later in Rome (Bell. 6:357)<sup>545</sup>. In the case of the Jerusalem setting (Ant. 20:49-53 and Ant. 20:92-96), he could also rely on personal experience and/or local Jewish oral traditions<sup>546</sup>. However, it is not certain if Josephus could have covered the bulk of his long narrative only based on oral sources. Can we then say anything about Josephus’ use of written material underlying his narrative?

2. It is apparent that we have two kinds of material in Ant. 20:17-96 that now account for one narrative<sup>547</sup>. This can be suggested by the chronological shift in Ant. 20:34<sup>548</sup>. In Ant. 20:34, the topic of Izates’ interest in Jewish traditions appears for the first time, and this is brought forward in connection with the previous chronology of the narrative. Namely, Izates’ stay in Characene was presented in Ant. 20:23 (where we hear nothing of the topics directly related to the Jewish milieu) and by Ant. 20:34 Izates managed to return to Adiabene and take up the crown. When the narrative takes on the topic of conversion in Ant. 20:34, it again recalls Izates’ stay in Characene, and next moves the scene gradually back to Adiabene. This suggests that there were two sources, one used until 20:34 and devoted to political affairs, and the other focused on Izates’ conversion that started to be in use from Ant. 20:34 on<sup>549</sup>. Apparently, the first source did not include information on his conversion, so when the narrator went on to this topic, he had to reconcile it with the chronology employed so far<sup>550</sup>. However, this is actually all that can be said – two kinds of material were in use for the narrative of Ant. 20:17-96.

Of course, de Jong shows that a number of details in Josephus’ description of the Parthian setting is extensive and very close to, what we consider to be in the light of our present knowledge, the *Realien* of the Parthian world<sup>551</sup>. This shows that Ant. 20:17-96 cannot be dismissed as a source for historically-minded research, but does not really help to pin down the identity of sources underlying the narrative as we have it now.

3. Schalit’s and Schiffman’s ideas<sup>552</sup> that the message of Ant. 20:17-96 can be entirely attributed to Josephus’ sources (especially to an official court chronicler from Adiabene who joined the two above-mentioned traditions) and not to Josephus’ himself is completely misleading. First, modern Iranists do not think that religious and literary traditions in Parthian society were transmitted by scribes, but by professional minstrels (*gōsān*) employing oral forms of

---

<sup>543</sup> De Jong 2012.

<sup>544</sup> Attridge 1976; Feldman 1998a; Feldman 1998b; Begg 2000.

<sup>545</sup> So Graetz 1877: 242; Frenschkowski 1990: 141.

<sup>546</sup> Barish 1983: 36.

<sup>547</sup> Täubler 1904: 69-70; Schalit 1965: 178-180; Barish 1983: 28-31; Schiffman 1987: 297-298, 308-309.

<sup>548</sup> Barish 1983: 28-31.

<sup>549</sup> Barish 1983: 31.

<sup>550</sup> Barish 1983: 31.

<sup>551</sup> De Jong 2012.

<sup>552</sup> Schalit 1965: 178-180; Schiffman 1987: 297-298, 308-309.

transmission<sup>553</sup>. Thus, in the light of our present knowledge of Parthian society we must say that Schiffman's official court chroniclers did not exist at all. Furthermore, there is a number of clues in the text of Ant. 20:17-96 that clearly show us either Josephus' direct involvement in the narrative or at least make it clear that we cannot ascribe the message of Ant. 20:17-96 to anonymous sources of Iranian background:

- the text of Ant. 20:17-96 contains a good number of Greek expressions that can be found elsewhere in Josephus' writings and as such should be regarded as typically Josephan<sup>554</sup>;
- the reference to the ark of Noah within the excursus on Carron in Ant. 20:24b-26a resembles other places in Josephus writings describing that object<sup>555</sup>;
- the comments introducing Parthian customs to readers and explaining them as local are typical of an author who writes for an outside audience and would be awkward in the mouth of an official court chronicler from Adiabene addressing the non-Jewish population of that country (so Schalit and Schiffman) or for a text coming in its essential form from the Parthian Empire itself (de Jong);
- while referring to some Jewish institutions in two places of the Adiabene narrative (Ant. 20:52; Ant. 20:71), the narrator uses possessive pronouns that clearly express his affiliation with the Jewish people;
- the Greek phrase ἔδοξε ὑπακούειν in Ant. 20:18 is considered to be a technical phrase used in ancient Greek dream reports<sup>556</sup>, and this shows that the narrative device used here is integral to the Greek literary tradition and is not a rendering from a non-Greek tradition (Aramaic or Iranian);
- Josephus' description of Izates' family relations (Ant. 20:20-22) clearly echo those in the biblical Joseph story (as retold by Josephus himself in Ant. 2:10). This can be argued because of *the striking occurrence of two terms* in Ant. 20:21 and 29: φθόνος and μῖσος, used by Josephus within one sentence only six times in all his writings (Ant 2:10; Ant. 6:193; Ant. 20:21 and 29; Bell. 2:82; Bell. 4:566; see also chapter 2.3.)<sup>557</sup>;
- the idea of God's providence and human piety is repeated throughout the narrative and clearly accounts for the guiding principle of Ant. 20:17-96 as a whole, and this message unambiguously fits Josephus' programmatic statements expressed in the forward to *Antiquitates Judaicae*. In that light, Ant. 20:17-96 is an integral part of Josephus' *opus magnum*.

In summary, it should be clear that not much can be said about the sources used in Ant. 20:17-96. First, there were apparently at least two different kinds of material used for composing the narrative. Secondly, one of them devoted to political affairs in and around Adiabene shows a good knowledge of the Parthian *Realien*. But, the specific identification of sources underlying the Adiabene narrative remains an enigma. Above all, the author of Ant. 20:17-96 shows a proficient knowledge of written Greek; identifies himself with Jewish institutions and refers to Parthian customs as an outsider explaining them to other outsiders. What is more, he uses the same language and conveys the same ideas that can be found throughout *Antiquitates Judaicae*. Therefore, the author of Ant. 20:17-96 is Josephus, and this is not to say that he did not use any sources, because he apparently did. But no matter whatever sources he had, he took them and composed his own narrative for which he himself remains responsible.

This narrative as a result of a consciously planned composition of Josephus has been the subject of our analysis in part 1, in which we have reached the following conclusions:

<sup>553</sup> Boyce 1957: 10-45; Ge. Herman 2005: 283-297, esp. 297 and n. 67; Ge. Herman 2006: 16-18.

<sup>554</sup> Broer 1994: 218-219 in contrast to the frequently-repeated but never verified statement of Feldman 1965: 399, n. "d" who recalls the observation of Thackeray "that the story of Izates is written in an easy flowing style very different from that of Ant. XVII-XIX".

<sup>555</sup> So Broer 1994: 152; Mason 2009.

<sup>556</sup> Hanson 1980: 1409; Gnuse 1996: 196-197; Weber 2000: 41-42.

<sup>557</sup> For more on this issue, see Marciak 2011a: 70-71, 73, 82.

## Conclusions to Part 1

1. The conversion of Helena and Izates is clearly the reason that prompted Josephus to write Ant. 20:17-96. At the same time, he decided to deliver a lengthy account devoted to one of two protagonists of the conversion story. Consequently, he had to do two things to realize both inspirations - first to give his account a formal and thematic principle carrying the storylines from Ant. 20:17 until Ant. 20:96, and secondly to place the conversion story as the climax of that account. As a result, first, the Adiabene narrative at large is organized as a biography (βίος) for Izates (the formal principle), secondly, the thematic principle lying behind a whole span of Ant. 20:17-96 is that of God's providence and human piety, and consequently the conversion (placed as the climax of the whole story) is presented as part of a theological idea about human piety and God's providence.

2. Ant. 20:17-96 as a biography is focused on Izates' life as a king. As a biography, it delivers a portrayal of an ideal king who abounds in many positive qualities: wisdom, self-control, courage, justice, temperance, kindness and foresight leading to benefactions. However, there is one virtue that is recalled much more frequently than any other in the Adiabene narrative - piety. Above all, Izates is a most pious king.

3. The guiding principle lying behind Ant. 20:17-96 is the theme of the relation between God's providence and human piety. Generally speaking, in Ant. 20:17-96 Josephus shows that impiety counters the working of God's providence, while the pious profit from its benevolent working. Piety consists of strict observance of ancestry laws and trust in God's providential care, and also includes filial reverence. What is more, piety seems to be a synonym for virtue as such, and consequently is seen as a source of all positive qualities. In turn, God's providence is mostly presented as God's help given to the pious ones in danger. However, there is one precondition of reaching piety in human life. Namely, one cannot assume full perfection without God's antecedent providence (see the case of Izates' birth). Further, while having reached a certain degree of piety enabling one to profit from God's protection, one still has to make an effort to respond to it by acting piously (like Izates through his circumcision). God's protection is not given once and for all.

4. Josephus recognizes that piety also exists among non-Jews. He sees non-Jews genuinely approaching Jews and their traditions as driven by piety. In fact, human piety at its height leads to contact with Jewish traditions as the highest manifestation of piety. Josephus approves of every form of sympathization from non-Jews towards Jews and their traditions, conversion is not required, though if someone despite all odds reaches to the highest ideals of piety, it is extremely praiseworthy. In Josephus' eyes, such pious individuals will be accompanied by God's providence all the way along.

5. The conversion is understood as a deep change of life. It involves leaving one's ancestral traditions and joining another ἔθνος with all its distinctive customs and laws. What is more, it also implies breaking away from one's previous associations. There is no other reason for the adoption of Jewish traditions than a human drive to piety. In reality, however, the adoption of Jewish laws can bring socially and politically dangerous consequences. But, then, Josephus believes that converts will not be left alone without God's help.

6. There seem to be some political ideas Josephus conveys through Ant. 20:17-96. First, he counters the stereotype of Jews being selfishly interested only in the welfare of their own kinsmen. In contrast, they can be loyal to their non-Jewish superiors (Artabanos). Secondly, Izates is depicted as an extremely pro-Roman politician. In fact, he is the opposite of the two stereotypes present among the Romans – that of a Jewish revolutionary and that of a Parthian barbarian. In the first case, the thought of standing up against Rome would never occur to him, in the second, as being pious in the Roman sense, he is a positive example of being loyal and trustworthy in his words and deeds.