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13. Adiabene and Judea in the Context of the Relations between Rome and Parthia

13.1. Izates II and Monobazos II as Parthian Barbarians

Several references to the 1st c. CE rulers of Adiabene can be found in Tacitus' *Annales* and Cassius Dio's *Historia Romana* where the Adiabeneans come to the fore only in the context of Roman-Parthian affairs (Tac. *Ann.* 12.10-14; 15.1-15 and Cass. Dio 62.20.2-3; 62.23.4; 63.1.2). Therefore, we must notice that the Adiabeneans were not of independent interest to Tacitus or Dio. They rather show up in Roman writings as part of the Parthian setting and as a result, Tacitus' and Dio's Adiabeneans feature most characteristics typical of the Roman image of the Parthians.

The Romans were not always interested in and well informed about the Parthians (Plutarch, *Crassus* 18.3-5)¹⁴⁷⁶, but in the course of time, especially due to negative experiences like the battle at Carrhae¹⁴⁷⁷, had to come to terms with Parthia as a power which could challenge Rome in the East¹⁴⁷⁸. Consequently, the Romans started to exhibit more interest in the Parthian world and developed their own image of the Parthians¹⁴⁷⁹. However, the Romans' knowledge of the Parthians is believed to be frequently a set of clichés¹⁴⁸⁰.

Tacitus' references can be divided into two groups. *Ann.* 12.10-14 belongs to a body of eastern sections in the Claudius books (*Ann.* 11 and 12)¹⁴⁸¹. The eastern sections clearly stand out from the rest of the narrative set in Rome, and as such are regarded by commentators as either digressions or coherent material consciously used as interplay between Roman and Eastern scenes¹⁴⁸². In turn, *Ann.* 15.1-15 is part of a lengthy narrative in Books 13-15 on Corbulo's campaigns¹⁴⁸³.

Ann. 12.10-14¹⁴⁸⁴ describes an attempt by the Romans to establish Meherdates on the Parthian throne in lieu of Gotarzes, the current king (49-50 CE)¹⁴⁸⁵. The whole enterprise was started by some Parthians who were hostile to their king Gotarzes and arrived in Rome to ask Claudius to appoint Meherdates as a king over them. Caesar agreed and military action was undertaken by the Romans with support of local forces – the Parthian magnates, forces of the satrap Carenus, and troops of the Arab Acbarus. The army had to march through Adiabene, and then the forces of king Izates (“rex Izates”¹⁴⁸⁶) joined the coalition (*Ann.* 12.13). At this point Izates is said to be allied with Meherdatis in public, but in fact was inclined towards Gotarzes (*Ann.* 12.13)¹⁴⁸⁷. The campaign was doomed to come to naught when “first Izates and then

¹⁴⁷⁶ Sonnabend 1986: 157-159, 169-171, 177-178; Campbell 1993: 216-217;

¹⁴⁷⁷ Sonnabend 1986: 157-159, 174-176; Campbell 1993: 216; Lerouge 2007: 83-86.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Campbell 1993: 216-217; Sonnabend 1986: 157-159, 174-176.

¹⁴⁷⁹ For a precise overview of the development of the Roman image of the Parthians, especially its different stages, see Sonnabend 1986: 157-227; Lerouge 2007: 83-169.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Walser 1951: 72-75, 136-154; Sonnabend 1986: 157-300; Ehrhardt 1998: 295-307; Campbell 1993: 218-219.

¹⁴⁸¹ The texts and translations used here are Furneaux 1907; Koesterman 1967; Jackson 1937a and 1937b.

¹⁴⁸² Syme 1958: 259-260; Vessey 1971: 385-409; Keitel 1978: 462-473; Pford 1998: 82, 87-89.

¹⁴⁸³ Gilmartin 1973: 583; Pfordt 1998: 170-183.

¹⁴⁸⁴ The texts and translations used here are Furneaux 1907; Koesterman 1967; Jackson 1937a.

¹⁴⁸⁵ On the historical context, see Debevoise 1938: 72-73; Dillemann 1962: 188.

¹⁴⁸⁶ The name „Izates” in 12.13 is a common emendation from „Iuliatas” in 12.13 and „Ezates” or „Exates” (manuscripts M and L respectively) in *Ann.* 12.14: see Furneaux 1907: 76, n. 2; Koestermann 1967: 129-130. This emendation is done on the basis of Ant. 20:17-96.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Gerber/Greef 1903: 465: “in Gotarzen per occultata et magis fida inclinabat i.q. heimilich und mit mehr Treue“. See also Furneaux 1907: 76, n. 3; Koesterman 1967: 130.

Acbarus” departed with their forces. This deed is harshly judged by Tacitus who explains it with the very nature of these barbarians who did it “in accordance with the levity of their race and with the fact, proved by experience, that barbarians are more inclined to seek their kings from Rome than to keep them” (*Ann.* 12.14)¹⁴⁸⁸.

Ann. 12.10-14 is clearly written from the Roman perspective. The Parthian envoys come to Rome and seek help from Claudius. Claudius’ response recorded in direct speech perfectly reflects the Roman image of the Parthian world. Claudius refers to the envoys as “barbari” when he gives advice to Meherdates, and slightly more polite as “gens externa” while directly addressing the envoys (*Ann.* 12.11). Both terms were used by Roman writers as fixed ways of referring to other non-Roman peoples. “Gentes” or “nationes externa” used to be a neutral geographical term denoting peoples outside the Roman Empire, however, with time became a pejorative term functioning as a synonym to “barbarus”¹⁴⁸⁹. Thus, “externus” and “barbarus” express the inferiority of non-Roman peoples in terms of culture and statehood as opposed to Roman (and Greek) “mos maiorum and res publica”¹⁴⁹⁰. Further, Claudius’ agreement to dispatch Meherdates is clearly presented as resulting from his will to bring “mercy”, “justice” and “tranquility” (“clementia”, “iustitia”, “quietas” - *Ann.* 12.11) to the outside world whose constitution is marked by the despotism of the king and slavery of his subjects (“nepos”, “dominatio” and “servi” as opposed to “rector” and “cives” in *Ann.* 12.10-11). Thus, the invasion is exactly presented as an enlightened mission for the sake of those who live in darkness outside the Roman civilized world and are tormented by despotism with all its consequences – cruelty and slavery (“saevitia” in *Ann.* 12.10, “dominatio” and “servi” in *Ann.* 12.11)¹⁴⁹¹. Further, when the invasion force is already on its way and happens to be considerably supported by the reinforcement of some Parthian magnates and the Arabs under Acbarus, the Roman general Cassius cautions Meherdates that the enthusiasm of barbarians can change very quickly into treachery (“perfidia” in *Ann.* 12.12). This is another commonplace in the Roman stereotyped image of the Parthians who were seen as unreliable, untrustworthy and disloyal in their commitments¹⁴⁹². The further narrative only illustrates this truth. Acbarus first leads the coalition astray, and finally Izates and Acbarus leave the coalition which in fact means its unsuccessful ending. This leads Tacitus to his final remarks on the levity of the barbarians’ race (“levitate gentili”)¹⁴⁹³ and this remark clearly operates with a notion of the inferiority of the barbarians’ race, but, what is more, explains their deeds as deterministically resulting from their race.

All in all, the events recorded in *Ann.* 12.10-14 are embedded into an ideological agenda that can be divided into three steps – the prediction of the fiasco of the invasion made upon the Roman knowledge of the very nature of barbarians, the subsequent illustration of barbarian treachery and finally the conclusion as the events reached a climax. The conclusion fully confirms the prediction. Thus, Tacitus does not really operate with political reasons in his

¹⁴⁸⁸ Jackson 1937a: 335.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Walser 1951: 67-72, esp. 67 and n. 304. Another term is „alter orbis” - see Sonnabend 1986: 211-214; J.W. Drijvers 1998: 199-202.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Walser 1951: 67-72.

¹⁴⁹¹ Campbell 1993: 218-219. In the second run, such a portrayal of Claudius implies a great deal of irony on the side of Tacitus who draws a parallel between dynastic intrigue and treachery in Rome and those in Parthia in order to accentuate his critique of *domus Caesaris* under Claudius and Agrippina – see Keitel 1978: 462-473, esp. 462-468. Thus, Tacitus’ use of Parthian vices to describe *domus Caesaris* emphasizes his fierce critique of dynastic politics in Rome. Likewise Kosterman 1967: 125; Pfordt 1998: 98 and Walser 1951: 154.

¹⁴⁹² Campbell 1993: 218; Sonnabend 1986: 181; Sommer 2005: 234-235.

¹⁴⁹³ Furneaux 1967: 77, n. 11.

portrayal of the course of events, but offers us psychological explanations based on his clichés of the Parthians¹⁴⁹⁴. In that respect, *Ann.* 12:10-14 is an excellent example of Tacitus' "Barbarenpsychologie"¹⁴⁹⁵. As for Izates, he appears in the narrative in a secondary role as an element illustrating the Romans' prediction. Theoretically, he shows up late in the narrative and should not be blamed for all previous acts of 'Tacitus' barbarians', especially those of Acbarus who is said to be dishonest and to delay the campaign from the very beginning and finally leading it to fiasco (*Ann.* 12.12). In fact, the figure of Acbarus attracts most of Tacitus' harsh remarks¹⁴⁹⁶. Yet, the final conclusion concerning the levity of the barbarians' race is also referred to Izates as to everyone else among the "barbarians" in *Ann.* 12.10-14. It is so because Izates is presented as an integral part of the outside barbarian world and in fact it does not matter to what extent he can be personally blamed for the final fiasco. Tacitus does not discern between better or worse "barbarians" in *Ann.* 12.10-14 and does not weigh blame against individual involvement. Izates and Acbarus are equally barbarian, and as such are not to be trusted. Consequently, Tacitus' only explicit remark on Izates as a duplicitous politician is in full agreement with his stereotyped outlook on the Parthian world.

Monobazos (and the Adiabenean forces), the ruling prince of Adiabene, appears in Tacitus' narrative about the Eastern campaigns of Nero's general, Domitius Corbulo (*Ann.* 13.5-9; 34.2-41; 14.23-26; 15.1-17; 15.24-31)¹⁴⁹⁷ who fought in Armenia in 58-63 CE¹⁴⁹⁸. The Romans elevated Tigranes, their favorite, to the Armenian throne and expelled Tiridates, who was appointed king of Armenia by the Parthians. Tigranes in turn continued military activity by ravaging the bordering country of Adiabene. The moment for his attack was well chosen because the Parthian king Vologases was engaged in fighting a revolt in the eastern part of his country and thus could not respond well to the threat from the West and support his allies. Tacitus recalls the frustration of those Parthian magnates who felt they had been abandoned in that situation (Tacitus calls them very generally "primores gentium" but we can infer from the context that Parthian elites, both from Parthia and vassal states like Armenia and Adiabene are meant here). Their resentment is said to be inflamed by Monobazos whose words full of irony and sarcasm are quoted in a third person discourse: "What protection was he to seek? Or from what quarter? Armenia had already been ceded; the adjacent country was following; and, if Parthia refused protection, then the Roman yoke pressed more lightly upon a surrendered than upon a conquered nation!" (*Ann.* 15.1)¹⁴⁹⁹. Next, the reaction of Tiridates is similarly given, and the text goes on to report how the Parthian king Vologases decided at the council to send auxiliary forces to reinforce Tiridates. Vologases sent a body of cavalry under the command of a Parthian noble named Monaeses and added a number of Adiabenean auxiliaries (*Ann.* 15.2). Further, *Ann.* 15.4 records the fights at Tigranokerta, the citadel, which was besieged by the Parthians. Here, Tacitus recalls the participation of Adiabenean forces. The Parthians resort to occasional flights of arrows, but lack the boldness required at close quarters for the prosecution of a siege (*Ann.* 15.4). So the Adiabene auxiliary forces pushed forward with their ladders and machines, but were easily thrown back and then cut to pieces (*Ann.* 15.4). The whole campaign was ended by a

¹⁴⁹⁴ Walser 1951: 160.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Walser 1951: 149.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Sommer 2005: 234, n. 37: "Die Verschlagenheit der Edessener hat – man beachte die augenfälligen Parallelen in der Darstellung zur Niederlage des Crassus – geradezu topischen Charakter".

¹⁴⁹⁷ Gilmartin 1973: 583-626. See also Pford 1998: 170-177.

¹⁴⁹⁸ For the historical context, see Debevoise 1938: 179-202; Dillemann 1962: 268-272 and for the chronology, see Schur 1925: 75-96 and Wheeler 1997: 383-397.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Jackson 1937b: 217.

truce described in *Ann.* 15.14 where king Monobazos shows up once again. Monobazos is said to be called in as a witness to the agreement of both sides (*Ann.* 15.4). *Ann.* 15.4 is in fact only a very brief mention of Monobazos.

Interestingly, Tacitus opens the whole account with a scene set at the Parthian court (*Ann.* 15.1-2). Consequently, we get the impression that this time Tacitus makes an effort to see the situation through the eyes of the Parthians and not only the Romans (unlike in *Ann.* 12.10-14). However, a speech delivered by a “barbarian” is not a rare literary device in Tacitus, and actually serves him to convey his own Roman point of view¹⁵⁰⁰. In *Ann.* 15.1 Tacitus stresses that due to recent blows the Parthians are suffering most in their pride¹⁵⁰¹. This picture fits well the Roman notion of the Parthians as a proud people (Plutarch, *Sulla* 5.4-5; Plutarch, *Pompeius* 33.3-5)¹⁵⁰². Similarly, his scornful comments on Tigranes’ background as a Roman hostage touch on another theme in Romans’ clichés on the Parthians, namely, it is the Parthians’ contempt for Greek customs that make all Parthian returnees from Rome highly unwelcome (locus classicus for this stereotype is Tac. *Ann.* 2.56; see also *Ann.* 6.32 and 2.1.1-2)¹⁵⁰³. Nevertheless, this time Tacitus indeed pictures a political constellation from the Parthian perspective too. It is especially true of Monobazos’ words. They recall a situation of a Parthian vassal who, being caught between two empires, has to be opportunistic. Unless he receives enough support from Parthia, he will be forced to accept the lesser evil, that is, to appease the winning Romans and to wait out their supremacy.

What can be said about Tacitus’ portrayal of Monobazos and the Adiabeneans? Let us begin with one general observation, that Monobazos was spared personal comments from Tacitus unlike Izates in *Ann.* 20.10-14. Second, Monobazos is introduced only as a ruling prince of Adiabene (*Ann.* 15.1: “penes Adiabenum regimen”), or just briefly as Monobazos the Adiabenean (*Ann.* 15.14: “Monobazus Adiabenus”), while Izates is entitled as “the king” (*Ann.* 12.13: “rex Izates”). Whether or not this difference reflects a change in the political status is uncertain, though the terminology itself may indicate this. Further, Monobazos and the Adiabeneans are indeed presented as a distinctive part of the Parthian world. First, Monobazos is presented as an important enough figure to have his speech recalled alongside the king of Armenia and the Parthian king Vologases. Secondly, his words are said to have a hold on other Parthian nobles. Thirdly, the Adiabenean troops are recalled as additional forces strengthening the core of the Parthian reinforcement. Finally, Monobazos serves as witness to the Roman-Parthian truce. The last fact does not make him independent from the two main sides (note that the other Roman-Parthian truce was witnessed by Herod Antipas, a Roman client king – *Ant.* 18:101-105), though it stresses his importance as a distinctive ruler within the Parthian world.

In *Ann.* 15.4 we find an interesting description of the siege of Tigranokerta by the Parthian forces. The text allows us to see the Adiabene auxiliary forces as infantry supporting the Parthian cavalry since the Adiabeneans are said to make use of their ladders and machines to besiege the city. However, the Adiabeneans’ performance serves Tacitus to recall a commonplace in the Romans’ perception of the Parthians as a whole. While the Romans recalled the Parthians’ superb skills in archery and horsemanship (Plut. *Ant.* 52; Cass. Dio 49.29.1-4.),

¹⁵⁰⁰ Walser 1951: 154-160.

¹⁵⁰¹ Gilmartin 1973: 604-605.

¹⁵⁰² Campbell 1993: 214.

¹⁵⁰³ Walser 1951: 72-74; Campbell 1993: 218; Sonnabend 1986: 219-220.

they often mentioned their complete inability to conduct sieges and their dislike of distant and long campaigns (Cass. Dio 40.14; Tac., *Ann.* 11.9-10)¹⁵⁰⁴.

Corbulo's campaign is also described by Cassius Dio¹⁵⁰⁵. The person of Monobazos, king of Adiabene appears in *Historia Romana*, 62.20.2-3; 62.23.4 and 63.1.2. According to Cassius Dio, because Adiabene was being ravaged by Tigranes at that time (Cass. Dio 20.2), the Parthian decided to send "Monobazos, king of Adiabene and Monaeses, a Parthian" to oppose Tigranes. Yet, the siege became so unsuccessful that Vologases decided to give up the expedition. Further, Monobazos is mentioned as giving hostages to Rome alongside Vologases in Cass. Dio 62.23.4, as well as together with Tiridates, Vologases and Pacorus in Cass. Dio 63.1.2.

Dio's version is a great deal briefer and less elaborate than that of Tacitus. In fact, this passage belongs to lost parts of Dio's writing and is only known through Byzantine excerpts (see also p. 150)¹⁵⁰⁶. What is more, Dio's narrative itself may have been based on Tacitus¹⁵⁰⁷. Thus, the character of Dio's text on Monobazos, compared to that of Tacitus, perfectly illustrates Millar's description of the work of Ioannes Xiphilinus of Trapezus, Dio's main epitomizer: "a rather erratic selection from his material, substantially, but not invariably, in Dio's order and often keeping very close to Dio's wording"¹⁵⁰⁸. Therefore, this source, as we have it now, can hardly be treated as independent evidence for our purposes.

To summarize, Latin sources on 1st c. CE Adiabene royalty have a two-fold value. They are most frequently used as a repository of historical information (for our use of them in that respect, see chapter 12), and this is helpful since it helps us gain a broader perspective by realizing that the characters do not only appear in one literary tradition. Furthermore, they reflect well Roman stereotypes on the Orbis Parthicus in which Adiabene rulers represent an integral part. Consequently, Izates and Monobazos do not appear as Jews or Jewish converts but as Parthian barbarians and as such present most typically (in Roman eyes) Parthian vices¹⁵⁰⁹: they are duplicitous, unworthy of trust, in terms of military skills – unfit for sieges and disinclined to distant and long campaigns, and above all, they are potential enemies of Rome.

13.2. The Jews in Adiabene

Since Izates adopted Jewish ancestral customs while in Adiabene, the question arises as to what we know about the presence of Jews in Adiabene in the Parthian period. Ant. 20:17-96 mentions two Jews who were in close contact with Izates. They are Ananias and Eleazar. However, both are said to arrive in Adiabene from the outside. Ananias came to Adiabene from Charakene on a personal invitation from Izates, and is said to be ἔμπορος (Ant. 20:34). This term can apply to merchants, as well as travelers in general, which aligns with the nature of ancient merchandise, which often involved long-distance travel. This word is very rare in Josephus, it appears only ten times in all his writings (Ant 2:32; 2:33; 2:39; 8:179, 8:189; 12:209, 12:299; 15:333; 20:34; Bell 4:643), and in all cases those who are called ἔμπορος undertake travels for a

¹⁵⁰⁴ Campbell 1993: 218-219; Sonnabend 1986: 195.

¹⁵⁰⁵ The text used here is that given by M. Stern 1980: 368-369.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Millar 1964: 1-4.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Millar 1964: 34-48.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Millar 1964: 2.

¹⁵⁰⁹ By contrast, Barish 1983: 7 speculates that Tacitus was well aware of Izates' conversion and, given his otherwise attested anti-Semitism, this has influenced his negative picture of Izates. However, this is exactly the point made by the present study – Tacitus' negative portrayal of Izates results from his biases towards the Parthian world.

Part 3: Material and Political Environment of Adiabene from the 3rd c. BCE to the 3rd c. CE

commercial purpose. As far as Eleazar is concerned, he is said to come from Galilee, and the text makes the impression it is a one-time occasion when he arrives in Adiabene. Of course, the question can be posed whether there was any Jewish community whose presence could prompt Eleazar to come to Adiabene, but since Adiabene lay on one of the main routes between the West and the East, precisely along a convenient road from Nineveh to Babylon, his presence in Adiabene may be explained as resulting from his travels.

Nevertheless, a lot of scholars think that there was a considerable Jewish community present in Parthian Adiabene. Let us then simply present the evidence before we arrive at our own conclusion:

1 – Following the chronological sequence of Ant. 20:17-96, while Izates resides in Charakene, Helena remains in Adiabene. Helena is then instructed by “a certain other Jew” and this clearly takes place in Adiabene.

2 – Except for members of the Adiabene elites, who are mentioned by Josephus in Bell. and are self-evidently taken to be Jewish like all the other fighters participating in the Great Revolt, Josephus mentions another non-royal Adiabenean named Chagiras son of Nabataios taking part in the uprising (Bell. 5:474).

3 – Josephus remarks in Bell. 1:6 that the Aramaic original of *De Bello Judaico* was addressed, among others, to his brethren from Adiabene.

4 – Likewise in Bell. 2:388 Josephus records Agrippa’s speech which recalls “kinsmen from Adiabene” who are hoped by the insurgents to come to aid the uprising. Regardless of whether or not this speech accurately reflects historical realities at the time of the uprising, it at least expresses Josephus’ post-factum agenda directed at interested readers in Adiabene.

5 – *BT Qiddušin* 72a and *BT Yebamot* 16b-17a identify the biblical Havor (2 Kings 18:11) with Ḥadyab and as one of the settlements captured by the Assyrian invader¹⁵¹⁰. This is, of course, not to say that the Jews in Seleucid-Parthian Adiabene were descendants of the exiles from the Northern Kingdom¹⁵¹¹, but might implicitly suggest that the Babylonian Rabbis were aware of some Jewish settlements in that area, and could relate the Adiabenean Jews to this Biblical textual tradition¹⁵¹².

6 – There are two Jews from Adiabene briefly mentioned by name in the Talmud: Mār 'Ukba from Arbela (in *PT Soṭah* 4, 3 (4))¹⁵¹³, and Jacob Hadyava (in *BT Baba Batra* 26b)¹⁵¹⁴. The reference to Mār 'Ukba giving instructions in Arbela could suggest the existence of a Rabbinic school in Arbela¹⁵¹⁵. Likewise, two other passages in the Babylonian Talmud, Mo'ed Qaṭan 28a and Niddah 21b, recall certain opinions ascribed to an anonymous “pair (שׁוֹתֵף)” of scholars from Ḥadyab¹⁵¹⁶. These references can approximately be dated to the late 3rd c. CE¹⁵¹⁷.

¹⁵¹⁰ Oppenheimer 1983: 22.

¹⁵¹¹ This question constitutes a separate field of research. For an introduction, see Crown/Pummer 2005.

¹⁵¹² Likewise Dalley 2007: 201 most of whose remarks we otherwise do not accept. For hostile views of the Babylonian Jews towards other Mesopotamian Jews, see Kalmin 2010: 76-77. If Kalmin is right that the Babylonian redactors of the Talmud were at discord with the Adiabene Jews, this could additionally explain the low number of references to the Adiabene Jewry in the Babylonian Talmud.

¹⁵¹³ Altheim/Stiehl 1965: 69; Oppenheimer 1983: 38-39.

¹⁵¹⁴ Oppenheimer 1983: 22.

¹⁵¹⁵ Gottheil 1901:191.

¹⁵¹⁶ Oppenheimer 1983: 22.

¹⁵¹⁷ Goodblatt 2006: 84.

Chapter 13: Adiabene and Judea in the Context of the Relations between Rome and Parthia

8 – A rapid expansion of Christianity in Adiabene, especially in the 4th c. CE, is often credited to a fertile ground, being the presence of a Jewish community¹⁵¹⁸.

As we can see, our evidence is scarce and often indirect; nevertheless, some conclusions can still be reached:

1. The earliest reference to the Jewish presence in Adiabene starts with the conversion of the Adiabene royalty. There are no source references prior to that 1st c. CE occurrence.

2. However, Helena's first contact with a certain Jew who had access to her would have been unlikely if that Jew was a complete stranger in the Adiabene kingdom, all the more so it is highly unlikely that Helena could practice and enjoy Jewish customs without any Jewish environment around her. Thus, there must have been some Jewish presence in Adiabene prior to the conversion of its royalty, and it could not have been completely insignificant, though we cannot precisely determine its size and character.

3. From the conversion on, we start to have more references to the Jewish presence in Adiabene. They basically come from two backgrounds. One is Josephus - his reports on the Adiabene dynasty of royal converts, as well as his remarks on the political context of the Jewish uprising and the Roman-Parthian relations. The other comes from Rabbinic traditions (the late 3rd c. CE). Both groups of sources mention very separate cases of the Jewish presence in Adiabene, but if we focus on the broader context of such references, we may arrive at some conclusions.

4. The conversion of the royal house must have created a convenient environment for the Jews in Adiabene and result in its considerable growth. The growth in size and importance of the Jewish community in Adiabene in the 1st c. CE can best explain a growing number of references to Adiabene Jews in literature from that period on¹⁵¹⁹. What is more, Josephus' references to non-royal Jews from Adiabene show that this phenomenon cannot be restricted only to Adiabene royal elites. Furthermore, Josephus' brief remarks in Bell. reveal two things – first, the insurgents in Jerusalem directed their hopes for external help towards the Jews beyond the Euphrates, Adiabene in particular¹⁵²⁰. Second, the perception of the failed uprising among the Mesopotamian Jews, including Adiabene, was still an issue for Josephus after 73 CE who decided to address them with his Aramaic version of *De Bello Judaico*¹⁵²¹. These facts can be best explained by a mixture of two factors – a considerable number of Jews beyond the Euphrates (including Adiabene) and the political weight of the Adiabene Jewish community whose influence reached as far as the royal court of Adiabene.

¹⁵¹⁸ This is in fact a very frequently repeated observation – e.g. see Fiey 1965: 41-43; Neusner 1966: 144-150; J.B. Segal 2005: 68-71; M. Stern 1976: 170-178; Chaumont 1988: 52-53; Moffett 1992: 128-129; Feldman 1992: 376-377; Walker 2006: 107.

¹⁵¹⁹ Additionally, there is the question of Nisibis that belonged to Adiabene in the 1st c. CE and whose Jewish community could offer an additional boost to Jewish life in Adiabene. For instance, Sellwood 1985: 457 even thinks that Helena was converted through the contact with the Jews from Nisibis. However, it is a matter of scholarly dispute as to which point in history Nisibis had a considerable Jewish community and was an important center of Rabbinic studies. Josephus speaks about Nisibis as a collection point of temple taxes from Jews beyond the Euphrates for shipment to Jerusalem (Ant. 18:312-313), but this could be Nisibis near Nehardea (see Oppenheimer 1983: 333-334). Further, there is a number of traditions about Rabbi Judah ben Bathyra in Nisibis which associate him with the mid-2nd c. Rabbi (one story presupposes the before 70 CE setting), but the historical credibility of these stories and their dating is equally controversial. See Neusner 1969: 46-53, 94-99; Raschke 1978: 642 and 824 (n. 741); Oppenheimer 1983: 328-334; Goodblatt 2006: 83-85.

¹⁵²⁰ Likewise Rajak 1984: 183-184; Arcari 2007: 484.

¹⁵²¹ According to Feldman 1992: 377, Josephus' statement in Bell. 1:6 implies "a sizable number of interested readers".

5. There is a gap in sources reporting on the presence of Jews in Adiabene between the late 1st c. CE and the 3rd c. CE, but developed forms of Rabbinic life in Adiabene in the late 3rd c. CE must have needed some time to allow its growth, thus the 2nd c. CE Jewish community in Adiabene should be seen as an intermediary stage between the 1st c. CE and 3rd c. CE developments¹⁵²².

13. 3. The Adiabeneans in Jerusalem during the Jewish Uprising against Rome

Several times Josephus recalls some Adiabeneans in Bell. in his descriptions of the military activities of the Jewish fighters against the Romans during the Jewish uprising in 66-70 CE. The nature of these references is very similar to Josephus' contribution with regard to Helena's mausoleum and the Adiabenean palaces in Bell. – the Adiabeneans are briefly recalled only in passing. Nevertheless, these references can still be very revealing since they shed light on the presence and activity of the Adiabeneans in Jewish society during one of most crucial events of Jewish history – the uprising against the Roman rule in Judea in 66-73 CE.

The first reference is made in the context of the beginnings of the Jewish uprising. Bell. 2 describes the reign of Herod's successors, the Roman procurators and finally the outbreak of the revolt¹⁵²³. In particular, Bell. 2:517-555 gives an account of procurator Cestius' attempts to put down the revolt at its very beginnings. Bell. 2:517-522 describes the approach of the Roman forces under Cestius towards Jerusalem, constantly being interrupted by attacks of insurgents. One such ambush on the Roman force is presented in Bell. 2:517-522. The Romans suffered great losses and as a result had to slow down their advance. The success of the insurgents was due to superior numbers, as well as to the extreme bravery on the battlefield. Josephus recalls the names of the most distinguished in the insurgents' ranks: "Monobazos (Μονόβαζος) and Kenedaios (Κενεδαίος), kinsmen of Monobazos, king of Adiabene" (τοῦ τῆς Ἀδιαβηνῆς βασιλέως συγγενεῖς)", as well as Niger the Peraean and Silas the Babylonian" (Bell. 2: 520).

Bell. 2:520 is indeed a very brief reference. Yet, if we take a look at the whole context, there are a few things that attract our attention. First of all, Monobazos and Kenedaios are treated as members of a group - Ἰουδαῖοι. In fact, the whole context pertains to activities of a collective noun - Ἰουδαῖοι. Ἰουδαῖοι are a collective protagonist of this passage and fight against another group - Ῥωμαῖοι. The noun Ἰουδαῖοι is explicitly used in Bell. 2:517, 2:519, 2:520, 2:521, 2:522, otherwise the subject of the sentence is given in plural in accordance with a collective protagonist - Ἰουδαῖοι. Some members of that group are explicitly named only twice. Of special importance to us is Bell. 2:520 where some Adiabeneans are indeed recalled. Note that the sentence in Bell. 2:519 speaks of Ἰουδαῖοι and then in Bell. 2:520 some *among* them are enumerated. The only reason explicitly given in the text for distinguishing them from the whole group is that they deserved particular praise for their bravery¹⁵²⁴.

However, the term Ἰουδαῖοι as such can be highly problematic¹⁵²⁵. The issue touches on a number of questions, especially on the notorious and complex "who was a Jew" debate (see

¹⁵²² Likewise J.B. Segal 1964: 35. See also Lepper 1948: 154.

¹⁵²³ Attridge 1984: 194.

¹⁵²⁴ Consequently, no specific connection, other than their bravery, is drawn by Josephus between the royal Adiabeneans and Silas with Niger. By contrast, Kokkinos 1998: 336 suggests with regard to Silas that „as a deserter he became attached to the royal family of Adiabene. Likewise, in Kokkinos' opinion, the royal Adiabeneans "were among the leaders of the rebel forces in Jerusalem".

¹⁵²⁵ S.J.D. Cohen 2000; S.J.D. Cohen 1994: 23-38; Mason 2007: 457-512; D.R. Schwartz 2007: 4-27.

chapter 4.3.1.). Nevertheless, we have concluded in chapter 4.3.1. that Josephus unambiguously understands conversion as joining the Jewish ἔθνος, and not as adoption of a purely (that is abstracted from ethnicity) political or religious system. Thus, there is no good reason to a priori think that the term Ἰουδαῖος in Bell. 2:517-522 is used by Josephus as a function of political or religious affiliations, but not of ethnicity. Of course, Josephus does not seem to give us here an exhaustive definition of who Ἰουδαῖοι were and who did not belong to them, since in Bell. 2:520 Josephus also mentions King Agrippa as neither a member of Ἰουδαῖοι nor among the Roman troops, and from elsewhere we can know that Josephus would surely consider him to be a Ἰουδαῖος. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Monobazos and Kenedaios are clearly called Ἰουδαῖοι. At the same time, what strikes us in Bell. 2:517-522 is that those Ἰουδαῖοι are also somehow connected with a foreign country. However, the last observation does not refer exclusively to the Adiabeneans, but equally concerns two other distinguished fighters - Niger and Silas. Let us then briefly examine the data provided by Josephus in Bell. 2:517-522, and other related references, to see whether there is not anything that could make us change our opinion on Josephus' understanding of Jewish identity. Since we apparently know more about the background of the Adiabene royalty than about the two other fighters, let us see what can be said about Niger and Silas

Σίλας is considered to be a Semitic name¹⁵²⁶. Lexicon entries identify it as derived from the Hebrew שׂאִיל or the Palmyrene Aramaic שׂאִילא¹⁵²⁷. However, T. Ilan, following Mussies¹⁵²⁸, relates it to the Aramaic שׂאִילא or שׂאִילא and the Hebrew שׂאִיל¹⁵²⁹, while שׂאִיל is given by Ilan as a separate entry, and is often rendered as Σαοῦλος in Greek¹⁵³⁰. The agnomen Βαβυλωνίος is suggested by Ilan as a designation of the country the person emigrated from¹⁵³¹. This person is mentioned a few times in Josephus' writings (Bell. 2:520, 2:616; 3:11, 3:19; Vita 1:272), and we know that he served as a general of Agrippa's cavalry¹⁵³². Nothing explicitly suggests that he was of non-Jewish descent. Silas the Babylonian is rather a Ἰουδαῖος whose descendants were first settled in Babylonia, but some migrated to Palestine later at the time of King Herod and were settled as military colonists in Batanaea (Ant. 17:23-29, Bell. 3:11)¹⁵³³. Thus, the agnomen, the Babylonian points to Silas' origin from a Jewish diaspora in Babylonia rather than suggests his foreign-Babylonian descent.

In turn, Niger is a Latin loanword (*niger* meaning “black” and as a name translates “dark-complexioned”)¹⁵³⁴. The name itself may indicate a great deal of Romanization¹⁵³⁵. It was used

¹⁵²⁶ By contrast, see Bauer/K.Aland/B.Aland 1988: 1499-1500 and Danker 2000: 923 who both think that Silas is a contracted form Σιλουανός or Σιλβανός.

¹⁵²⁷ Bauer/K.Aland/B.Aland 1988: 1499-1500; Danker 2000: 923.

¹⁵²⁸ Mussies 1994: 245, 249.

¹⁵²⁹ Ilan 1992: 414.

¹⁵³⁰ Ilan 1992: 211-212.

¹⁵³¹ It is Ilan's category 6.3.1 („foreigners” within Jewish Palestinian society) different from 6.3.2 „gentiles” and 6.3.3 „converts”, though all three being parts of the category 6.3 „doubtful Palestinian Jews”. See Ilan 1992: 48-50.

¹⁵³² Actually, we know from Josephus about two persons bearing the same name and agnomen, both high officers of the Agrippa family. Schwartz 1990: 70 suggests that they both came from the same family in Batanea and served under Agrippa I and Agrippa II respectively. Silas of Agrippa I can be found in Ant. 18:204, Ant. 19:317, Ant. 19:320). See also Kokkinos 1998: 283 and n. 70, 336 and n. 241; Mendels 1992: 345, 352 and n. 25; Goodman 1987: 160-162.

¹⁵³³ As suggested by Thackeray 1927: 525 or they were at least regarded by their contemporaries as connected with the Babylonian Diaspora. See Neusner 1969: 67-68 and nn. 2-3; D.R. Schwartz 1990: 70; Goodman 1987: 160-162; Kokkinos 1998: 336.

¹⁵³⁴ Bauer/K.Aland/B.Aland 1988: 1090; Danker 2000: 672.

by the Romans, as well as in the Near East, and often given to men of dark-complexion¹⁵³⁶. We find this person in three more places of Bell: 2:566; 2:11; 4:359. Especially important is Bell. 2:566 where Niger is said to be a one-time governor of Idumaea and his agnomen Περαιίτης¹⁵³⁷ is explained by the fact he was by birth from Peraea beyond the Jordan (γένος δ' ἦν ἐκ τῆς περὶ Ἰορδάνην Περαιίας διὸ καὶ Περαιίτης ἐκαλεῖτο). Further, in Ant. 20:2-3 we learn of Jews of Peraea who had an armed conflict with the people of Philadelephia. In fact, Peraea was substantially inhabited by the Jewish population by 66 CE, especially south of the Jabbok¹⁵³⁸. Thus, Niger “the Peraean” is apparently a Ἰουδαῖος born in the Peraean Diaspora¹⁵³⁹ and consequently his agnomen points only to his geographical background. In sum, although theoretically it cannot be ruled out that Niger and Silas were non-Jews who were circumcised (or their direct predecessors), the context rather shows us that in both cases we have to do with Jews whose agnomens suggest that they (or their close ancestors) came from a Jewish Diaspora from Babylonia (via Batanea) and Peraea. If so, there is no good reason to treat Monobazos and Kenedaios in Bell. 2:520 differently than Silas or Niger. But for Ant. 20:17-96 (where we are told that they were born as natives of Adiabene and only later adopted Jewish ancestral customs), we might quickly pass by the reference to Adiabene in Bell. 2:520 seeing it only as a geographical designation.

What else can be said about Bell. 2:517-522? First, Monobazos and Kenedaios are said to be συγγενεῖς of Monobazos, king of Adiabene. The problem is that συγγενεῖς is not specific enough to distinguish genealogical lines in the modern sense. Generally speaking, it describes blood ties¹⁵⁴⁰. Consequently, it can be used for family members (*relatives*), but also in a wider sense as *countrymen* (still the same blood ties in a wider sense), but it also has a third meaning as an official title meaning *king's friends* (so in Xenophon's description of the Persian court, as well as at the Ptolemaic and Seleucid courts)¹⁵⁴¹. Since both Adiabenean fighters are connected to the current king of Adiabene, the first or third option is most likely. However, it may be impossible to distinguish between these two translations, *relative* and *king's friend*, based only on Bell. 2:520, since the idea behind the honor of being a *king's friend* is that of an extended family when some individuals get recognized as being part of the family life at the royal court¹⁵⁴².

If Monobazos of Bell. 2:530 was a family member of the royal house of Adiabene, the question arises as to how close he was related to Monobazos II. Can he be regarded as a son of Monobazos II, thus being perhaps heir to the Adiabene throne (as Monobazos III)? Monobazos was a name used by at least two rulers of Adiabene in the 1st c. CE. Monobazos was a name of Izates II's father (thus Monobazos I) and that of his older brother (Monobazos II). This practice can be interpreted as patronymy (naming son after his father's name)¹⁵⁴³, and may indicate that

¹⁵³⁵ Ilan 1992: 13 regards Latin names used by Jews as an indicator of the influence of Roman culture and seems to separate both cultural realms.

¹⁵³⁶ D.M. Goldenberg 2003:123.

¹⁵³⁷ Niger “the Peraean” or “the Peraeite”, this is a noun derived from an adjective, and the translation “the Peraean” is closer to the original than the translation “of Peraea”.

¹⁵³⁸ M. Stern 1976: 262.

¹⁵³⁹ M. Stern 1976: 262.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Liddell/Scott/Jones 1986: 1659-1660. See also G. Herman 1987: 11-12; Ch.P. Jones 1999: 30-32; J.M. Hall 2002: 212-213.

¹⁵⁴¹ Liddell/Scott/Jones 1986: 1660.

¹⁵⁴² G. Herman 1987: 13.

¹⁵⁴³ Hachlili 2000: 88-89.

Monobazos II was primarily considered as heir¹⁵⁴⁴. Indeed, Monobazos II later replaced Izates II on the throne and it is this same Monobazos II, Izates II's older brother, who is mentioned as a ruling king of Adiabene in Bell. 5:520. Another striking recurrence of a name in the Adiabene royalty is Izates, a convert (Izates II) who bears the same name as the father of Monobazos I and Helena (Izates I). This is in turn the practice of papyonymy, naming a child after his grandfather¹⁵⁴⁵. Did then the Adiabene royalty in the 1st c. CE practice papyonymy and patryonymy and can we reconstruct the royal lineage on this basis? Both practices were widespread among Jews in the Second Temple Period¹⁵⁴⁶, however, we do not know enough about this practice among the Parthian royalty (which would be especially relevant for Monobazos I's choice of heir). Thus, a closer affiliation of Monobazos mentioned in Bell. 2:520 as a συγγενής of Monobazos II cannot be definitely determined based only on this passage (but see below the discussion of Bell. 6:356-357, pp. 208-209).

Finally, it should be noted that all characters mentioned in Bell. 2:517-522 and presented as most distinguished in the insurgents' ranks were individuals: Monobazos and Kenedaios, Niger and Silas. Not only are these nouns proper names and no collective names are reported, but in fact the whole context is about praising personal bravery on the battlefield. Thus, let us keep in mind that no "Adiabenean auxiliary forces"¹⁵⁴⁷ can be found in Bell. 2:520¹⁵⁴⁸.

On two other occasions, we hear of more Adiabeneans taking part in the Revolt. First, Bell. 5:474-489 describes one of the attacks of Simon's group launched on Roman siege ramparts. The Jewish attack went so successfully that the Romans' own camp walls were in danger. This assault was begun by what Josephus presents as the boldest undertaking on the side of the besieged during this war. Namely, only three warriors snatched some torches and rushed out of the city into a mass of enemies to set the siege machines on fire. Not only did they succeed but they also caused great terror among their enemies. What is more, inspired by their success, masses of Jewish warriors followed and flooded out of the city and fighting, pushed the Romans back to their own camp walls. One of these bold warriors is said to be "one Adiabenean, the son of Nabataios, and called from the bad luck by the name of Chagiras, what means a lame" (Bell. 5:474: Ἀδιαβηνός τις υἱὸς Ναβαταίου τοῦνομα κληθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς τύχης καὶ Χαγείρας ὅπερ σημαίνει χωλός). This particular Adiabenean features very interesting forms of personal identification (see pp. 183-184)¹⁵⁴⁹. First, he is identified by his patronym, Ναβαταῖος. This name may indicate Arabic provenance¹⁵⁵⁰. Furthermore, he is also named Χαγείρας which is clearly a Semitic name¹⁵⁵¹. Thus, Chagiras is taken to be Jewish, but is also characterized as Adiabenean, and his father bears a name of Arabic provenance. What is more, this man is explicitly said to belong to one of the radical parties among Jewish rebels - together with two Palestinian Jews, one from Galilee and a former royal servant of Mariamne, probably the daughter of Agrippa I

¹⁵⁴⁴ See some scholars (e.g. Tameanko 2005: 16-25; Ben-Ami/Tchekhanovetz 2011: 237) who find in Ant. 20:26-33 evidence for a power struggle at the Adiabene court and suggest that it was Monobazos II who in fact replaced Monobazos I but was later forced to pass his crown to Izates II.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Ilan 1992: 32-33; Hachlili 2000: 88-89.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Ilan 1992: 32-33; Hachlili 2000: 88-89.

¹⁵⁴⁷ This idea has been introduced into scholarship by Widengren 1957: 200-201 and later adopted by Neusner 1969: 64. What is more, it frequently returns – see e.g. the latest large-scale publication on the Parthian empire where Zehnder 2010: 270 and 282 repeats this assumption and quotes Bell. 2:530 to support this view.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Likewise Ziegler 1964: 77, n. 237 and Olbrycht 1998: 133.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Ilan 1992: 32-50.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Ilan 1992: 196.

¹⁵⁵¹ Ilan 1992: 196.

Part 3: Material and Political Environment of Adiabene from the 3rd c. BCE to the 3rd c. CE

(Bell. 2:220). Next, that is a third individual from Adiabene who is counted among the bravest warriors during the Great Revolt. Further, it seems that Josephus knew by name at least a few Adiabeneans taking part in the revolt since he first refers to Chagiras as “a certain Adiabenean”, but then goes on to give us further details about him. Remarkably, this time the Adiabenean is not said to be a member of the Adiabene royalty. The only characterization given, besides his names, is the same as in the case of Silas the Babylonian and Niger the Peraean, namely, we have here a collective noun Ἀδιαβηνός / Ἀδιαβηνοί (like in Ant 20:1; 20:17; 20:18; 20:81; Bell. 1:6; Bell. 4:568; Bell. 5:253; Bell. 5:474). We understand such a reference in exactly the same way as other expressions like *Peraean*, *Babylonian*, that is, as an indication of geographical provenance. Furthermore, based on the texts discussed so far, we can conclude that neither Monobazos and Kenedaios nor Chagiras stand out among other Jewish fighters in Jerusalem in terms of foreign ethnicity.

As the revolt was coming to an end, some rebels decided to surrender to the Romans. So did υἱοί and ἀδελφοί of Izates the king” (οἱ Ἰζάτου βασιλέως υἱοὶ καὶ ἀδελφοί) together with many of the eminent townsfolk and asked Titus for a guarantee of protection (Bell. 6:356). Titus decided to spare them, yet kept them in custody (Bell. 6:356). As Bell. 6:357 continues - Titus decided later to send royal παῖδες and συγγενεῖς (τοῦ βασιλέως παῖδες καὶ συγγενεῖς) to Rome as hostages to ensure the future loyalty of their country. Thus, we have two references to the royal group who surrendered to the Romans. If we again want to more closely identify the family ties of the Adiabeneans who surrendered, then the problem is that not all the above-mentioned terms can always be used in a uniform way. One term is συγγενής, as we already know, the other ἀδελφός. The latter means *brother*, that is a male having the same parents as another or at least one parent in common. However, it can be also understood in a wider sense referring to kinsman, associate, fellow, or used as an honorary title¹⁵⁵². Josephus likewise employs it with regard to siblings, but also to kinsmen, friends and fellows¹⁵⁵³. However, Josephus apparently refers to the same group twice, and it seems that, consequently, both references can be understood as synonyms. As a result υἱοί and in Bell. 6:356 and παῖδες in Bell. 6:357 denote a very close family relationship meaning direct descendants like offspring, while ἀδελφοί and συγγενεῖς indicate a more distant family. Thus, particularly a second term in both expressions seems to specify its counterpart from the first expression. The noun ἀδελφός is then used more like a cousin, while συγγενής is used in the sense of a relative. All in all, it seems that those who surrendered were “children and relatives” of Izates the late king of Adiabene¹⁵⁵⁴. This solution also contributes to our understanding of Bell. 5:250. Namely, if Bell. 6:356-357 does distinguish between direct royal descendants (υἱοί and παῖδες) and members of the extended royal family (συγγενεῖς and ἀδελφοί), then Monobazos from Bell. 5:250 does not need to be regarded as a royal son but rather as a member of the Adiabene royal court.

Remarkably, this time Josephus recalls some royal Adiabeneans but does not connect them with the current ruler of Adiabene, that is Monobazos II, as he did in Bell. 2:520. This

¹⁵⁵² Liddell/Scott/Jones 1986: 20-21.

¹⁵⁵³ Rengstorf 1973: 19.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Preference to *children* over *sons* results from the fact that the word, *children* is a broader term than the word, *sons* since it can include females. In actual fact, it does not seem possible to determine at a literary level who is meant here by Josephus, because, on the one hand, those were men who are mostly described as fighters during the Revolt, but on the other, not only men remained in Jerusalem according to Josephus' description, but also whole families (Bell. 5:447-448). That is why we prefer the broader option which does not automatically exclude females. For the situation of the population in the besieged Jerusalem, see J.J. Price 1992: 118-120.

Chapter 13: Adiabene and Judea in the Context of the Relations between Rome and Parthia

passage reminds us of Ant. 20:71 where Izates is said to send his five sons to Jerusalem to get educated in Jewish culture. Thus, Josephus can distinguish between two branches of the royal house of Adiabene (connected with Izates II and Monobazos II respectively). Secondly, it is striking to see at what stage of the war the above-mentioned Adiabeneans decided to surrender to the Romans. The Romans took Jerusalem step by step causing each time a flood of desertions. However, the Adiabene royalty from the line of Izates took part in the war until the very last moment. All parts of Jerusalem except the Upper City were conquered, the Temple was destroyed and consequently the revolt was essentially over, but the Adiabeneans belonged to the very last fighters who were still holding out. Their behaviour can clearly be interpreted as a sign of special loyalty to the national cause.

To summarize, we find in Josephus' *Bell.* three passages pertaining to Adiabeneans who took part in the Roman-Jewish War. A few general conclusions can be drawn. First, in referring to the Adiabeneans, Josephus uses a differentiated vocabulary and so gives us a good insight into the variety of "the Adiabenean world" in Jerusalem. In this regard, the Adiabene royalty clearly consisted of two distinctive lines – one stemming from Izates II and another from Izates' brother, Monobazos II. In addition to the Adiabene royalty, there were non-royal Adiabeneans fighting in Jerusalem. Secondly, all Adiabeneans mentioned in *Bell.* are presented as "most ardent supporters of the revolution"¹⁵⁵⁵. They were either distinguished for their bravery on the battlefield (Bell. 2:520; Bell. 6:474) or persisted in fighting until the last moment (Bell. 6:356). Thirdly, the Adiabene royalty had a great deal of respect in Jewish society during the siege, including from the radical groups. In this regard, it is interesting to compare the fate of the Adiabene royalty with that of other aristocrats who also belonged to the most distinguished in Jewish ranks. For instance, there is Niger the Peraean, once a governor of Idumea, who also had an aristocratic background¹⁵⁵⁶ and is praised by Josephus for his bravery alongside Monobazos and Kenedaios in Bell. 2:520. Despite all his merits in the war against the Romans, Niger was murdered by radical insurgents out of jealousy (Bell. 4:359-363). In contrast, the Adiabene royalty escaped such a fate and managed to surrender to the Romans, though desertions at that stage were said to be highly endangered by other rebels' revenge (Bell. 6:366-368). Surely, if not for their merits in the war, many insurgents could understand a political significance of the Adiabene royalty and consequently hope for the help from the kingdom of Adiabene (see explicitly Bell. 2:345-407). Fourthly and lastly, all Adiabeneans recalled in *Bell.* are self-evidently taken as Jewish, and their characterization as Jews affiliated with Adiabene fits well the geo-cultural diversity of the Jewish world of the 1st c. CE.

13.4 Adiabene, Parthia and Rome in the Context of the Jewish Uprising of 66-73 CE

The above-mentioned explicit references to the Adiabeneans who personally took part in the Jewish-Roman war (chapter 13.3) can be further enlightened by Josephus' texts that touch on the broad context of the Roman-Jewish War and in doing so, recall Adiabene as a political factor on the international scene of those days. Those places are Bell. 6:328-350; Bell. 2:345-407 and Bell. 1:6.

The first text is very general and can be quoted only as a background example. In Bell. 6:328-350 Josephus quotes a speech delivered by Titus to the besieged. Speeches by leading figures were customary in ancient historiography in general, and in this light Josephus' speeches

¹⁵⁵⁵ J.J. Price 1992: 173. Likewise Farmer 1956: 72, n. 64.

¹⁵⁵⁶ J.J. Price 1992: 36; Rajak 1984: 130, 134.

can be seen as important for revealing his own agenda¹⁵⁵⁷. In Bell. 6:328-350 the voice is given to Titus whose message is well in accord with the main idea Josephus wants to convey through his opus – putting blame for the war on Jewish revolutionaries and absolving the Romans, especially the Flavians, from the blame for the catastrophe¹⁵⁵⁸. Thus, Titus addresses the besieged and urges them to surrender. Among others, he points to the baseless hopes for any outside relief by saying that the besieged “sent ambassadors to those beyond Euphrates to foster revolt” (καὶ πρεσβείαι μὲν ὑμῶν πρὸς τοὺς ὑπὲρ Εὐφράτην ἐπὶ νεωτερισμῷ - Bell. 6:343). When it comes to the recipients of these ambassadors, the sentence is obscure and consequently various translations have been suggested, e.g. Thackeray translates it as “your friends beyond the Euphrates”¹⁵⁵⁹, Whiston in turn goes with “those of your nation that are beyond the Euphrates”¹⁵⁶⁰. Both translations are not literal, but attempt to make sense of Josephus’ vague expression by resorting to the historical background¹⁵⁶¹. Especially Whiston’s translation clearly points to the widespread Jewish Diaspora east of the Euphrates and under power of the Parthian Kingdom (see Ant. 11:131-135) as the object of the insurgents’ hopes¹⁵⁶². Indeed, in the insurgents’ daring expectations Jewish communities widespread east of the Euphrates could be expected to provide some help or even to exercise some influence on policy-making authorities in their countries¹⁵⁶³. These expectations are contrasted by Titus with reality that he makes plain to the defenders: there is no way that the insurgents can take advantage of the period of instability in the Empire since it is already gone and the proof is that “foreign peoples” already send congratulations to Vespasian after he has managed to overcome domestic conflicts in the Empire (Bell. 6:342). One could see the Parthians themselves under the obscure expression, “foreign peoples”, which would create a striking contrast between reality and the insurgents’ vain hopes and so demonstrate the insurgents’ lack of touch with reality and the absurdity of their hopes – the Parthians are on the side of the Romans, while the insurgents hope to receive help from those being under Parthian suzerainty. Being ambiguous, the text allows the above-mentioned interpretation, although taken literally, it also makes sense – the generality of Josephus’ expression suggests that all imaginable peoples made peace with the Romans, while only the insurgents do not realize the gravity of their situation.

A very similar attempt to persuade the revolutionaries to make peace with the Romans can be found in Bell. 2:345-407. This time the speech is put into the mouth of king Agrippa. He also points out that the rebels’ hope to gain help from outside was not realized. Again, the rebels’ hopes are said to be directed towards “those beyond Euphrates”. However, unlike in Bell. 6:434, the recipient is precisely named this time. Agrippa recalls “your kinsmen from Adiabene” (τοὺς ἐκ τῆς Ἀδιαβηνῆς ὁμοφύλους) – Bell. 2:388. Further, Agrippa goes on to negate these hopes by pointing out that Jews from Adiabene would not go to war against the Romans for an absurd

¹⁵⁵⁷ Attridge 1984: 194-195; Michel 1984: 945-976.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Attridge 1984: 196-200; Goodman 1987: 1-25.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Thackeray 1928: 475.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Whiston 1999: 901.

¹⁵⁶¹ By contrast, Michel/Bauernfeind 1969: 59 translates it very literally as “zu den Leuten jenseits des Euphrat“, but in the footnote (Michel/Bauernfeind 1969: 199, n. 174) speak of “die jüdische Diaspora und befreundete Gruppen des Auslandes“.

¹⁵⁶² Likewise J.J. Price 1992: 67 and n. 16: “large and important Jewish community living in the Parthian empire”.

¹⁵⁶³ Likewise Rajak 1984: 183-184. In addition to the political level, one may wonder if the text does not reflect some Jewish traditions concerning the eschatological return of the lost tribes of Israel (Arcari 2007: 484). Such traditions could be present among the insurgents. For a critical assessment of these traditions, see Zangenberg 1998: 205-209.

reason (δι' αἰτίαν ἄλογον) and even if they did, then the Parthians would not allow them (Bell. 2:389). Let us stress that the text speaks of Jews from Adiabene, since ὁμόφυλος means “kinsmen, of the same race”¹⁵⁶⁴. By contrast, Thackeray, commenting on this reference, remarks that the term “‘proselytes’ would have been a more correct term than ‘kinsmen’”¹⁵⁶⁵. Thackeray’s idea attempts at correcting the text and it clearly expresses something completely opposite to the literal meaning of the source. Namely, in Bell. 2:388 there is no perception that (some) people from Adiabene are converts but they are “of the same race”, they are as Jewish as all the others who were fighting in Jerusalem. There is also another important question raised by Bell 2:345-407. Let us remark that the texts discussed so far referred to the Adiabeneans who were already taking part in the revolt. What, then, is the difference between those who are already fighting at the moment of Agrippa’s speech and those who they only hoped would come to fight and, what is more, apparently can contribute to it in a way which would be substantial for the fate of the war? The issue seems to be complex and so cannot be answered in full here, but, as far as our sources are taken literally, neither indicates the involvement of Adiabeneans other than individuals or family circles. If so, a relative abundance of small hints for an important presence of the Adiabene royalty in the Jewish society of the 1st c. CE should not be attributed to abrupt dispatches of human resources on the eve of the Great Revolt, but rather should be understood as a result of a gradual process that started with Izates sending his children to Jerusalem and Helena going there on pilgrimage, and was apparently followed by many others from Adiabene. Both movements must have led to a systematic social and economic investment of the Adiabene royalty in Judea whose long-term results are evident in Josephus’ incidental transmission.

The last reference to the group of the Adiabeneans occurs in Bell. 1:6 where Josephus recalls his previous version of *De Bello Judaico* written in Aramaic and tells us to whom it was addressed. Namely, he wished to make known the truth about the Great Revolt: καὶ Πάρθους μὲν καὶ Βαβυλωνίους Ἀράβων τε τοὺς πορρωτάτω καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ Εὐφράτην ὁμόφυλον ἡμῖν Ἀδιαβηνοὺς τε. This phrase in Greek distinguishes a number of Eastern people who are enumerated one after another but separated by the conjunction “and”. However, this conjunction is expressed by two Greek words καί and τέ. The structure of this enumeration is obscure¹⁵⁶⁶. Nevertheless, some lexicon entries suggest a close and special affinity between the two terms joined by both καί and τέ¹⁵⁶⁷, to be precise – “the particle καί, is conjunctive while the latter τέ, is adjunctive, in that καί introduces something new under the same aspect yet as an external addition, whereas τέ, marks it as having an inner connection with what precedes”¹⁵⁶⁸. Accordingly, the order of different peoples enumerated in Bell. 1:6 should be as follows: the Parthians and (καί) the Babylonians with the Arabs (τέ), and (καί) our kinsmen beyond the Euphrates with (τέ) the Adiabeneans. Other possible translations cannot be definitely ruled out, but this translation makes perfect sense for the Adiabeneans in keeping with all the above-discussed texts (especially Bell. 2:388) - they are regarded as a distinctive group of Jews

¹⁵⁶⁴ Liddell/Scott/Jones 1986: 1228.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Thackeray 1927: 475, n. “f”.

¹⁵⁶⁶ See the comment of Rajak 1984:177.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Moulton 1963: 339; Blass/Debrunner/Rehkopf 1976: 373; Thayer 1979: 616-617; Bauer/K.Aland/B.Aland 1988: 1610-1611.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Thayer 1979: 616.

Part 3: Material and Political Environment of Adiabene from the 3rd c. BCE to the 3rd c. CE

dispersed east of the Euphrates. Further, it also makes some sense for the Arabs¹⁵⁶⁹, though the use of this term in ancient sources is often very vague¹⁵⁷⁰.

In summary, five explicit references to the Adiabeneans can be found in Josephus' *De Bello Judaico*. Bell. 2:388 and Bell. 1:6 refer to a collective group – the Adiabeneans (Bell. 1:6) or the [people] of Adiabene. They are explicitly said to be Jews in Bell. 2:388 and likely presented as a distinctive group of Jews east of the Euphrates in Bell. 1:6. Furthermore, some individuals from Adiabene also appear in Josephus' Bell. Those are namely Monobazos and Kenedaios, relatives of Monobazos II, king of Adiabene (2:520), as well as anonymous children and relatives of the late ruler of Adiabene, Izates II (6:356). All royal Adiabeneans are presented as “most ardent supporters of the revolution”¹⁵⁷¹. Again, one non-royal Adiabenean is recalled by Josephus, Chagiras, as a member of the sectarian group of Simon. Monobazos and Kenedaios, as well as Chagiras are praised for their bravery and seen as most distinguished among Jewish ranks. No individual from Adiabene (mentioned by Josephus in Bell.) was ever called a convert¹⁵⁷². On the contrary, they do not stand out among other Jews taking part in the revolt and consequently are self-evidently taken as Jewish. Therefore, the adjective “Adiabenean” or the phrase “of Adiabene” are to be understood as other agnomens such as “Peraean” or “Babylonian”, that is as a designation of geographical provenance within the Jewish Diaspora.

¹⁵⁶⁹ For possible locations of so enumerated Arabs, see Rajak 1984: 179.

¹⁵⁷⁰ See Nöldeke 1871: 443-468; Retsö 2003: 200.

¹⁵⁷¹ J.J. Price 1992: 173. Likewise Farmer 1956: 72 and n. 64.

¹⁵⁷² This has already been recognized by S.J.D. Cohen 1987: 429, n. 58.