

RANDOLF LUKAS, *Josephus Latinus, Antiquitates Judaicae Buch 6 und 7. Einleitung, Edition und Kommentar zur Übersetzungstechnik*, BAC 112, Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2022, clxvi+129 pp., ISBN 978-3-86821-969-2.

In the late 6th century CE, Cassiodorus commissioned a group of learned monks in his monastery Vivarium to produce a Latin translation of two works of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus which had hitherto been unavailable to readers without knowledge of Greek: the twenty books of the *Jewish Antiquities* (*AJ*) and the two books of *Contra Apionem* (*Ap.*). Roughly one thousand years later, Guillaume Budé (1468–1540), appalled by this translation’s unclassical Latin and the many obvious mistakes in it, stated that “it would have been better it had never been published”.¹ However, for the most part of those centuries that lay between the production of this Latin version and Budé’s scathing remark, very few people would have agreed with the famous French humanist’s view that this text should have never seen the light of day. On the contrary: as the impressive number of over 170 surviving manuscripts demonstrates, this Latin translation of Josephus produced in Cassiodorus’ Southern Italian monastery was highly welcomed by generations of readers throughout the Latin Middle Ages.

The importance of the Jewish historian for late antique and medieval Christianity can, in fact, hardly be exaggerated. Josephus’ retelling of the history of the Jewish people in *AJ* was an essential tool to clarify historical, geographical, and etymological obscurities in the Bible; the *Testimonium Flavianum*, a (probably largely spurious) mention of Jesus Christ in *AJ* 18.63–64, served as a supposed extrabiblical confirmation of Christ’s existence; and Josephus’ narration of the destruction of Jerusalem in the *Bellum Judaicum* (*BJ*) was considered a proof for God’s punishment of his once chosen people. For these and many other reasons, the works of Josephus became one of the most essential text for medieval Christian intellectuals and no respectable monastery library could do without them.

In modern scholarship, the topic of the huge popularity of Josephus in the Latin Middle Ages is now beginning to receive the attention it deserves: several individual studies as well as larger research projects analyse the ways in which the Jewish historian was read, annotated, translated, used and misused by Church Fathers, Carolingian theologians, Sorbonne scholastics, and many other groups as well as individuals in medieval Europe.² However, a major impediment for the study of the reception of Josephus in this period is the fact that the late antique Latin translations – the textual form in which almost all readers in Western and Central

¹ Guillaume Budé, *De asse et eius partibus*, Paris 1514 (USTC 183526), f. 105r.: [*Iosephi libri*], quos latine ita versos legimus ut praestabilius fuerit nunquam fuisse editos. Budé here specifically refers to the part of the Vivarium translation that contains *Ap.*, but it can also be taken as a general statement about its quality in the eyes of a humanist.

² For an overview of the latest research on the reception of Josephus in the Latin Middle Ages, see Karen Kletter, Paul Hilliard (eds), *A Companion to Josephus in the Medieval West*, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition 106, Leiden 2024 (forthcoming).

Europe between 600 and 1500 CE would have approached this author – still await a complete modern edition. For the largest part of the so-called *Josephus Latinus*, scholars still have to resort to an edition issued in 1524 by the illustrious Basel printer Johann Froben (USTC 657576) when referencing these highly influential translations (the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, for example, still quotes from this Renaissance print!).

Given the enormous number of manuscripts and the sheer size of Josephus' oeuvre, the lack of a critical edition of the *Josephus Latinus* is not surprising. Thankfully, at least certain portions of this corpus have by now been edited according to modern philological standards. Regarding the translation produced in Cassiodorus' Vivarium, two partial editions exist so far: in 1898, Karl Boysen published the Latin text of the two books of *Ap*. In 1958, Franz Blatt undertook an edition of books 1–5 of *AJ*. As for the Latin version of Josephus' *BJ* – a text that had been translated roughly one century earlier than *AJ* and *Ap*. – we since recently possess a critical edition of book 1, published by Bernd Bader in 2019. The latest effort in this field now comes from Randolph Lukas (L.) who, by editing books 6–7 of *AJ*, brings us yet another small but significant step closer to having a reliable text for the whole of the *Josephus Latinus*.

L.'s edition, based on a PhD thesis submitted at the University of Bochum in 2021, is divided into two main parts, an extensive introduction and the critical text itself. The former section opens with a brief outline of the origins of the translation of *AJ* und *Ap*. in Cassiodorus' Vivarium, before succinctly discussing the principal reasons for its rich reception throughout the Middle Ages. This is then followed by an overview of the research conducted on the Latin Josephus from the late 19th century to the 21st century revival of studies on the transmission and reception of the works of this author.

Chapter II of the introduction explains L.'s editorial methodology, in particular his criteria for selecting the manuscripts he collated. Given the severe criticism Blatt had incurred for his choice of codices, L. was well advised to completely reassess the transmission. Thanks to his close exchange with David B. Levenson and Thomas R. Martin, who have done seminal groundwork on the Latin text of both *BJ* and *AJ*, L. did not have to start entirely from scratch, but could rely on some expert guidance as to the selection of his textual witnesses. Nevertheless, L.'s *recensio* differs enough from that of his two colleagues that he decided to introduce his own classification of manuscripts ('Lukas Klassen') rather than just adopting the groups devised by Levenson and Martin. Out of the 159 codices transmitting the text of of *AJ* 6–7, L. ultimately chose sixteen manuscripts which, in his opinion, are best suited to get as close as possible to the *Urtext* and, furthermore, to cover the transmission in all its breadth. In chapter III, the selected textual witnesses are then codicologically described in great detail. This section, together with the list of all known manuscripts containing the *AJ* at the very end of L.'s edition (pp. 118–128), is a highly useful update to Blatt's fundamental but incomplete and occasionally also inaccurate description of the *AJ* codices still extant. Chapter IV contains a brief

discussion of the most important early prints up to Froben's 1524 edition (here, as well as in the list of early prints at the end of L.'s edition, the USTC numbers – by now the standard for referencing early modern prints – would have been useful).

Chapter V then offers the most substantial section of L.'s introduction: with admirable clarity, L. leads the reader through his reconstruction of the dependencies between the manuscripts of the Latin version of *AJ*. It is particularly helpful that, after the discussion of each manuscript group, L. offers a provisional stemma, therefore visualising step by step his thought process that leads to the final and convincing stemma on p. CI. L. shows that the whole transmission of books 1–10 (or potentially even 1–12) can be traced back to a single, already defective, and now lost archetype (Ω) from which a tripartite stemma then depends. The first branch is represented by only one manuscript, but a rather spectacular one: the papyrus Cimelio 1 (manuscript *A* in L.s stemma), which is today kept in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, was written in the late 6th or early 7th century and can, therefore, only be a couple of decades younger than the original translation of *AJ* and *Ap.* produced at Vivarium. Although now only a fragment, it luckily contains most of the text of *AJ* 6–7 and is, therefore, of great value to L.'s reconstruction of the text. The two other main branches of the transmission are the group of Italian manuscripts (α) and a transalpine group (β), the latter being further subdivided into groups γ and δ . The quality of the γ -family is, as L. convincingly shows, often inferior to that of the others. However, as manuscripts of this strand were used for the first printed editions of Josephus, their readings are, as L. rightly highlights, still of great importance for understanding which Latin text early modern readers of Josephus were consulting and quoting.

Chapter VI of the introduction, containing a discussion of the language and the translation technique observable in the Latin version of *AJ* 6–7, is highly informative not only for scholars of the *Josephus Latinus* but for anyone interested in the transformation of Latin at the dawn of the Middle Ages and the cultural transfer between the Greek East and the Latin West in the same period. Linguistic phenomena such as the genitive of comparison (*quod horum maius est*, 6.256), the ablative of direction (*ascendens in cacumine*, 7.64), and *consulere* construed as a deponent verb (*consultus est deum*, 6.271) are part of the reason why classically-minded humanists such as Guillaume Budé held this translation in such contempt; for modern scholars studying the development of Late Latin, however, L.'s systematic presentation of the peculiarities of the language in the Latin version of *AJ* 6–7 is extremely fascinating and instructive.

The same goes for his analysis of the translation technique applied by the monks at Vivarium: with many examples, L. shows how, as a general rule, they translated the Greek almost word for word, therefore creating an often very unnatural-sounding Latin syntax. However, at times they also handled their *Vorlage* rather freely, either because they did not understand the – in some cases already defective – Greek manuscripts from which they translated or because they deliberately adjusted the wording, and sometimes even the content, to the text of the Vulgate. L.

concludes his discussion of the quality of the Vivarium translation with the balanced verdict that the translators' linguistic abilities were indeed limited and that their somewhat mechanical approach to translating Josephus gives the appearance of a commissioned work ("Auftragsarbeit", p. CL); at the same time, as L. also stresses, the translation does for the most part still correctly convey the content of the Greek and is, therefore, better than its general reputation (Benedict Niese, the Teubner editor of Josephus' *Opera omnia* in Greek, had said of the Vivarium translation: *infimae est Latinitatis*. For more modern criticism of the quality of this translation, see pp. CXII f. in L.'s edition).

Part two of L.'s edition offers the critical text of *AJ* 6–7 (in which Josephus retells the story of the Kings Saul and David as recorded in the Book of Samuel). The *apparatus criticus* of the edition is, as L. declares (p. CLXIV), positive throughout. Given the rather large number of manuscripts collated, this of course bears the danger of overloading the *apparatus*. However, by only giving the group sigla wherever the reading of the hyparchetype seems certain and by refraining from reporting trivial mistakes and simple orthographical variants, L. has managed to keep the *apparatus* neat and tidy. There are only a handful of cases where the information provided appears not quite clear: on p. 14, for example, we read in the *apparatus* regarding the text of *AJ* 6.71: *obsessionem a.1 β : oppressionem a.2 : obsidionem T*. But what is the reading of the Cimelio papyrus (*A*) in the case of this textual problem? According to L.'s description of this important manuscript (pp. XXVIII f.), it contains no major lacuna at 6.71, but we nevertheless do not get told what it reads. Do we have to assume a minor gap there? If so, why is the *lacuna* not indicated as it is in other cases (e.g. p. 14, *apparatus* line 3: *lac. A*)? This lack of clarity is, however, the exception rather than the rule; for the most part L.'s *apparatus criticus* is very thorough and represents a major improvement to Blatt's practice in his edition of *AJ* 1–5. Another advantage over his predecessor's edition is that L. also offers an additional *apparatus fontium* that allows the reader to easily find the biblical passages on which Josephus' narrative is based.

To highlight the textual improvements achieved in L.'s edition I will, in what follows, make selective comparisons between his text and that of the Froben edition which, albeit 500 years old, until now constituted our only real point of reference for this section of the Latin *AJ*. It has to be said that, as the biblical content of *AJ* 6–7 was well-known to both translators and scribes, the *textus receptus* preserved in the *Frobeniana* is not as deplorable as it is in the later books of *AJ* and particularly in *Ap*. Nevertheless, over the course of the centuries a lot of mistakes have crept into the text. To give just a few of the more notable errors in the 1524 print (most of them consistent with the readings of the γ -family): at 6.68 the *Frobeniana* reads *postmodum* (p. 152) instead of *post mensem*; at 6.173 *pestem* (p. 163) instead of *potestate*; at 6.191 *consistere non valuerunt* (p. 163) instead of *consistere noluerunt*; at 6.341 *his mutuare* (p. 177) instead of *eos valde mulcere* (here L.'s *apparatus* wrongly reports the reading *mutare* for the *Frobeniana*); at 6.377 *ieiunium* (p. 180) instead of *luctum*; at 7.8 *eorum virtutem* (p. 181) instead of *opus eorum*; at 7.267

servus suus (p. 205) instead of *puer suus*; at 7.276 *moverentur* (p. 206) instead of *morderentur*. By consulting the manuscript transmission, L. could, as the first modern editor, emend all of these and countless other mistakes.

The Basel 1524 edition also frequently contains additions, some of them potentially by Froben's then-corrector Beatus Rhenanus, that have no foundation at all in the manuscript tradition: e.g. at 6.190 it says of David, standing next to the dead body of Goliath: *stetit super eum et caput incidit eius*. The codices, however, actually only offer *stetit et caput incidit eius* (L. suspects – probably rightly – that the translators had a defective Greek text for this passage; see his discussion on p. CXVI). At 6.197 we find the addition *eo scilicet pacto* (p. 164) that has no counterpart in the transmission; at 7.350 (p. 213) we read *eius amicos non vocatos* while the manuscripts only offer *eius amicos*. L. deleted these additions from the text, often without even citing them in the *apparatus*. In most cases, this is certainly justified, but a handful of the better readings of the *Frobeniana* (and other early editions) would, in the eyes of the reviewer, have at least deserved a mention in the *apparatus*, e.g. *ut totum bellum unius victoria terminetur* (p. 162) instead of *et totum bellum unius victoria terminetur* at 6.173 or *illuc pergens unde* (p. 216) for *illic pergens unde* at 7.383.

L.'s edition also contains some convincing conjectures purely based on the comparison against the Greek text (some of them contributed by Thomas Riesenweber, the co-supervisor of L.'s PhD thesis), e.g. 6.215 *iudicium* (δικαστήριον) for *publicum*; 6.341: *incitabat* (προετρέψατο) for *invitabat*; 7.186: *impetravisse* (ἐπιτροχεῖν) for *impetisse*; 7.369: *ducem* (ἄρχοντα) for *iudicem*. To sum up the discussion of L.'s constitution of the text of *AJ* 6–7: although many of L.'s changes to the *textus receptus* at first sight might appear minor, as a whole they give the Latin of this section of *AJ* a very different shape to what centuries of readers used to consult. His text is much more sound and, therefore, represents a significant step closer to what the monks in Cassiodorus' Vivarium might have actually translated.

The whole volume is well produced and the copyediting was done carefully.³ This book will serve generations of scholars working with the Latin Josephus and sets the bar very high for any subsequent editions of parts of this corpus that are hopefully going to follow in the not so distant future. In short: even someone as critical of the *Josephus Latinus* as Guillaume Budé could not but have wholeheartedly approved of L.'s edition of the Latin version of *AJ* 6–7.

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³ I've noticed only very few misprints: on p. XXIV n. 52 read "Leoni"; on p. XXI n. 35 "1524"; on p. L and passim "Ammann"; on p. CXLV n. 33 "Hofmann"; on p. CLI read "im Kolophon"; on p. 16 ἀποστροπήν; *recte magnanimitas*.