

THE TWO EDITIONS OF JOSEPHUS'S *LIFE*

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[214 | 685] More recently than Ussani, R. Laqueur<sup>1</sup> has grounded his criticism of Josephus's account on a new basis, arguing that in the *Life*—completed after AD 100—he only superficially modified a much earlier report, in which in AD 66–67, before the beginning of the war against the Romans, he would have expounded upon the events in Galilee in which he had played no small part. Laqueur believes that all the passages alluding to later times in the *Life* are additions which disrupt the flow of the narrative; he also believes that a comparison between the *Life* and the *War* (which was written, as we know,

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1. R. Laqueur, *Der jüdische Historiker Flavius Josephus* (Giessen: Münchow, 1920).

between 75 and 79) makes it apparent that the *Life* is the source of the *War* and is therefore more ancient in its foundations; and that [215 | 686] an examination of the primary core of the *Life* shows that while Josephus was writing it he did not catch wind of the imminent great war against the Romans. Later on, after having fallen under their power, he would have undertaken to construct a systematic historical fabrication in honor of them and their ally Agrippa II, the result of which would be the *War*. Thus, Laqueur thinks that the ancient account reconstructed by him should be the starting point for a new appraisal of Josephus's personality and his political and historical work. This demonstration is far from convincing, but some of the issues raised by Laqueur deserve to be investigated.

First of all, when was the *Life* composed?

Nearing the end of the *Antiquities*, Josephus believes that recounting the events of his own life will not provoke envy in others, while those who could disprove or corroborate his statements were still alive (ἴσως δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐπίφθονον γένοιτο καὶ περὶ γένους τοῦμοῦ καὶ περὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων βραχέα διεξελεθεῖν, ἕως ἔχω ζῶντας ἢ τοὺς ἐλέγξοντας ἢ τοὺς μαρτυρήσοντας: *Ant.* 20.266 ['Perhaps it will not seem to the public invidious or awkward for me to recount briefly my lineage and the events of my life while there are still persons living who can either disprove or corroborate my statements']).<sup>2</sup> At this point we would expect the brief biographical account; instead Josephus gives the number of lines in which the *Antiquities* were contained and lists the writings he was going to compose: a work in four books<sup>3</sup> in which he would epitomize the Jewish war and expose the later events 'up to the present day, which belongs to the thirteenth year of the reign of Domitian Caesar and to the fifty-sixth of my life';<sup>4</sup> and also a work in four books 'on [the opinions that we Jews hold concerning] God and His essence, as well as concerning the laws, that is, why according to them we are permitted to do some things while we are forbidden to do others' (*Ant.* 20.267-268). Today the *Life* is an autonomous book separated from book 20, but the manuscript tradition has

2. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities Books XVIII–XX* (trans. L.H. Feldman; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965) (trans.).

3. As a matter of fact, in *Ant.* 20.267 Josephus does not indicate the number of books of this projected work; he only mentions his intention of writing 'a running account of the war' (trans.).

4. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities Book XX* (trans. L.H. Feldman; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965) (trans.).

preserved it as attached to it, almost as a part of it; and while the beginning 'Ἐμοὶ δὲ γένος ἔστιν οὐκ ἄσημον ['My family is no ignoble one']<sup>5</sup> (*Life* 1.1) is tied directly to § 266 (quoted above), the conclusion (§ 430) mentions again the *Antiquities* and the author addresses Epaphroditus, to whom he had dedicated the main work.

[216 | 687] In any case the *Life* appears to have been composed during the thirteenth year of Domitian's reign, viz. in AD 93–94. But the problem of the date is more complicated, because the *Life* is directed in part against Justus of Tiberias, who—says Josephus (§ 359)—had published his work on the Jewish war after the death of Vespasian, Titus and Agrippa II; now, the latter died in the third year of Trajan's reign, according to a statement of Photius (*Cod.* 33); therefore the composition of the *Life* must be dated to after AD 100. In recent times several scholars have questioned the value of Photius's statement, claiming that Agrippa II died before [AD] 93–94,<sup>6</sup> especially since in *Ant.* 17.[2]8<sup>7</sup> there is a passage which briefly mentions that the government of Batanaea had passed from Agrippa into the hands of the Romans, and describes how they had behaved with regard to some of the privileges of the local population. But against this simplistic interpretation, Schürer<sup>8</sup> has already noted that Agrippa's coins extend at least to 95, and as for *Ant.* 17.[2]8,<sup>9</sup> he has rightly pointed out that the passage does not endorse the idea that Agrippa was dead, but only that that part of his territories had been taken away from him, which is also indicated by other circumstances. Thus, Schürer took a position strongly in favour of the idea that the *Life* was composed after 100, overlooking the difficulties posed by *Ant.* 20.266, which seems to announce the immediate composition of the *Life*, and also the fact that the beginning and the end of the latter are closely connected with the *Antiquities*.

Laqueur has pursued a different route. He points out that according to Photius, Justus's work ended with the death of Agrippa; the date of the King's

5. Josephus, *The Life Against Apion* (trans. H.J. Thackeray; LCL; London: William Heinemann, 1926) (trans.).

6. Here the original text has '93–94 a.C.', which is a clear typo: the date of the death of King Agrippa II is obviously CE (trans.).

7. Another misprint (or perhaps a slip by the author): the passage referred to is *Ant.* 17.28, not '*ant.* XVII, 18' (trans.).

8. Emil Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (3 vols.; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 4th edn, 1901–1909), I, p. 87 (trans.).

9. See above n. 6 (trans.).

death is therefore taken from that very work of Justus, and as a consequence it cannot be challenged. However, he observes that in *Ant.* 20.259 Josephus says: *παύσεται δ' ἐνταῦθά μοι τὰ τῆς ἀρχαιολογίας* [‘Here will be the end of my *Antiquities*’]<sup>10</sup> and in 267 *ἐπὶ τούτοις καταπαύσω τὴν ἀρχαιολο-* [217 | 688] *γίαν* [‘With this I shall conclude my *Antiquities*’];<sup>11</sup> where is the actual end of the work? After the words quoted from § 259, Josephus adds: *μεθ' ἣν καὶ τὸν πόλεμον ἠρξάμην γράφειν* [‘following which begins my account of the war’],<sup>12</sup> and Laqueur believes that this is a duplicate of the promise which Josephus makes in 267 to summarize in four books the account of the *War* and the later events.<sup>13</sup> However, these words more naturally refer to the *War* itself, which is said to contain material subsequent to that narrated in the *Antiquities*; otherwise Josephus says he began by writing the account of the war, which chronologically follows the facts described in the *Antiquities*. The two similar phrases at the beginning of §§ 259 and 267 can also be explained as a natural repetition after having expounded the considerations of the intermediate paragraphs. But Laqueur is convinced that §§ 259–266 and 267–268 exclude each other; §§ 267–268 in previous times would have followed § 258, forming the conclusion of an edition of the *Antiquities* without the *Life*; instead, §§ 259–266 would be the conclusion of a second and later edition of the *Antiquities* to which in § 266 the *Life* was immediately attached; the later scribes would have kept the two conclusions, writing them one after the other. By supposing the existence of two editions of the *Antiquities*, the first ending with §§ 267–268 in 93–94 and without the *Life*, the second with the *Life* after AD 100, the chronological difficulties would disappear.

Laqueur has come close to the solution of the problem, but he has not found it. Two editions of a work as vast as the *Antiquities* cannot be surmised without a much more conclusive demonstration. And why would the second have been necessary, at a distance of only six or seven years from the first? Furthermore, if §§ 267–268 were the final part of the primitive edition without the *Life*, and followed § 258, why is it that they are not attached to it? And why is it that §§ 259–266—which would form the conclusion of the edition with the *Life*—far from being attached to the latter (§ 266 seems to come immediately before it) are instead [218 | 689] inserted between §§ 258 and 267–

10. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities Books XVIII–XX* (trans.).

11. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities Books XVIII–XX* (trans.).

12. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities Books XVIII–XX* (trans.).

13. See above n. 3 (trans.).

268? That after the old conclusion the copyists added the new one with the *Life* would be understandable, not that they detached the new conclusion from the *Life* and inserted it after § 258 and then added the old conclusion between the new one and the *Life*. Moreover § 266 leads one to believe that some of the important figures who could corroborate Josephus's statements—such as Agrippa or Domitian—were still living, not that they were all dead; and it seems unlikely that Josephus could have written the sentence in which he states that recounting the events of his life would not cause him to be envied after Justus's allegations.

The solution is much simpler: there were not two editions of the *Antiquities*, but two editions of the *Life*; a shorter one, which was part of book 20 and immediately followed § 266—to which the δέ at the beginning of the *Life* is connected—and which was written in AD 93–94, when Josephus concluded the long work with §§ 267–268, where he gives the number of lines and announces his future works. But after 100 the work by Justus of Tiberias appeared, questioning not only Josephus's literary activity, but also his moral and political conduct during the Jewish war; thus, what Josephus had considered to be an unlikely event when writing § 266 had happened. He felt the pressing need to reply to his opponent, and he did so through a second and more detailed edition, not of the *War*, not even of the *Antiquities*, but of the *Life*, which then took on a stronger tone of apology and counterattack against Justus. The old draft of the *Life* at the end of book 20 was removed, but the final §§ 267–268 were preserved, because they contained the indication of the number of lines of the *Antiquities* and the notice of the projected works. The new edition of the *Life*, having assumed the length of a book, was attached as a sort of appendix to the main work, but in reality it was nothing but an enlargement of the first one, of which it preserved not only the initial δέ, and Josephus's genealogy with [219 | 690] the facts of his early youth up to § 23, but it also kept unchanged the ending from § 414 through § 429, from the surrender of Jotapata onwards, which properly speaking is the more biographical section. It is not by chance that § 429 stops precisely at the time of Domitian: 'When Vespasian died and Titus succeeded him in the rule, he preserved the same sort of honor towards me as his father and, though I was often accused, he did not credit [the charges]. When Domitian succeeded Titus, he further increased the honors towards me. For example, he disciplined the Judeans who had accused me, and he ordered that a eunuch slave and tutor of my son who had accused me be disciplined. He also gave me tax exemption for my territory in Judea, which is the greatest honor for the recipient. And

Domitia, the wife of Caesar, continued benefiting me in many ways.<sup>14</sup> Anyone who reads these sentences must suppose that Domitian was still reigning while the author was writing them: not a single word alludes to Nerva and to Trajan. It is the conclusion of the first edition, preserved in the second one.

In drawing up his account of the Jewish war, Josephus had had several serious reasons to overlook the exact circumstances surrounding his command in Galilee. His conduct had not been irreproachable and unblemished, not so much for the fact of having fought the Romans, as for the way he had managed to seize power and how he had exercised it. It appears from the *Life* that he had been entrusted not with the command, but with a peaceful mission in Galilee, which region he and two companions had to try to keep quiet and loyal to the Jerusalem authorities, while troublemakers of every kind were running through it, and national and religious feuds were raging. Instead, once his colleagues had left, Josephus had remained there, and acting craftily he had managed to put under his leadership the flocks of Galilean fanatics and political and religious brigands who were threatening the region, hiring them with the subventions of the towns, which thus provided the means to dominate them through the terror of those same bands which [220 | 691] Josephus could unleash at the slightest hint of rebellion against his will. Not everyone, however, had submitted to his supremacy: the townspeople of Tiberias repeatedly tried to escape it, and so did those of Sepphoris, and also against Josephus was John of Gischala, who was much more entitled to command his own region. An appeal was made to the authorities in Jerusalem, who placed the blame on Josephus; they sent off influential personages to take power away from him, and they also dispatched troops and hired bands, but did not succeed in ousting him and eventually they had to recognize his usurped authority, which he lost only to the Romans. As for the way he had ruled the region, he boasts about his moderation, his mild disposition towards enemies, his temperance towards other people and their property, and he says he deemed it impious to kill a fellow-countryman and a crime to rob even enemies, in short he presents himself as a real ascetic governing the region. Yet his enemies accused him of leading a life of luxury (*ἐν τρυφαίῃς δὲ διάγοντος*: *Life* 28[4]<sup>15</sup>), and in the same § 8[1]<sup>16</sup> where he praises his own

14. Josephus, *Life of Josephus* (trans. Steve Mason; Leiden: Brill, 2003) (trans.).

15. In the original text one reads ‘*vita*, 285’, but the correct reference is to *Life* 284 (trans.).

16. The original text indicates (incorrectly) ‘§ 80’ (trans.).

conduct he also confesses—no doubt following specific accusations levelled against him by Justus of Tiberias—that he did take a share of the spoils obtained after the victory over the Syrian cities. However, he does not say a thing about these expeditions against the surrounding Gentile cities; this would not by any means have been the least interesting part of the activities he carried out. But in § 410 he reports that when Vespasian arrived in Tyre, the principal men of the Syrian Decapolis loudly denounced Justus of Tiberias because he had set fire to and of course plundered their villages.<sup>17</sup> Here I would like to express my belief that Josephus attributed to Justus the robberies which he himself had committed around that time, relying on the readers' ignorance and good faith.

The strategy adopted by Josephus in the *War* to defend his anti-Roman activities in Galilee, activities which he could [221 | 692] not, nor had he any intention to deny, because in a sense they contributed to his glory and added to the importance of his own persona, consisted in presenting his actions as the result of a formal and precise mandate—received from the national authorities in Jerusalem—to arm and strengthen the defenses of Galilee, while waiting for the decisions which the Romans would make. Therefore he acts like a great general whom his government has entrusted with a difficult task: he pacifies the province, builds up and fortifies the walls of many towns, he recruits 100,000 men, and arms and trains them with Roman discipline, so as to have 60,000 of them fit for fighting, in addition to the mercenaries and the cavalymen. Vespasian knows that capturing Josephus amounts to winning the greater part of the war (*War* 3.[143-]144), and the latter is the only commander who can stand up to the Roman general. It is not necessary to point out that in this way Josephus exaggerates his own valor and misrepresents the facts, but this exaggeration and misrepresentation did please Vespasian and Titus: their great achievement in subduing Judaea grew in importance with the growing of the difficulties overcome. In point of fact the Jewish war had been a minor war against a minor nation, a stubborn people who were profoundly torn by internal strife and riven with factions; this was not only common knowledge, but was also reported by contemporary historians. Josephus, who writes a semi-official account, attacks such historians from the very beginning of the preface: 'They desire to represent the Romans as a great nation,

17. This is inaccurate: Vespasian reaches Tyre in *Life* 407, but it is in Ptolemais that the chief men of the Syrian Decapolis loudly accuse Justus of setting fire to their villages (*Life* 410) (trans.).

and yet they continually depreciate and disparage the actions of the Jews. But I fail to see how the conquerors of a puny people deserve to be accounted great. Again, these writers have respect neither for the long duration of the war, nor for the vast numbers of the Roman army that it engaged, nor for the prestige of the generals, who, after such herculean labors under the walls of Jerusalem, are, I suppose, of no repute in these writers' eyes, if their achievement is to be underestimated'<sup>18</sup> (*War* 1.1-7).<sup>19</sup>

This strategy adopted by Josephus would of course lead him [222 | 693] to overlook or to mention only in passing that series of intrigues and personal conflicts by which he had acquired and illegally kept his position in Galilee; such incidents would have proven him to be quite far from the image of the lawful and great general of a most powerful army which he wants to foster. After summarizing in books 1 and 2 the antecedents, from the Maccabean revolution up to the anti-Roman rising under Nero, he then briefly illustrates his own activities in Galilee with a few episodes that were particularly useful in presenting himself in a good light, and he opens book 3 with Vespasian's intervention. It was indeed high time to come to the subject: the background information in the first two books occupies 203 pages of Niese's editio minor, the remaining five books taken together 267; had the author lingered a little bit longer, the eurhythmy of the work would have been compromised. Furthermore, Josephus has shrewdly avoided boring his Roman readers—among whom he counted Vespasian, Titus, and Agrippa—with a verbose description of his personal conflicts in Galilee, which it was also in his best interest not to rake up in great detail, stirring the resentments and grievances of opponents who were still alive and powerful. His personal ambition was adequately appeased by presenting himself as a grand general in the Roman style to his audience in Rome, under the benevolent smile of the Flavians. But when he grew old, he must have proposed to return to the events of Galilee to illustrate in full detail his sagacity; we have this exposition in the second draft of the *Life* which is at odds with *Justus*.

Laqueur (pp. 10 ff.) maintains that the conflict between *Justus* and Josephus was simply a literary one, not a political one. To this end he analyses the long digression in *Life* 336–367. However, if we read Josephus's text we

18. Josephus, *The Jewish War Books I–III* (trans. H.J. Thackeray; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956) (trans.).

19. Despite the slightly different indication provided by Motzo, the actual quotation is taken from *War* 1.7-8 (trans.).



can easily notice that Justus's accusation rebutted in §§ 340–354—for half of the digression—is truly [223 | 694] political in nature: πῶς οὖν ... Ἰοῦστε δεινότατε συγγραφέων, τοῦτο γὰρ ἀρχεῖς περὶ σεαυτοῦ, αἴτιοι γεγόναμεν ἐγώ τε καὶ Γαλιλαῖοι τῇ πατρίδι σουτῆς πρὸς Ῥωμαίους καὶ πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα στάσεως [‘How, then ... Justus most clever of historians, as you boast yourself to be, can I and the Galilaeans be held responsible for the insurrection of your native city against the Romans and against the king’].<sup>20</sup> In §§ 355–356 Josephus throws back the moral charge of *πονηρία*, accusing his opponent of several faults which we are not able to verify. From § 357 through § 367 he opposes Justus's claims to having written a better history of those events. He has to reluctantly acknowledge a certain stylistic superiority in his rival, but he tries to insinuate into his reader's mind the conviction that Justus lacked what matters most in a writer of histories, a thorough knowledge of the events, as he had fled Galilee, nor had he witnessed the siege of Jotapata, which no one had survived but Josephus himself, and he had not even seen the siege of Jerusalem as Josephus had, whose account had been approved by Vespasian and especially by Titus and by King Agrippa. ‘Why did you not publish your history while Vespasian and Titus and King Agrippa were living, since you had it written twenty years earlier? Certainly you would have obtained praise for your accuracy!’<sup>21</sup> Justus had waited for the end of the Flavians and for Agrippa's death, and only in the third year of Trajan's reign did he decide to bring his work into the open and expose the truth without peril; his account differed a lot from the official and semi-official versions of the facts contained in Vespasian's memoirs and in Josephus's narrative. The latter's persona must have been cut down to size by Justus showing how he had illegally usurped power, how he had relied on bandits, had resisted the central authorities in Jerusalem, and how through the terror of the gangs he had pushed towns and villages to surrender to him, defecting from the King and the Romans. All this destroyed not only the role of a great general which Josephus had assumed in the *War*, but also his plan of justification in the eyes of the Romans, which had consisted in presenting himself as a mere executor of the orders of the central authorities. Justus struck at [224 | 695] his

20. This quotation is taken from *Life* 340 (Josephus, *The Life Against Apion*) (trans.).

21. In spite of the use of quotation marks, here Motzo summarizes and re-words—rather than translating literally—what Josephus writes. The reference, however, is to *Life* 359–360 (trans.).

opponent not just from a literary point of view, but morally and politically; he made a bandit of a hero, and a ringleader out of a general like the grand Roman proconsuls, and that was very serious. No doubt—as Laqueur notes—everybody in Rome knew about Josephus’s involvement in the war against the Romans, and he did not think of dissimulating it, quite the contrary, nor would anyone blame him for it: but this was known in the form in which Josephus himself had portrayed it with the tacit connivance of the Flavians. With the end of the latter, Josephus lost the protection of the Court, if in concluding the second edition of the *Life*—which, as we now know, was redone after 100—he preserved unchanged the final hint at the favor he had enjoyed under Vespasian, Titus, Domitian and his consort, but kept completely silent about their successors Nerva and Trajan.

Laqueur (pp. 18 ff.) tries to find confirmation that the rivalry between the two writers would have been a purely literary one and should be seen only in terms of competing books through a comparison with *Apion* 1.46-56 and 1.24-27: but it must be absolutely denied that in those passages Josephus is picking on Justus the Jew [as one who is not able to know] the history of his own people,<sup>22</sup> although the argument against Gentile historians who had written about the Jews is carried on along the same lines as that against Justus with regard to the Jewish war, namely the lack of truthfulness and of a good knowledge of the topic. Thus, the proof used by Laqueur to deduce that the *Against Apion* was composed after 100 is lacking. Likewise the possibility must be excluded that Josephus is arguing with Justus in *Ant.* 20.262-265, where—boasting about the completed work—he asserts that no one else, either Jew or Greek, had been able to expound with so much accuracy the vicissitudes of the Jewish people to the Greek and Roman world, but at the same time he admits that his own Greek elocution—which he had not been familiar with from childhood—was rather faulty, and he apologizes for it by saying that among his compatriots learning other languages was considered [225 | 696] a less liberal skill, common even to slaves, while only a profound knowledge of the Law was held in high esteem. Here Josephus is not at all alluding in a polemical fashion to Justus, whose work—still to come—demonstrated how also a Jew could compete with the Greeks in stylistic perfection; rather,

22. Here Motzo’s original text is rather puzzling; a few words may be missing (trans.).

he was refuting an objection commonly raised by his readers, which he also tries to rebut elsewhere.

Contrary to what Laqueur claims, we must think that in the *Life* Josephus writes in reply to the statements of his opponent not only in those passages where Justus is openly referred to or mentioned, but also elsewhere; this is quite clear for §§ 80–84, where he brags about his conduct, but is forced to confess to having taken a share of the spoils obtained from the Gentile cities of the province of Syria. It should be noted that as many as 210 sections out of 430 explicitly deal with Tiberias and with Justus, that is almost half of the *Life*; a few sections of it—for example what is said about Gamala and Philip (§§ 46–61, 179–86, 407–409)—cannot be connected to Josephus's personal biography, but we would probably have an explanation for that if we had Justus's account. However, a different hypothesis can be put forward to explain the anomaly of such sections. When in 93 Josephus concluded the *Antiquities* and wrote the first version of the *Life*, he also intended to again narrate the history of the war and the later events up to the last years in a work in four books.<sup>23</sup> It would have had to have been a 'brief account', *κατὰ περιδρομήν* (*Ant.* 20.267), but that would not have prevented him from illustrating, even in minute detail, the circumstances of his command in Galilee which he had had to summarize in the *War*, while no doubt the older he grew the more he treasured that experience, because it represented the period in his life when he had been of some importance from a political point of view; in contrast, the war with the Romans, despite his good deal of imposture, had been a complete fiasco. It is likely [226 | 697] that he began to write this account; however, the work never saw the light of day, because a work that was superior from a literary point of view and that extended until the death of Agrippa II had appeared, viz. Justus's work, which superseded the one projected by Josephus. The latter understood that it was no longer advisable to publish his own. Yet he had to defend himself—particularly about his command in Galilee—and he did so in the new edition of the *Life*, which deals with it almost exclusively from § 30 through § 413, that is for 383 sections as opposed to the 47 devoted to the rest of the biography and the other events. The fact that in this narrative the mentioning of Justus sometimes appears to have been forcibly stuck into a context not related to him, makes me suspect that in those passages the author either enlarged the text of the old biography

23. See above n. 2 (trans.).

or copied out—taking it from his drawer—not a most ancient report dating back to the years 66–67<sup>24</sup> (as Laqueur believes), but rather that part of the four books which he had promised in 93, the part dealing with the events of Galilee, and through minor and major additions he transformed it into a pamphlet against Justus and his fellow-citizens the Tiberians, and into an apologia of his own conduct.

24. Or ‘a most ancient report of the years 66–67’ (trans.).