

Herod's Childhood and the Idumaeen Provenance of his Family: Marisa or Horvat Midras?*

Israel Shatzman

I

Marisa, Maresha in Hebrew,¹ was the central city of Idumaea in the Hellenistic period, an economically prosperous city whose commercial and cultural activities and links extended far beyond the borders of Palestine.² According to Josephus, the Hasmonaean ruler John Hyrcanus conquered many cities in Idumaea, including Adora and Marisa, subdued the Idumaeans and coerced them to be circumcised and to observe the laws and customs of the Judaeans; those who accepted his terms were allowed to remain in their country and became Judaeans and those who did not had to leave.³ It is not known how long it took John Hyrcanus to complete the conquest of Idumaea, but we do have archaeological evidence indicating that the war was not limited to the capture of cities only, but was also conducted in the rural areas.⁴ Coinage finds, funerary inscriptions, weights and amphora handle stamps that were discovered in Marisa show that the city was not captured before 112/111. The exact date is disputed; as I argued elsewhere, it seems that the city was conquered in 108/107 or soon afterwards.⁵

Josephus and other sources tell us that Herod's forebears were Idumaeans,⁶ and several scholars, seeking to be more precise, suggested or claimed that Marisa was the

* A Hebrew version of this article appeared in *Jerusalem and Eretz-Israel* 8-9 (2013): *Studies in Honour of Prof. Amos Kloner*, ed. B. Zissu, 135-64. In the present version I have slightly extended and modified the discussion in a few cases, taking into account additional evidence and scholarly works bearing on the topics treated. Unless otherwise indicated all dates are BCE.

¹ See, e.g., Josh. 15: 44; Mic. 1: 15; I Chr. 2: 42.

² On the economy of Marisa see Kloner 2001; *idem*, in Kloner, Eshel, Korzakova and Finkielstejn 2010, 206-15, 321-3.

³ Joseph. *BJ* 1.63; *AJ* 13.257-8; 14.253-4 (hereafter Josephus' name is omitted in references to his works). The coerced conversion of the Idumaeans is also recorded in the only fragment known from *On King Herod* written by a certain Ptolemy, probably the well-known *grammaticus* of Ascalon; see M. Stern 1974, 355-6, and esp. Geiger 2012. For the view that the Idumaeans converted under duress see Shatzman 2005; for the view that the Idumaeans converted voluntarily see Rappaport 2009.

⁴ The site of Kh. a-Rasm, situated about one km. south-west of Tel 'Azeqa and comprising rural buildings, was abandoned and set on fire at this time. See Faust and Erlich 2011. They justly ascribe the abandonment or destruction of several more sites to the Hasmonaean conquest; see also Shatzman 2012, 42-3.

⁵ Shatzman 2012, 38-40.

⁶ *BJ* 1.123; *AJ* 14.8-10, 403 (etc.); Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 1.7, 1. The distinction between the original Judaeans and the Judaeans whose origin was Idumaeen appears in Ptolemy's *On*

place of origin of the Herodian family. In his monumental book on Herod, Abraham Schalit preferred to express his view on this point in the form of a question:

Die Familie des Antipatros macht den Eindruck einer in der hellenistischen Tradition verwurzelten orientalisches-patriarchalischen Sippe. Liegt es nicht nahe anzunehmen, dass die Hellenisierung dieser angesehenen, reichen idumäischen Familie ihren Ausgang von Marissa genommen hat, jener idumäischen Stadt, der hellenistischen Charakter uns die in Tell Sandahanna entdeckten Gräber vor Augen geführt?⁷

Schalit's suggestion and arguments have been endorsed by Martin Hengel,⁸ and Aryeh Kasher followed suit.⁹ Most recently Bezalel Bar-Kochva too concurred with Schalit's view.¹⁰ Eliezer Oren interprets a different kind of evidence to argue that Marisa was the ancestral abode of the Herodians (see below).¹¹ In his book on the Herodian dynasty, Nikos Kokkinos draws attention to Josephus' remark (*AJ* 14.10) that Alexander Jannaeus and his wife appointed Antipas, Herods' grandfather, as governor (*stratēgos*) of Idumaea and that:

During the reign of Alexandra (76-67 BCE) Antipater seems to have succeeded his father [Antipas] in the position of Idumaeen *stratēgos* at Marisa ... Thus Marisa would need to be regarded as Herod the Great's "home town".¹²

Yet, he subsequently claims that the original provenance of the family was Ascalon; his arguments and interpretations are, however, untenable.¹³ Other scholars, including

King Herod (n. 3 above), and it stands to reason that the author brought it up while discussing the question of the Idumaeen origins of Herod. See Schürer 1973, 27; M. Stern 1974, 355-6; Shatzman 2005, 218-9; Geiger 2012, 187. Several Talmudic sources (*M. Sotah* 7: 8; *Tos. Sotah* 7: 16, etc.; cf. *AJ* 19.332-4) deal with the qualification of Agrippa I, Herod's grandson, to reign on account of his being a descendant of converts, that is, by implication, Idumaeen converts. See Schalit 1969, 692-3; J.M. Baumgarten 1982; D.R. Schwartz 1990, 124-30, 158-61, 219-21; A. Baumgarten 1993. However, Herod's Idumaeen origins are not mentioned explicitly in Talmudic sources (Schalit 1962, 109 and 143 n. 1).

⁷ Schalit 1969, 257-8 n. 382. For a much more affirmative formulation of the provenance from Marisa see Schalit 1962, 109-10, 113-4.

⁸ Hengel 1974, 1, 62; 2, 45 n. 34.

⁹ Kasher 2007, 19; cf. also 27.

¹⁰ Bar-Kochva 2012, 260.

¹¹ Oren 1968.

¹² Kokkinos 1998, 96.

¹³ Kokkinos 1998, 100-138. A few comments and references will have to suffice here. Kokkinos' starting point is based on Christian traditions testifying to Herod's grandfather's servile status and provenance from Ascalon. He admits that these are slandering stories, but claims that they may contain a genuine core, i.e. the Ascalonite origin. Yet, slanders do not necessarily contain a grain of truth. Moreover, all the other pieces of information that Kokkinos uses to prove Herod's links with Ascalon are partly related to later stages in Herod's political career and partly irrelevant. Also, Kokkinos does not take into consideration that in order to give credibility to a story about an ancestor of Herod's being a slave in Apollo's temple in Ascalon the person, or persons, who originally concocted the libel might have exploited the information about the friendly relations Antipas had

Walter Otto and Menahem Stern, refrained from specifying a precise geographical provenance for Herod's family.¹⁴ It may be presumed that they did not form an opinion simply because Marisa does not appear in any of the surviving sources as the dwelling site of the Herodian family, neither before the appointment of Antipas as governor of Idumaea nor after it.

The present article aims to show that there is no basis for both Schalit's suggestion and for that of those who followed his lead. Not only were the historical sources misinterpreted, but their premise was also disproved by the archeological evidence. Thereafter I shall examine the possibility that Herod grew up in Jerusalem although his family came from a rural area in Idumaea, probably Horvat Midras, where it presumably owned sizeable property and enjoyed local influence, perhaps even control of the population.

II

The suggestion that Herod's family originated in Marisa is based on certain facts and interpretations involving assumptions and conjectures that need to be detailed.

1. The Greek names Antipas, Antipater and Herod indicate a degree of Hellenization of the Herodian family as early as the second century, that is, before the Hasmonaean conquest of Idumaea.

2. According to the relatively copious evidence (in particular Greek inscriptions, names of people recorded in inscriptions, wall paintings depicting various motifs and myths, as well as other works of art), Marisa was a Hellenized city, and the process of its Hellenization had already begun in the third century.¹⁵

3. Scholars' implicit assumption is that a Hellenized Idumaeian family, like that of the Herodians, must have lived in Marisa, a city known to have been Hellenized.

4. It is assumed that as governor of Idumaea, Antipas most naturally resided in Marisa, the central city of the district.¹⁶

5. It is conjectured that Antipater inherited the position of governor of Idumaea from his father and that hence, he too resided in Marisa.¹⁷

established with the people of Ascalon (see below, 128) and the position that Herod attained there after his rise to power. Many scholars have rejected the story (e.g. Schürer 1973, 234 n. 3; Smallwood 1976, 19-20 n. 50), which may well have been a Jewish invention as part of an anti-Herodian propaganda. See Schalit 1962, esp. 115-21, 136-43. Kokkinos' proposal is rejected by Wilker 2007, 34.

¹⁴ See Otto 1913, 17-8; Stern 1992, 10-11.

¹⁵ Hengel 1974, 1, 62; Fuks 1983, 29-35.

¹⁶ See Kokkinos 1998, 95; Bar-Kochva 2012, 261.

¹⁷ Kokkinos' wording concerning this matter (see above, 124) is cautious; cf. Schalit 1969, 5. Smallwood (1976, 19) emphasizes that Antipater's governorship is not mentioned at all. Bar-Kochva (2012, 260) argues that it stands to reason that Antipater was appointed governor due both to origin, wealth and social standing, and the fact that in the Hellenistic kingdoms the office of governor quite often passed from father to son. Others (e.g. Günther 2005, 40; Kasher 2007, 21 n. 12) take this conjecture as an established fact.

6. As Herod is known to have been well-versed in Greek culture, including philosophy and history, it is assumed that he received a Greek education in childhood; the appropriate place for a young Idumaeen to get it would be Marisa.¹⁸

7. Not satisfied with the looting of Jerusalem in 40, the Parthians raided the whole of Judaea, and destroyed Marisa completely. Schalit, followed by Hengel, conjectures that Marisa suffered this fate on account of its special connection with Herod. The latter, nonetheless, managed to escape the Parthians who aimed to uproot the Herodian economic and social infrastructure in Idumaea.¹⁹

8. Oren has presented extensive Talmudic evidence on a variety of topics including a reference to a particular kind of doves whose name vary in at least twenty-four versions. Among them we find: Hardsiot (הרדסיאות), Hardsiyot (הרדסיות), Hardisiot (הרדיסאות), Hardisaot (הרדיסאות), Horodsiyot (הורודסיות), Dorsiot (דורסיאות), Dorsiyot (דורסיות), Hadresiot (הדרסיאות), and Hadrusiyot (הדרוסיות). Additional evidence reads as follows:

Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Simeon [disagreed on the reading of the Mishnah]. One taught 'Hadresiot' and one taught 'Hardsiot'. The one teaching 'Hardsiot' [named the doves] after Herod, and the one teaching 'Hadresiot' [named them] after their place.²⁰

Oren infers that two main versions circulated on the name of these doves, the first that it derived from Herod's name,²¹ and the second that it came from a place where these doves were cultivated. He believes that both versions are correct and 'indicate a common origin — i.e. a name of a place associated with Herod as well as with the breeding of a specific type of doves'. Oren avers that these two characteristics apply only to Marisa because: (a) some 200 caves with *columbaria* for the breeding of doves were discovered in its vicinity; (b) Josephus' account of Herod's escape from the Parthians in the year 40 reveals his special connections with Marisa. In the course of his flight Herod met his brother Joseph at a place variously named in Josephus' two historical works.²² Oren argues that the reading *risa*, which appears in the Latin translation of the *Antiquities*, is the correct one for the following reason: it 'can undoubtedly be identified with *Marissa*', and that it is noteworthy that after spoiling the royal palace in Jerusalem, 'the Parthians

¹⁸ Kashner (2007, 27) conjectures that, as a child, Herod was educated in Marisa and later in Ascalon, because his father wished to provide him with the finest education possible.

¹⁹ For the Parthian destruction see *BJ* 1.268-9; *AJ* 14.263-4; for the conjecture: Schalit 1962, 110.

²⁰ Talmud Bavli, *Hullin* 139b. For further examples, variants in manuscripts and discussions see Lieberman 1992, 185-6; Epstein 2000, 27-9.

²¹ For dove-cotes in Herod's palace in Jerusalem see *BJ* 5.181. See also *M. Shabbath* 24: 3; *Hullin* 12: 1; Schürer 1973, 310 with notes 76-77.

²² The *app. crit.* of B. Niese's edition of *BJ* 1.266, 294 and *AJ* 14.361, 400 (Berlin 1887-1894) gives various readings and iotacisms of θρησά / θρήσσα but notably also ῥήσά / ῥύσα / ῥύσσα / *risa* (Lat.). All the Greek readings depend on the Codex Laurentianus 69, 22 (L), dated to the eleventh century. The *editio princeps* (Basel 1544) is based on the Codex Schleusingenensis (S) which is independent of manuscript L. Its readings (θρησα / θρησα / ῥησα) are almost identical to those of L. It is commonly agreed that the distortion of the place-name had occurred before the translation of Josephus' works into Latin.

went from Jerusalem *straight on to Marissa in Idumea*, destroying the city completely'. Hence, it is obvious that the brothers met at Marisa: that was where Herod's family resided and there he had sent his treasures even before his flight from Jerusalem. Oren adds that after its destruction by the Parthians Marisa sank into oblivion, which caused the distortion of the name and the inability of the Gemara to provide the place-name associated with Herod.

III

Let us now examine the facts and the interpretations presented above, beginning with nos. 1-3. The process of Hellenization, usually regarded as acculturation, encompassed a variety of phenomena relating to individuals as well as to society as a whole. Although it may be examined from different angles — language, material culture, education, customs, religion, socio-economic and political conditions — some scholars stress the limits of the Hellenization of the populations of Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine in that period, and the extent of the continuation of the local, traditional cultures.²³

The extent of the Hellenization of the Jews of Palestine has been hotly debated but fortunately need not be discussed here.²⁴ In this context it is important to note that the adoption of a Greek name was the easiest way for a family to endow itself with Greek identity. However, the mere fact that a local individual, be he a Phoenician, Judaeon or Idumaeon, was known by a Greek name does not necessarily point to the true extent of his Hellenization. As Maurice Sartre writes:

... one ought to wonder about the reasons for choosing a name, about the relative freedom of the parents and the weight of familial traditions, as well as about fashions ... one ought also to reflect on how conscious individuals were of the name they selected: can we be certain that the chosen name's ethnic, religious, cultural, or even political dimensions were considered?²⁵

One or two examples are in order. The Greek names adopted by members of the Hasmonaeon dynasty probably aimed at the Hellenistic public in order to be considered equal with leaders involved in contemporary politics.²⁶ One need not infer that John Hyrcanus and his sons were given an ordinary Greek education or adopted Greek dress; or even that they knew Greek, although that may well have been the case. Another example is Antigonos of Socho (early second century) who is said to have

received [the Law] from [the High-Priest] Simeon the Just. He used to say: 'Be not like slaves that minister to the master for the sake of receiving a bounty, but be like slaves that

²³ See especially Millar 2006.

²⁴ The classic study is Hengel 1974, who underlines the importance of Hellenization and its deep penetration into almost all aspects of life. For a contradictory view see, e.g., Feldman 2006, 1-33; for the limits of the process see Collins 2001; and for a balanced position see Rajak 2002, 3-10. On the limited assimilation of Greek patterns of material culture and the significant continuation of local traditions see Tal 2006, *passim*, esp. 323-35, a study based on an exhaustive review of the archaeological finds in Eretz-Israel in the Hellenistic period.

²⁵ Sartre 2007, 200.

²⁶ See Rappaport 1991, 481-5 (Hebrew); 1992; Wasserstein 1995, 118-9.

minister to the master not for the sake of receiving a bounty; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you'.²⁷

The view that this saying betrays influence of Greek philosophical thinking is groundless. Elias Bickerman has convincingly shown that it reflects conditions of slavery common in the Graeco-Roman world and other societies. The reason for this Jewish sage's name is in complete darkness and nothing further is known about the extent of the "Hellenism" surrounding Antigonus of Socho.²⁸ Moreover, Socho was the name of two small villages on the road to Jerusalem but close to Idumaea (about fifteen km. from Beth Govrin),²⁹ a fact which implies that a person like Antigonus, whose origin was not from a central city, could still be given a Greek name in the early second century. This information is enough to undermine the theory built on the basis of a few Greek names that the provenance of the Herodian family was from Marisa or the family's supposed Hellenization. One factor that seriously undermines this theory is the neglect to probe whether the population of Marisa in the first century was as Hellenized as that of pre-Hasmonaean Marisa.

IV

Can the conjectures that Antipater inherited, so to speak, the governorship of Idumaea from his father and that the official residence of both was in Marisa stand scrutiny? The only extant historiographical source on Antipater's origins is Josephus. When Josephus introduces Antipater for the first time he points to his noble pedigree, his wealth and power, in virtue of which he enjoyed a foremost position among the Idumaeans (*BJ* 1.123). Although the account aims at highlighting his elevated standing and esteem, Josephus has nothing to say about his being the Hasmonaean governor of Idumaea, thus casting doubt on a crucial aspect of Antipater's power and governorship. Of course an *argumentum e silentio* is a weak argument. But what about the Josephan evidence from which scholars have inferred that Antipater was appointed governor of Idumaea? In the *Antiquities*, in contrast to the *War*, we do hear about Antipater's origins. We learn that he was a friend of Hyrcanus II, owned many properties, and was an energetic and seditious person (*drastērios, stasiastēs*); that Alexander Jannaeus and his wife appointed his father, Antipas, as governor of Idumaea; and that the latter established friendly relations with the Arabs — presumably the Nabataeans — the Gazaeans and the Ascalonites, winning them over by many gifts. Josephus provides this information in order to refute Nicolaus of Damascus' claim that the Herodian family descended from Babylonian returnees.³⁰ It turns out that even in the more detailed account of Antipater's origins, also

²⁷ M. *Aboth* 1: 3 (Danby 1933, 446).

²⁸ See Bickerman 1951. Albright asserts, without any explanation or discussion, that the name of Antigonus testifies to his Greek education and that the saying was coined under Greek influence (1940, 269, 272); even Hengel does not agree (1974, 2, 87 n.161).

²⁹ Euseb. *Onom.* 156: 16; Tsafir, Di Segni and Green 1994, 234.

³⁰ *AJ* 14.8-10. The information does not divulge when Antipas was appointed governor of Idumaea and until when he held this post. It is unclear whether it was a joint appointment made by Jannaeus and his wife or an appointment confirmed by Alexandra after the death of her husband.

aimed at stressing Herod's honourable lineage, Josephus does not report that he had been governor of Idumaea. Josephus' consistent silence cannot perhaps be deemed as clear-cut proof that such an appointment did not take place, but it certainly makes the opposite conclusion seriously questionable.

Despite this, the conjecture that Antipater was governor of Idumaea could be regarded as plausible, if it could be demonstrated that the appointment of sons of high ranking officials to the positions held by their fathers was widely practised in the Hellenistic kingdoms or by the Hasmonaean administration. This, however, cannot be established. Under the Hasmonaean regime no such practice is known; but admittedly, very little is known about the personnel of the Hasmonaean administration. By contrast, the prosopographical information about Seleucid and, in particular, Ptolemaic officials is much better despite many *lacunae*. Examples which show that members of certain families served in various administrative positions in the course of more than one generation are known, yet the only case of a son who "inherited" the position of his father is that of Ptolemy son of Thraseas, governor of Syria and Phoenicia under Ptolemy IV, whose father had served in the same position shortly after 217.³¹ On the other hand, there are many examples of individuals who did not "inherit" the posts held by their fathers and of administrative districts where no family ties existed between the governors.³² In sum, although it would be hasty to deny categorically that an immediate appointment of a son to the position previously held by his father ever happened, it is clear that this was not the accepted procedure in the two great Hellenistic kingdoms that ruled Palestine and whose methods of government the Hasmonaeans may have adopted. Furthermore, given Josephus' silence, the conjecture that Antipater was appointed governor after the death of his father is extremely speculative and certainly cannot corroborate the surmise that he resided in Marisa or was especially associated with it. The archaeological evidence also refutes the other conjecture, namely that Antipas resided in Marisa as governor of Idumaea.

In light of the findings discovered in the excavations conducted by Amos Kloner and the archaeologists who worked with him, partly in the lower and partly in the upper city of Marisa, as well in those conducted by Macalister and Bliss in the upper city in 1900, one must definitely conclude that Antipas' residence as governor of Idumaea could not possibly have been in Marisa. In his account of the excavations, Macalister distinguishes three strata: an early "Jewish" one and two Hellenistic of which the upper was Seleucid; he dates the Hellenistic city to the third and second centuries, a chronology that fits with

³¹ See Gera 1998, 29-31. Even in this case, there is no direct evidence that Ptolemy stepped in as governor immediately after his father Thraseas. Aetus, Thraseas' father, was governor of Cilicia under Ptolemy II, and Thraseas served in the same position many years later, some time after 238.

³² For lists of Seleucid *stratēgoi* see Bengtson 1944-52, 2, 407-410 (forty-eight persons) and for the Ptolemaic 3, 207-41 (192 persons). The lists of Seleucid officials collected by Grainger (1997, 75-124) contain more than 300 persons but the vast majority did not serve as governors. On absence of family connection between the governors of Cyprus see Bagnall 1976, 253-62

the pottery and epigraphic dates provided by the Rhodian amphora stamps and coins discovered in the site and in the under-ground caves of Marisa.³³

Macalister and Bliss did not consider the possibility that Marisa continued to be settled after the Hasmonaean conquest. By contrast, M. Avi-Yonah claimed that the "oriental" changes noticed in the Hippodamic plan of the city – meaning the intrusion of rooms into city streets with the loss of straight courses – could have happened only under the Hasmonaean, not the Seleucid regime.³⁴ This is a misconceived argument, because 'From the few architectural fragments and from the plans of the buildings, it is evident that the plan of the city was a blend of Hellenistic and eastern elements', as Avi-Yonah himself wrote,³⁵ and as others have also underlined.³⁶ These oriental elements were quite natural in a city like Marisa, whose inhabitants were oriental Idumaeans, Arabs, Sidonians etc., people who may well have been responsible for the introduction of the so-called eastern changes that preceded the Hasmonaean conquest, particularly during the decline of Seleucid authority in the second half of the second century. No archaeological evidence indicates that these "eastern" changes are later than the adjacent buildings; in other words, there is no evidence for the existence of a separate Hasmonaean phase in addition to the three strata distinguished by Bliss and Macalister.³⁷

Several scholars were of the opinion that a certain building, divided into three cells and situated in the eastern part of the city, was an Idumaeian temple erected under Aulus Gabinius, the Roman governor of Syria (57-55) who intervened in the administration of Judaea.³⁸ This is sheer speculation, lacking any archaeological support whatsoever. Moreover, the attempts to credit Gabinius with buildings and other archaeological finds stem from a misunderstanding of the confused information provided by Josephus about the condition of the cities that had been captured by the Hasmonaean rulers and the actions taken by Pompey and Gabinius to restore them.³⁹ The measures taken by these two Roman generals introduced new political arrangements that enabled the administrative and demographic restoration of those cities; there is no reason to assume

³³ Bliss and Macalister 1902, 52-61, 67-70; cf. Watzinger 1935, 12-3. Albright has concluded, on the basis of the coins found in the excavations of Beth-Zur, Gezer and Marisa, that the inhabitants of these three cities evacuated them in the time of John Hyrcanus, that is, 120-100 (Sellers and Albright 1931, 12). Certain Greek inscriptions have mostly Greek names, but also some Egyptian, Semitic and Roman ones. R. Wünsch dated these inscriptions to the second century CE (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 158-187, esp. 181-2). However, this dating has been rejected by H. Thiersch on the ground that it is incongruous with the archaeological context of the finds and that the Attic phonetic analogies used by Wünsch are not applicable in the heart of the Semitic world (1908, 402 with n. 62). Avi-Yonah dates these inscriptions to the Hellenistic period (1993, 950).

³⁴ Avi-Yonah 1993, 951

³⁵ Avi-Yonah 1993, 949; cf. Avi-Yonah and Yeivin 1956, 124-5.

³⁶ Horowitz 1980, 109; Tal 2006, 103.

³⁷ Kloner 2003, 11-2; *idem*, in Kloner, Eshel, Korzakova and Finkielsztein 2010, 1.

³⁸ Thiersch 1908, 397-8; Avi-Yonah and Yeivin 1956, 122; Horowitz 1980, 104-5; Avi-Yonah 1993, 951.

³⁹ On the confusion and contradictions in Josephus' reports about these topics see Isaac 1990, 336-40; Shatzman 1991, 72-7.

that they financed the physical restoration at their own expense.⁴⁰ This does not mean, however, that no buildings had been constructed and that no governing and administrative institutions were established. In fact, one should take into consideration the recent discovery of certain coins, altogether about forty, whose legends testify to the minting of coins by the city of Marisa in the wake of Gabinius' decisions. One coin was found in excavations in Beth Govrin and another was reported to have been collected on the surface at Marisa; the provenance of all the other coins is unfortunately unknown.⁴¹

The numismatic evidence is instructive. Sixty-one coins were discovered in the excavations of Bliss and Macalister: thirteen Ptolemaic; nineteen Seleucid; twenty-five of John Hyrcanus; one of Herod and two unidentified Greek; not even one Alexander Jannaeus coin was found. In Kloner's excavations, both in the upper and lower city, 950 coins were discovered: two of the fourth century; 135 Ptolemaic; seven of the city of Side (late third to the early second century); 716 Seleucid; forty-seven city coins, the latest dated to 108/107; twenty-nine Nabataean coins that had been minted long before the Hasmonaean conquest; and nine Hasmonaean coins (two of John Hyrcanus, four of Jannaeus that were found on the surface, and three unidentified); post-Hasmonaean conquest coins: one of Ptolemaïs (Acre), one of Cleopatra VII, one of Gaius (mint of Ascalon), and two "Herodian" — of Agrippa I. Two phenomena are conspicuous: the extreme rarity of foreign coins dated to the post-Hasmonaean conquest, particularly in contrast with the copious number of such coins dated to the pre-Hasmonaean centuries (the ratio is 5:856), and the exceptionally exiguous number of coins of Jannaeus, in contrast to other Hasmonaean sites. These phenomena are patent evidence that Marisa ceased to be settled a short time after the conquest of John Hyrcanus, although it is possible that a Hasmonaean garrison had briefly occupied the site.⁴² In comparison, in the excavations of the Hellenistic city on Mount Gerizim, which was also conquered by John Hyrcanus, at least sixteen thousands coins were discovered including 546 Hasmonaean coins: fifty-two of John Hyrcanus; one of Aristobulus I; 480 of Jannaeus,

⁴⁰ Gadara is the only city that may have been financially helped by Pompey (*BJ* 1.155; *AJ* 14.74). Avi-Yonah was well aware that Gabinius dealt only with administrative matters and the problem of the population composition; he did not care to explain why he thought that this policy did not apply to the suggested temple (1993, 951).

⁴¹ See Qedar 1992-93; Gitler and Kushnir-Stein 2004.

⁴² See Bliss and Macalister 1902, 68; Kloner and Asaf 1992; Kloner 2003, 6; Barkay 2003-6, 49. Tal's proposal (2006, 28) to date the highest layer to the Hasmonaean period on the ground that many Hasmonaean coins, mainly of Jannaeus, were found on the peak, results from wrong inference. Kloner (2003, 6), to whom Tal refers, speaks only about a random discovery of coins on the surface, including those of Jannaeus and Herod. See Kloner and Asaf 1992, where only two Hasmonaean coins are reported. The details given in the text are based on the list of the coins that Dr. Barkay and Prof. Kloner most kindly handed over to me and I wish to thank them for sharing this information with me. On the twenty-nine Nabataean coins see also Barkay 2003-6, 49, 55-6. About 400 coins have been discovered in the digs conducted by Dr. I. Stern and B. Alpert but they remain unreported (Ariel and Hoover 2011, 62 and 65).

and the others unidentified.⁴³ The generally accepted conclusion is hence that, in contrast to Marisa, the successors of John Hyrcanus continued to occupy Mt. Gerizim.

The evidence of the coinage finds is supported by other archaeological evidence revealed in Marisa: hundreds of ostraca and other inscriptions, hundreds of amphoras, a huge number of various pottery vessels, numerous lamps, figurines, weights etc. All these finds are securely dated to not later than the end of the second century, some suggesting that the site was briefly occupied by Hasmonaean soldiers after the conquest.⁴⁴ All in all the archaeological finds show that Marisa was not occupied in the first half of the first century and that the city that was founded on Gabinus' decision was not located in Tel Sandahanna or in its close vicinity, but at some distance from it. This conclusion was already reached by Shraga Qedar and Amos Kloner who proposed that the Gabinian city was located at the site of Beth Govrin, about two km. north of Tel Sandahanna. The precise location of that city is not the subject of the present discussion, and at any rate nothing is known about it from an archaeological perspective, except, perhaps, for the coins that the city minted; hence it is impossible to assess the extent of its Hellenism.⁴⁵

V

Since Marisa was not occupied in the first half of the first century, obviously neither Antipas nor Antipater could have resided there, nor could Herod have been raised and educated in it. Furthermore, when Gabinian Marisa was founded, about 58/57, Herod was at least fifteen year old. Nonetheless, it is important to examine whether the events of the year 40 associate Herod with Gabinian Marisa

Several considerations invalidate Oren's interpretation (above II, 8). A close reading of Josephus' account of Herod's escape from Jerusalem negates the possibility that he sought to reach Marisa. One learns that Herod and his men fought the Parthians who pursued them after discovering that he had left Jerusalem, succeeded in repulsing them 'and hastened to the fortress of Masada'.⁴⁶ The Jews (i.e. Mattathias Antigonus' supporters) went on pursuing Herod and a battle was fought on the site where Herod later built Herodion, that is, about eleven km. south of Jerusalem and east of the

⁴³ Magen 2008, 1707. In an earlier count (Magen 2000, 114-5) the number was 13,000; the final count will be probably higher.

⁴⁴ For details and references to the archaeological reports see Shatzman 2012, 37-40.

⁴⁵ Qedar 1992-93, 27-8; Kloner 2003, 6; 2008, 1919, 1921; *idem*, in Kloner, Eshel, Korzakova and Finkielstejn 2010, 5, 8, 11-2, 32. Kloner wrote more than once that Marisa was destroyed in the Hasmonaean conquest (e.g. Kloner 2001; 2003, 5). Eventually he came to the conclusion that the city was not demolished systematically — except for destruction associated with the fighting and the breach made in the city-wall during the siege — but abandoned (e.g. Kloner 2010, 5, 11-2), a conclusion I fully concur with. Dan Barag was also of the same opinion. *Pace* Bar-Kochva (2012, 260 n. 13), there is no evidence that Marisa was later re-founded in another site under the Hasmonaeans.

⁴⁶ *BJ* 1.263-4; *AJ* 14.352-8. The account in *AJ* is longer due to the addition of pathetic-dramatic elements.

watershed of Judaea.⁴⁷ After defeating these enemies as well, thousands of supporters joined Herod and he arrived at a place whose name is distorted in the manuscripts of Josephus' works; there he met his brother Joseph, and on his advice sent away most of his followers because there was not enough room for them in Masada. Only Herod, members of his household and about 800 men came to Masada, but he himself soon left in order to go to Petra.⁴⁸

Several matters become clearer: (1) Herod's goal on leaving Jerusalem was to reach Masada, regarded as a secure, defensible place; (2) the pursuit after Herod and his entourage by both his Parthian and Jewish enemies pressed him to proceed without delay in order to reach refuge as quickly as possible; (3) the course of the route Herod chose to take led south of Jerusalem, and at a later stage, presumably south of Carmel, turning east to reach Masada. He intended to reach Petra in order to receive financial help from the Nabataean king Malchus I, as reported by Josephus.⁴⁹ Josephus' two accounts are clear and unequivocal: Herod had certainly no intention of going to Marisa upon leaving Jerusalem; he did not proceed along a route that led to Marisa, which is situated southwest of Jerusalem, so that the place where he met his brother has to be sought in the area between Herodion and Masada. About a century ago, E. Nestle attempted to reconstruct Herod's route. He proposed that their meeting-place rendered in distorted readings in Josephus' manuscripts, was in fact 'Horsha', a place mentioned together with Ziph in the Biblical account of David's flight from king Saul to the desert of Judaea.⁵⁰ It makes sense to associate Horsha with Kh. Harisa, situated about three km. south of Tel Ziph, and indeed, A. Schlatter had proposed this double identification prior to Nestle so that it has become the common view.⁵¹ This reconstruction of Herod's route undermines Oren's suggestion to regard the reading *risa* in the Latin version of Josephus as a distortion of Marisa. Indeed, there is no reason to regard the reading of the Latin version as better or more reliable than those of the Greek manuscripts; in this particular case they are all due to an old mistaken copying of ορησα, the Greek transcription of Hebrew 'Horsha' (חרשה).

Although he had not examined Herod's route, Oren claims that the Parthians went straight from Jerusalem to Marisa and destroyed it. He hence asserts that the two brothers met there.⁵² However, his whole argument is erroneous, yet since its elucidation

⁴⁷ *BJ* 1.265; *AJ* 14.359-360. This was a real battle, *contra* Kasher 2007, 60 who apparently has misunderstood the meaning of Josephus' wording.

⁴⁸ *BJ* 1.266-7; *AJ* 14.361-2.

⁴⁹ *BJ* 1.274-5; *AJ* 14.371-2.

⁵⁰ Nestle 1911, 81. According to Nestle, the main points on Herod's route were Tekoa, Beth Fajar, Bani Naim, Carmel and W. Seyal. On Ziph and Horsha see I Sam 23: 14-15. For the readings see above n. 22.

⁵¹ See Schlatter 1896, 229; Klein 1939, 102; Schalit 1968, 101; Tzafrir, Di Segni and Green 1994, 98 (with more references).

⁵² Oren 1968, 59.

touches on Schalit's interpretation,⁵³ it is necessary to examine Josephus' accounts in detail.

After ending his account of Herod's journey to Masada and his journey to Petra to obtain financial help, Josephus writes:

In Jerusalem, meanwhile, the Parthians turned themselves to pillage, breaking into the houses of the fugitives and into the palace, refraining only from the treasure of Hyrcanus, which, however, amounted to no more than three hundred talents. Elsewhere they found less than they had expected; for Herod, long since suspecting the barbarians of perfidy, had carried off the most precious of his treasures to Idumaea, and each of his friends had done likewise. After the pillage, the insolence of the Parthians proceeded so much that they attacked the whole country by sudden raids, and had the city of Marisa ruined.⁵⁴

Josephus' account in the *Antiquities* (14.363-364) opens with the sentence 'But at daybreak, the Parthians looted all the possessions of the people of Jerusalem, and the palace as well'. This is entirely similar to his account in *War* so that it is clear that the historian followed the earlier account introducing only some stylistic changes. Both accounts obviously resume the description of the Parthians' actions in Jerusalem following Herod's secret departure and his arrival at Masada. Their deeds have nothing to do with Herod's tribulations in the Judean desert so that there is no connection between Marisa and Herod's encounter with his brother, Joseph. Furthermore, the greedy Parthians sought to amass booty and capture moneys: they had pillaged Jerusalem and raided the whole country, as explicitly stated by Josephus, so that there is no reason to infer that Gabinian Marisa was the only city or settlement that they had attacked and looted.

Josephus does not relate what motivated the Parthians to destroy Marisa. Perhaps, as in known cases of the fate of cities captured in war, strong opposition by the people of Marisa might have enraged the Parthians so as to demolish their city, a deed also calculated to dissuade resistance to their demands elsewhere.⁵⁵ It may also be surmised that they destroyed the independent *polis* of Marisa in order to help Antigonus to re-establish his authority in Idumaea. Likewise, Marisa is perhaps specifically mentioned because it was the best known and richest city sacked by the Parthians. True, all these are conjectures with no firm evidence to corroborate them. However, one should bear in mind that Schalit's proposal to explain the destruction of Marisa is no less conjectural, a *petitio principii* based on the supposed association of Herod with that city. Apart from a conjecture whose reasoning have been proven to be erroneous, namely the unjustified ascription of Herod's family's origins to Marisa under the Hasmonaean regime and before it, there is nothing in Josephus' description of the events of the year 40 to suggest that a specific connection existed between Herod and Gabinian Marisa.

⁵³ See above II, 7. Like Oren later, Schalit (1962, 110), too, assumed that 'diese Stadt [i.e. Marisa] auf der Fluchtlinie des Herodes und in bequemer Reichweite seiner Verfolger lag'.

⁵⁴ *BJ* 1.268-269 (H. St. Thackeray's translation for the Loeb Classical Library, with a few changes).

⁵⁵ The cases known are numerous, but two will suffice to illustrate my point: on the circumstances and objects that prompted Alexander to destroy Thebes see Polyb. 38.2.13; Plut. *Alex.* 11.4-5. For a Roman example see Liv. 32.15, 1-3.

VI

It is generally agreed that Josephus' main source for the description of Herod's rise to power was the latter's close counselor Nicolaus of Damascus. It is difficult to determine whether the absence of information about Herod's early life stems from Nicolaus' neglect to treat it or from Josephus' negligence or conscious decision not to write about it. Nonetheless, some information on these "lost" years can be wrested from the latter's narrative.

Josephus adds an illuminating detail when explaining Herod's readiness to discharge the Essenes from their obligation to swear allegiance. He relates that the Essene Menahem, who was endowed by God with powers to foretell the future, upon catching sight of Herod when still a child (on his way to his teacher's house), addressed him as 'King of the Jews'. Josephus goes on to write that when Herod was in the peak of his power he asked Menahem how long he would rule and the Essene answered that his kingship would last twenty, even thirty years. Thereupon Herod released Menahem, henceforth honouring all the Essenes.⁵⁶

Schalit has rejected the credibility of this story as mere propaganda aimed at presenting Herod as the 'Messiah'.⁵⁷ Schalit's reasoning is somewhat problematic, particularly so because other stories circulated about the Essenes' prophetic power, with no connection to Herod, e.g., Judah, who forecast the death of Antigonus (brother of Asistobululus I), and Simeon, who foresaw the death of Archelaus (son and successor of Herod). Josephus also refers to the Essene power of prophecy in general terms.⁵⁸ Some believe that Josephus' direct source was Nicolaus of Damascus, others claim that the story has the characteristics of a folk tale in the style of Herodotus.⁵⁹ It is more probable, however, that the original source was Jewish, although it is impossible to tell whether Josephus learned about it from the Jewish tradition or from Nicolaus, who had adapted it in accordance with his own historiographical goals and literary criteria. Some, however, like J. Klausner and M. Stern, did accept the connection between Herod and the Essene Menahem.⁶⁰ For our purpose it is important to note that those who told the story believed that Menhaem could have met Herod in his childhood. But where? For obvious reasons it was not in Marisa. In the case of Judah it is absolutely clear that the prophecy of Antigonus' death was proclaimed in Jerusalem. In the case of the summons to Simeon and other seers, it stands to reason that the meeting took place in the Herodian palace in Jerusalem. Menahem's meeting with child Herod, therefore, may well have taken place in Jerusalem. Is there other evidence that Herod grew up in Jerusalem?

⁵⁶ For the complete story see *AJ* 15.371-9. The anecdote is not reported in *War*.

⁵⁷ Schalit 1969, 459-60.

⁵⁸ Judah: *BJ* 1.78-80; *AJ* 13.311-3; Simeon: *BI* 2.113; *AJ* 17.345-8, and for the prophetic power of the Essenes in general: *BJ* 2.159.

⁵⁹ Landau 2006, 124; Kasher 2007, 25-6 n. 28.

⁶⁰ Klausner 1959, 148-9; Stern 1974, 249; *idem* 1975, 110, 113.

Herod was born *ca.* 73,⁶¹ and if he had received a normal Greek education, he would have started about the age of seven, that is, not earlier than 67.⁶² As already suggested, it is not implausible that he indeed grew up in Jerusalem. Josephus recounts that after his appointment as governor (*stratēgos*) of Coele-Syria and Samaria, probably in 46, Herod launched a campaign against Jerusalem to take revenge on Hyrcanus II for putting him on trial before the Sanhedrin. His father Antipater and his brother Phasael, however, intervened and stopped him, reminding him that Hyrcanus had been his 'youth friend' (*suntrophos*) and benefactor (*euergetēs*) on many occasions.⁶³ 'Youth friend' denotes a person who grew up or was educated with another person; benefactor denotes a person who gave benefactions to other people or bodies, the greatest benefactors usually being kings. The words acquired a more formal and specific meaning in the Hellenistic period and *euergetēs* became a royal title in several cases.⁶⁴ *Suntrophos* was used as an appellation or title for boys of good parentage who were educated in the royal court together with the future king.⁶⁵ Accordingly, Walter Otto inferred that in reward for Antipater's loyalty to Hyrcanus, Herod was raised from childhood in the Hasmonaean court, alongside other sons of the aristocracy.⁶⁶

Otto is only partially right. Firstly, in this case it is Hyrcanus son of the Hasmonaean king who is indicated *suntrophos*, although normally the term is applied to non-royal persons. It is uncertain whether Josephus himself was responsible for this deviation from common usage or found it in his source.⁶⁷ Secondly, he himself reports (*AJ* 15.177-8) that Hyrcanus was more than eighty year of age when Herod had him executed. Since that was in 30, it is evident that Hyrcanus was born in 110, thus older than Herod by at least thirty-six years. This would be in contrast to the usual assumption that Alexandra was the widow of Aristobulus I, and that Alexander Jannaeus married her after the death of his brother begetting Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II through her.⁶⁸ If so, Hyrcanus will have been born about 100 and seventy year old at the time of his death, and not

⁶¹ 73: Otto 1913, 18; 72: Kokkinos 1998, 156 n. 2. On the possibility that he was born in 74 see Shatzman 1991, 139 n. 32; Bar-Kochva 2003, 12 n. 23; *idem* 2012, 260 (but in n. 13 73/72 is stated as the date of birth of Herod).

⁶² Marrou 1956, 142. On Herod's studies see below n. 75 with the text.

⁶³ *BJ* 1.215; *AJ* 14.183. On this episode see Shatzman 1991, 141.

⁶⁴ For example, both Ptolemy III and Ptolemy VIII were given this title. On kings as benefactors see Bringmann 1993. See also Gauthier 1985, 39-43.

⁶⁵ For some examples see Polyb. 5.9.5; 82.8; 31.13.2; 32.15.10; I Macc. 1:6; II Macc. 9:29; cf. *AJ* 18.146 and 165, on the 'growing up together' (*homotrophia*) of Agrippa I and Drusus, the emperor Tiberius' son, and with the future emperor Claudius, respectively. For discussions see Corradi 1929, 269-81; Birkman 1938, 42-3; Walbank 1957, 547. For reservations see Strack 1900, 180-181 n. 5.

⁶⁶ Otto 1913, 19.

⁶⁷ It is only in his accounts of the imminent encounter between Herod and Hyrcanus that Josephus uses the word *suntrophos* (*BJ* 1.213-5; *AJ* 14.180-84), which does not appear elsewhere in his writings (Rengstorf 1983, 134). The close similarity between the accounts indicates that in his later work Josephus depended on his early one, for which Nicolaus of Damascus was most probably the source.

⁶⁸ *BJ* 1.109; *AJ* 13.407, 411, 416, 417, 433.

eighty.⁶⁹ Even if he was born in 100 Hyrcanus would still have been older than Herod by at least twenty-seven years. Clearly, Hyrcanus and Herod could not have possibly been “class mates”. The term *suntrophos* thus probably indicates that Hyrcanus became friendly with young Herod when the latter grew up in the Hasmonaean court. Hence, given the evidence of Herod’s and Hyrcanus’ respective ages, the acquaintance between the two could not have begun earlier than 67. Moreover, if Herod’s education (when allegedly meeting with the Essene Menahem) included Greek studies, these were merely elementary,⁷⁰ since Herod turned to the study of philosophy, history and rhetoric later in his life, as Nicolaus of Damascus relates in a fragment of his own autobiography.⁷¹ Finally, the most important aspect of the various stories is that these kinds of relations could have developed only in Jerusalem.

Certain facts related by Josephus about Herod’s father underpin the inference that the Herodian family resided in Jerusalem in the early 60s. As is well-known, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II were struggling over the rule of Judaea in those years. Hyrcanus was defeated near Jericho, escaped to Jerusalem, and then reached an agreement with his brother by which the latter received the kingship and the High-Priesthood. Following that accord Aristobulus moved to live in the Hasmonaean palace and Hyrcanus received his brother’s house.⁷² At this point Josephus first mentions Antipater, recounting two versions of his reaction to the change in Hasmonaean rule. In *War*, where we find the shorter version, we are told that Antipater, being an old and bitter enemy of Aristobulus, became frightened and therefore:

persuaded Hyrcanus to seek refuge with Aretas, king of Arabia, in order to regain his kingdom, as well as Aretas to receive Hyrcanus and to reinstate him on the throne ... Having [thus] prepared both parties, [Antipater] one night slipped out of the city with Hyrcanus and, resorting to strenuous flight, safely reached the [city] called Petra.⁷³

Hyrcanus, as already argued, resided in Jerusalem at that time, and obviously Antipater could have conversed with him only if he, too, were living in Jerusalem. The express sentence ‘slipped out of the city with Hyrcanus’ clinches the conclusion that they both resided in Jerusalem. One point, however, remains obscure, namely how Antipater, who lived in Jerusalem, managed to contact Aretas who lived in Petra and conversed with him.

The enlarged version in *Antiquities* (14.11-17) adds illuminating information. Firstly, we learn that Antipater talked about his apprehension not only to Hyrcanus, but had also conversed secretly with ‘powerful’ (*dunasteuontes*) Jews inciting them against Aristobulus. The word *dunasteuontes* probably denotes persons who were of great

⁶⁹ For an instructive discussion see Geiger 2002. Yet, the identification of Alexandra, Alexander Jannaeus’ wife, with the wife of Aristobulus I is disputed by not a few scholars.

⁷⁰ Both Schalit’s (1962, 111-2, 143-145, n. 5) and Kasher’s (2007, 28-31, 435) arguments about the Greek studies of the young Phasaël and Herod are speculative in the extreme.

⁷¹ Otto 1913, 18; M. Stern 1974, 248-9 (the Greek text, an English translation and a commentary on the fragment).

⁷² *BJ* 1.120-22; *AJ* 14.4-7.

⁷³ *BJ* 1.124-5 (Thackeray’s translation, with several changes).

influence in Jewish society due to their high economic and social position and who held offices in the Hasmonaean administration. The context makes it highly likely that he spoke with those people in Jerusalem although he may have met some of them in their places of abode in the country. Secondly, Hyrcanus was not easily persuaded by the slander brought against Aristobulus, so that Antipater had to repeat the charges time and again and not merely on a single occasion. Thirdly, Hyrcanus sent Antipater to the Nabataean king in order to ascertain that the latter would extend asylum and help. This data clarifies the one obscure point, namely how direct the contact was between Antipater and Aretas at that time.⁷⁴ Fourthly, Antipater succeeded in getting the required guarantees from Aretas, returned to Jerusalem, and after a while left Jerusalem secretly with Hyrcanus and reached Petra. All in all, the extended version firmly supports the inference drawn from the brief one, namely that in Herod's childhood his father resided in Jerusalem.

As already mentioned, the nature of Josephus' sources is problematic (see above, 135), but nevertheless, one can deduce from his account that Antipater and his family resided in Jerusalem at least since 67. It thus stands to reason that they had moved to that city early on, viz., not after the outbreak of the violent clash between the contending Hasmonaean brothers.⁷⁵ Since Josephus says nothing about the reasons that moved Antipater to settle in Jerusalem, one can only speculate. Josephus' account of the relations between Antipater and Hyrcanus and those with Aristobulus may suggest that the decision to settle in Jerusalem was prompted by the struggle between the two brothers over the rule of the kingdom, which had started even before their mother died. In *War* (1.123) Antipater is presented as an old and bitter enemy of Aristobulus and in *Antiquities* (14.8) his hostility to Aristobulus is said to have stemmed from his goodwill (*eunoia*) towards Hyrcanus. Clearly these relations of enmity and friendship did not begin suddenly in 67. Rather, they had probably developed gradually on account of political-personal interests. I suggest, therefore, that Hyrcanus sought to acquire supporters for his forthcoming encounter with Aristobulus. Antipater, on his part, characterized by Josephus as an energetic person (*drastērios*), spotting an opportunity to gain a position of influence, decided to transfer his residence to the capital city and to establish close connection with Hyrcanus, whom Alexandra had chosen as her successor. Needless to say, this inference drawn from Josephus' narrative is to some extent conjectural. Yet, the conclusion that Antipater resided in Jerusalem from at least 67 onwards is supported by solid evidence.

VII

⁷⁴ Antipas, Antipater's father, had established friendly relations with 'Arabs', probably the Nabataeans, and Cyprus, Antipater's wife, was of Arab stock, again probably Nabataean. This suggests that Antipater's relations with Aretas had originated earlier than the present occasion.

⁷⁵ Bar-Kochva (2003, 9) surmises that 'a few Idumaeans might have resided in Jerusalem and might have even been born there, for example at the time of Alexandra (76-67)' (my translation from Hebrew).

Although I have rejected (see above, 132-4) Oren's suggestion regarding the identification of the name of Marisa, I find convincing his argument that the two groups of versions about the doves' name refer to 'a name of a place associated with Herod as well as with the breeding of a specific type of doves'.⁷⁶ It seems to me that Horvat Midras answers to the two characteristics defined by Oren. Horvat Midras is the modern Hebrew name given to an ancient settlement that was situated on a hill about eight km. north-east of Marisa and about six km. north-east of Beth Govrin, close to a road that had linked Jerusalem to Gaza and Ascalon (G.R. 144/118).⁷⁷ Victor Guérin, the first European explorer who described the remains of the ancient site, called it Khirbet Drousia, obviously relying on the information drawn from the locals.⁷⁸ In the British Survey of Western Palestine it is named Kh. ed Druseh, marked in the map of the British Mandate of Palestine (1:20000) Kh. Durusiya.⁷⁹ The ceramic remains found on the site indicate that it was occupied during the Hellenistic period reaching its peak between the first century BCE and the second century CE, extending over an area of about 120 dunams (=12 hectares).⁸⁰

Does the Arabic name somehow preserve the ancient appellation as is the case in many instances?⁸¹ In his *Geography* Ptolemy (5.16. 6) mentions a settlement called *Drousius* which, according to the coordinates he provides, places it north of Antipatris. Claiming that Ptolemy's coordinates are often erroneous, Felix-Marie Abel proposed to identify Kh. Drousia with ancient Drousius; this is a plausible suggestion, and the confusion in Ptolemy's lists of towns of Palestine makes it most likely that a mistake indeed fell in his location of Drousius.⁸² As did many other scholars, I therefore accept Abel's proposal.⁸³

⁷⁶ Oren 1968, 58.

⁷⁷ Kloner 1993; Tsafrir, Di Segni and Green 1994.

⁷⁸ Guérin 1868, 370.

⁷⁹ For a photo of the relevant section of the map see Zissu and Kloner 2010, 240.

⁸⁰ For a recent detailed description of the site and the finds that were discovered in surveys and partial excavations see Zissu and Kloner 2010; cf. Kloner 1993.

⁸¹ On the preservation of ancient place-names among the Arab population of Palestine, and more generally, see Elitzur 1993; *idem* 2004.

⁸² According to the title of the list, it's aim is to list the towns of Judaea situated west of the Jordan. In fact, the towns are listed from the Mediterranean eastward and not from the Jordan westward. The first five towns mentioned are Raphia, Gaza, Iamnia, Lyda and Antipatris, towns that were situated along the main road of the coastal plain, listed here from south to north. Following Drousius, Sebaste, Beth Govrin, Sebus, Ammaus, Gophna, Archelaïs, Phasaelis, Jericho, and Jerusalem are enumerated. Ignoring for the moment Drousius and Sebus that are not known from any other sources, we have here a list of four inland towns that begins with the northern (Sebaste), continues with the southern (Beth Govrin) and ends with the two that are in between (Ammaus and Gophna). Even if we assume that Drousius belongs among the coastal towns, this list deviates from the order of the towns of the first group (from the south to the north) and in fact lacks any order. Lack of geographical order also characterizes the list of the Jordan valley towns (Archelaïs, Phasaelis and Jericho). A deviation from the geographical order is also found in the coastal harbour towns that are listed from north to south: Caesarea, Apollonia, Joppa, the harbour of

In a recently published article, Zissu and Kloner suggested that Herod named the site Drousius in honour of Drusus — Livia's son who was adopted by Augustus and brother of Tiberius, the future emperor — who died in the year 9.⁸⁴ Herod called several buildings and towns after Augustus and other members of his family; the largest tower in Caesarea's harbour was named DrouSION (or Drouseion) to commemorate Drusus, and it has been argued that another tower in the harbour was named Tiberieum in honour of his brother.⁸⁵ If Zissu and Kloner are right, Herod commemorated Augustus' adopted son by naming both a magnificent building and a town after him. This was not a unique act, for both Caesarea and Samaria-Sebaste were named after Augustus. On the other hand, Guy Stiebel suggests that the name Drousius was derived from the Greek word *drus*, 'oak', with the addition of the suffix *ias*, a common type of name formation, e.g., Panias and Agrippias; and indeed, oaks were abundant in the vicinity of the site.⁸⁶ Zissu and Kloner's suggestion dates the name to the late first century, which, however, helps little in recovering the name of the site in the Hellenistic period. Conversely, Stiebel's proposal would give us a Hellenistic name. Be that as it may, it is very easy to connect

Iamnia, Azotus, the harbour of Gaza, Ascalon, and Anthedon (5.16, 2, C.F.A. Nobbe's edition), for the last two should have been listed between Azotus and the harbour of Gaza. In fact, one group of manuscripts lists the coastal harbour towns in the right order (see Müller 1901, 987-8). On the whole it seems that either Ptolemy used his source (Marinos of Tyre), or sources, carelessly or that the lists have been distorted by copying errors, so that Drousius' position in this list does not necessarily testify to its true geographical location. A. Diller wrote in his introduction to the 1966 reprint of Nobbe's edition of 1843-5 (Georg Olms, Hildesheim): *ultima totius operis editio, a C.F.A. Nobbe curata, longe abest ut studiis hodiernis sufficiat*. For some examples of wrong coordinates, apparently copying errors, see Cuntz 1923, 38. S. Ziegler's critical edition of book 6 exposes the difficulties involved in establishing the text (1998, 2-13); the English translation follows the text edition, the German translation is based on one group (vA), and their coordinates for the place-names differ from one another in many cases (ib., e.g., 30-31). For the errors in the lists of numbers and place-names and the problems of the coordinates and the manuscripts see also Lennart Berggren and Jones 2000, 4-5, 31-45.

⁸³ Abel 1938, 309; Tsafir, Di Segni and Green 1994, 114; Schmitt 1995, 136 (with presentation of the difficulties involved in the location of Drousius near Antipatris); Zissu and Kloner 2010, 239. Avi-Yonah places Drousius both north of Antipatris, adding 'Majdel?', and in the area of Beth Govrin, adding 'Burgin', but with no explanation at all (1963, 129 with n. 8, 189; cf. *idem* 1976, 52, 108 — map). It is puzzling that as a support for the location north of Antipatris he refers the reader to Abel, who in fact identifies Drousius with Kh. Drousia. Avi-Yonah also refers to Alt (1931, 33 n. 2), but Alt's suggestion to locate Drousius near Teibeh, where he noticed some ruins, is sheer speculation.

⁸⁴ Zissu and Kloner 2010, 239-240. Cf. Müller 1901, 989, who is wrong, however, to say that Ptolemy placed Drousius between Antipatris and Archelaïs and to suggest that Neapolis' former name was perhaps Drousius.

⁸⁵ For DrouSION see *BJ* 1.412; *AJ* 15.335-6. For Tiberieum, probably recorded in the famous, partially preserved inscription of Pontius Pilatus which was found at the theatre of Caesarea, see Alföldi 1999, esp. 93-101; *idem* 2012; in his view both were light-towers.

⁸⁶ Stiebel 2013.

the name Drouσίας with one of the two groups of doves named in the Talmudic sources. This connection had been pointed out many years ago by Ze'ev Vilnay, who proposed — in response to the Hebrew version of Oren's article — that the origin of the 'Hadresiot' doves was in Kh. Drousiya.⁸⁷

Marisa's *columbaria* caves for dove breeding are famous, but Horvat Midras also has *columbaria* caves although much fewer. In his short account of his visit to the site Guérin writes:

Dans les flancs de la montagne sont creusées d'anciennes carrières. J'y observe aussi deux salles à coupole, dont l'une est percée intérieurement d'un grand nombre de petites niches, soit carrées, soit triangulaires, et pratiquées à égale distance les unes des autres.⁸⁸

Guérin's is clearly a description of a *columbarium* cave.

In a survey conducted some fifty years ago a great *columbarium* cave was recorded at Horvat Midras; Vilnay, who refers to it, adds that even in his days many wild doves nested there,⁸⁹ and that there are other *columbaria* caves in the site.⁹⁰ In sum, both in respect of the place-name and the breeding of doves, Kh. Drousia (or the variations ed Druseh, Durusiya, Dursiya etc.) is perfectly suitable to be identified with the settlement whose name is not mentioned in the commentary of the Gemara for the various versions of the dove-names (above II, 8). No other ancient site that fits these two criteria is known.

In view of Oren's persuasive explanation of the various Talmudic versions of the dove-names and the above-mentioned characteristics of Kh. Drousia, that is, Drouσίας, it is probable that this was the original residence of Herod's ancestors. The settlement was situated at a distance of about eight km. north-east from Marisa and was included in the territory of Idumaea, as is evinced by Josephus' account of Vespasian's campaign in this region at the time of the Great Jewish Revolt.⁹¹ Drouσίας' location near the road that was connected to the coastal plain could have contributed to its economy and to the development of cultural links with the population of such cities as Ascalon and Gaza. One matter is clear: it was not a remote and isolated site. The leaders of the local community must have come into contact with both the Ptolemaic (in the third century) and the Seleucid (in the second century) royal administrations due to their wealth and social standing, and possibly cultivated close relations with their equals in the coastal

⁸⁷ Vilnay 1966.

⁸⁸ Guérin 1868, 370.

⁸⁹ Vilnay 1966. Josephus and the Talmudic sources speak of domesticated, not wild pigeons, but this is no problem considering the abandonment of the site and the time elapsed since then.

⁹⁰ Zissu and Kloner 2010, 231, 241-2 (Photos 3 and 5).

⁹¹ BJ 4.445-7. Josephus relates that Vespasian captured Bethlethephe (identified with Beth Natiph: Tsafirir, Di Segni and Green 1994, 84) and set it on fire, as well as other sites in the vicinity of Idumaea, and then took Bethabris and Kephara Touba, 'in the middle of Idumaea'. For the identification and location of Bethabris and Kephara Touba close to Beth Govrin and Kephara Zacharia see Tsafirir, Di Segni and Green 1994, 87, 99, respectively. For the location of Horvat Midras, that is, Drouσίας, nearby these sites, all in the middle of Idumaea, see Tsafirir, Di Segni and Green 1994, 114, and the accompanying map.

cities. As already argued (section III), such people may have been prone to adopt Greek names, although this need not imply that they underwent an extensive process of acculturation. This may hold good as well for Herod's ancestors who, it may be suggested, were an influential and powerful family in Drousius.

VIII

It was thanks to his lineage, wealth and power that probably, like his father before him, Antipater held a foremost position among the Idumaeans (*BJ* 1.123). Presumably, this was why Alexander Jannaeus appointed Antipas governor of Idumaea. If indeed Drousius was the provenance of the Herodian family, it was there that they had established an original power base. Later, under the Hasmonaeans, Antipas and Antipater succeeded in extending their influence and authority much beyond the vicinity of Drousius, but it will be instructive to delve into some evidence that illustrates the assured, independent position of several powerful persons in Idumaea and how defiant or impetuous their attitude could have been — evidence preserved from the time of the Ptolemaic rule in Palestine.

About eighty years ago, Victor Tcherikover published a study, based mainly on the papyri of the Zenon archive, on the social, economic, administrative and security conditions of Palestine under the Ptolemaic regime in the third century.⁹² Zenon — agent of Apollonios, the wealthy and powerful finance minister (*dioikētēs*) of Ptolemy II, and from 257 the superintendent (*oikonomos*) of a huge estate in the Fayum belonging to that minister — made a journey through Palestine, carrying out various business matters along the way, a journey that lasted more than a year (from late 260 to early 258). Two papyri that were written after his return to Egypt are important for the present topic, and need be treated here in some detail. The first papyrus contains the drafts of five letters Zenon sent to five separate individuals in Idumaea in February or March 258, all of them dealing with the same matter.⁹³ It appears that during his sojourn in Marisa, Zenon bought slaves from two brothers named Zaidelos and Collochoutos. On his way back to Egypt, and apparently before reaching Gaza, three of the slaves ran away and returned to Zaidelos and his brother. According to a letter sent by a Ptolemaic official from Marisa, Zaidelos and his brother demanded 100 silver drachmas for surrendering the slaves, a high price considering the fact that this sum could buy two young female-slaves. Zenon

⁹² Tcherikover 1937; for a partial publication in Hebrew see *idem* 1933. On Zenon and his "archives", the largest from this period, see Orrieux 1983; Meister 2010 (a succinct account with literature). For a recent, detailed study of Zenon's papyri that concern Palestine, more correctly the Ptolemaic province of Syria and Phoenicia, see Durand 1997; the critique of the book (Reekmans 1998) has no bearing upon the points on which I agree or disagree with Durand's understanding of the two papyri treated here.

⁹³ Tcherikover 1933, 238-40; 1937, 40-42; Orrieux 1983, 48-9; Scholl 1983, 33-42; Durand 1997, 216-23. In contrast to other scholars, Scholl dates the present papyrus to a short time after September sixth, 258, a result of his overlooking the instructive connection between the mention of Straton in this papyrus and his presence in Marisa prior to early April 258 (see below, 143), and unnecessarily associating it with another papyrus dated September sixth, 258 (Scholl 1983, 37, 39).

addressed his letters to various Ptolemaic officials in Marisa, including two, who held senior posts, asking them to help to seize the runaway slaves and to deliver them to his representative Straton, whom he had despatched to Marisa. Zaidelos and his brother were obviously wealthy and engaged in slave trade. Confident and greedy, they did not stop short of extorting or cheating Apollonios' agent, Zenon.⁹⁴ Although acting in accordance with the legal procedure in such matters, Zenon's need to make special efforts in order to persuade the Ptolemaic officials in Marisa, including perhaps the police commander, to take action against the two brothers testifies to their powerful standing and audacity; it also seems to indicate that they did not reside in Marisa itself, the centre of the Ptolemaic regime in Idumaea where, one may presume, they would not have dared to display such hybriistic behaviour, but resided in their country stronghold.

To judge by his name, Zaidelos was an Arab, as was his brother Collochoutos, although his name is not attested in any other source. Tcherikover described them as 'influential native sheichs'. And indeed, numerous ostraca found recently prove that people bearing Arabic names had already penetrated Idumaea and settled there by the fourth century.⁹⁵ The new evidence supports the notion that Zaidelos and his brother, along with their household retinue, were entrenched in Idumaea itself, somewhere near Marisa, and not across the border, a possibility raised by Durand.⁹⁶

The central figure in the second papyrus is certainly a rural strongman.⁹⁷ It contains a letter which was sent by a certain Alexandros, a Ptolemaic official from Marisa (below), in early April 258, and from which one can draw the following information:

1) A person by the name of Ieddous owed a sum of money to Zenon, apparently a loan that he refrained from paying back.

2) Zenon sent a letter of warning to Ieddous threatening that if he did not pay, the bail would be seized and delivered to Straton.⁹⁸

3) Straton is most probably the same person mentioned in the previous papyrus as Zenon's representative who was staying in Marisa at about the same time, waiting for the delivery of the fugitive slaves. We may, therefore, safely infer that he was also charged with the handling of the matter of Ieddous by cooperating with the Ptolemaic official in Marisa responsible for such cases.

⁹⁴ Dismissing the possibility that the high price demanded by Zaidelos and his brother could be the expenses involved in the return of the slaves to their owner (in fact they kept on holding the slaves), Durand construes the demand as aiming at making profit by a second sale.

⁹⁵ Tcherikover 1937, 51. Durand (1997, 221) gives references for Zaidelos as an Arabic name and deals with the ethnic identity of the name Collochoutos. Scholl considers both brothers as Semites (1983, 39-40). For the new evidence on the ethnic composition of the population of Idumaea in the fourth century see I. Stern 2007.

⁹⁶ Durand 1997, 221. Orrieux (1983, 48) suggests that they were nomads active along the caravan route connecting South Arabia with Gaza. Both Durand's and Orrieux's proposals are highly unlikely, given Zenon's assumption that Zaidelos and his brother were situated at Marisa and subject to the jurisdiction of the Ptolemaic officials there.

⁹⁷ Tcherikover 1933, 240-41; 1937, 42; Tcherikover and Fuks 1957, 130; Orrieux 1983, 48; *idem* 1985, 162-3; Durand 1997, 157-60.

⁹⁸ On the bail — chattel possessions, not landed property — and the procedure to seize it see Tcherikover and Fuks 1957, 130.

4) Alexandros received a copy of Zenon's letter and was asked, or instructed, to hand it over to Ieddous. However, due to illness (whether genuine or faked), he was unable to present the letter personally and sent his young assistant instead, along with Straton, to do the job.

5) Ieddous ignored the letter, assaulted both messengers and drove them out of the village.⁹⁹

Ieddous' persistent refusal to return the debt to Zenon, who was known as an agent of the powerful Apollonius — although in this matter Zenon may have acted in private capacity — and Ieddous' resort to violence in expelling a government official and a person closely associated with the Ptolemaic administration, betray his self-confidence in controlling his territory. Whether all the village and its lands belonged to Ieddous, as Tcherikover assumed, or only a considerable part of it, and whether or not he was the official head of the village (*kōmarchēs*), as in Durand's proposal,¹⁰⁰ his behaviour represents a model of powerful and independent people who, counting on their wealth and influence in the local community, and presumably also proud of their honourable descent, ventured to defy representatives of the government and to debar them from intervening in the affairs of their villages or estates.¹⁰¹

Antipas' and Antipater's ancestors may well have held similar standing and influence in their original Idumaeen place of abode, whether it was Horvat Midras, as I suggest, or some other village. They themselves succeeded in extending their influence and strengthening their power far and beyond their ancestral territory thanks, it would seem, both to cooperation with the Hasmonaean rulers and to their own wisdom and resourceful spirit.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Initially Tcherikover was of the opinion that the event described in the letter took place in Judaea (1933, 240; 1937, 42; thus also Orrieux 1983, 48), but later found it difficult to decide between Judaea and Idumaea (Tcherikover and Fuks 1957, 129; cf. Durand 1997, 159, who tends to prefer Idumaea). On the one hand he considered Ieddous a Jew, taking the Greek name to have been derived from the Hebrew name ידוע, like יהושוע from יהושוע (Durand 1997, 159, considers it a Greek transcription of the form 'Yaddua', attested in Neh. 10:21; 12: 10 and in Aramaic ostraca from Arad, and also in *AJ* 11.302; cf. Orrieux 1985, 162), and hence thought that his village was in Judaea. On the other hand, he understood that Straton's mission was meant to be accomplished in Idumaea. The latter consideration is decisive. As explained above, Alexandros, the Ptolemaic official Zenon applied to, resided in Marisa and his authority did not extend beyond the borders of Idumaea. Moreover, Jews were settled in Idumaea, perhaps 10 percent of the entire population, as may be inferred from a study of about 1300 personal names recovered from inscriptions and ostraca (Kloner and Stern 2007, 142-3). For historiographical evidence probably implying Judaea presence in Idumaea see I Macc. 5:1-3.

¹⁰⁰ Durand 1997, 159; cf. Orrieux 1983, 48: 'chef de village'. Such a formal post would not be incompatible with Ieddous being a man of power and influence in his own right.

¹⁰¹ Ieddous' behaviour is construed by Orrieux (1985, 162-3; cf. Durand 1997, 160) as characteristic of a free, independent society. The Idumaeen society, however, was headed by its own leaders, conscious and jealous of their local status and rights.

¹⁰² Schwartz (1993, 309) considers Ieddous a model of a village strongman, one that includes the Tobiads, the Hasmonaean and Antipater's family. A distinction should be made,

IX

To conclude: scholars, who have argued that the provenance of the Herodian family was Marisa, misinterpreted irrelevant evidence — Marisa's destruction by the Parthians — and a supposed cultural phenomenon — the uncertain Hellenization of the Herodian family previously taken for granted to have occurred in Marisa — but without considering other factors and possibilities, including Josephus' inconsistent reports on the fate of Marisa and other Hellenistic cities after the Hasmonaean conquest. As has been shown by a detailed examination of the archaeological evidence, old and recent, Marisa was abandoned after its capture by John Hyrcanus, and Tel Sandahanna was not occupied in the first century. Herod could not possibly have grown up there, nor could have Antipas and Antipater resided there. However, the question whether or not the Herodian family originated in Marisa is related to more general questions: who were the elite members in Idumaea (and in other districts too, including Judaea, Samaria and Galilee)? Were the leaders of the Idumaeen population city-dwellers or did they reside in the country? What were the sources of their wealth and the basis of the social power? Did they derive their authority from their being clan heads? In general, these topics have not been investigated by those who discussed Herod's family and provenance. Admittedly, this is a difficult task because the relevant sources are scarce, although they have been significantly augmented recently thanks to the discovery of a great number of ostraca from fourth century Idumaea.¹⁰³

Obviously this is not the place to treat the demography and the social-economic and ethnic characteristics of the Idumaeen population, but one comment is in place. If accepted, the proposal that the Herodian family originated in Drousius, or in some village in Idumaea, would suggest that the natural leaders of the Idumaeen population — the vast majority of whom were settled in the countryside and found their living mainly in agriculture, and to some extent in pasturage — resided, by and large, in the rural areas rather than in urban centres.¹⁰⁴

however, between people whose power and influence were limited to their villages or estates, perhaps like Mattathias, and those whose power and authority extended over a much larger territory thanks to their gaining governmental posts or international recognition, like Mattathias' descendants and Antipas and Antipater.

¹⁰³ These ostraca began to appear in the clandestine antiquities market in the 1990s, but several collections of inscriptions have already been published. They provide evidence for the study of the ethnic, demographic, social and other characteristics of the Idumaeen population; see, e.g., Porten and Yardeni 2007; I. Stern 2007; Kloner and Stern 2007. For an account based on a comprehensive consideration of all the kinds of the archaeological evidence from Marisa see Kloner 2011.

¹⁰⁴ For their useful comments my thanks go to Prof. B. Bar-Kochva, Prof. U. Rappaport and Dr. G. Stiebel who read the first draft of this article. I acknowledge the helpful suggestions by the anonymous referee. I am much obliged to Prof. B. Zissu for the photo of the *columbarium* and to Mrs. V. Shatil for drawing the map. I also wish to thank the editors of *SCI* for their meticulous editing. The responsibility for the opinions and interpretations ventured, and for the errors remaining, rests with me alone.

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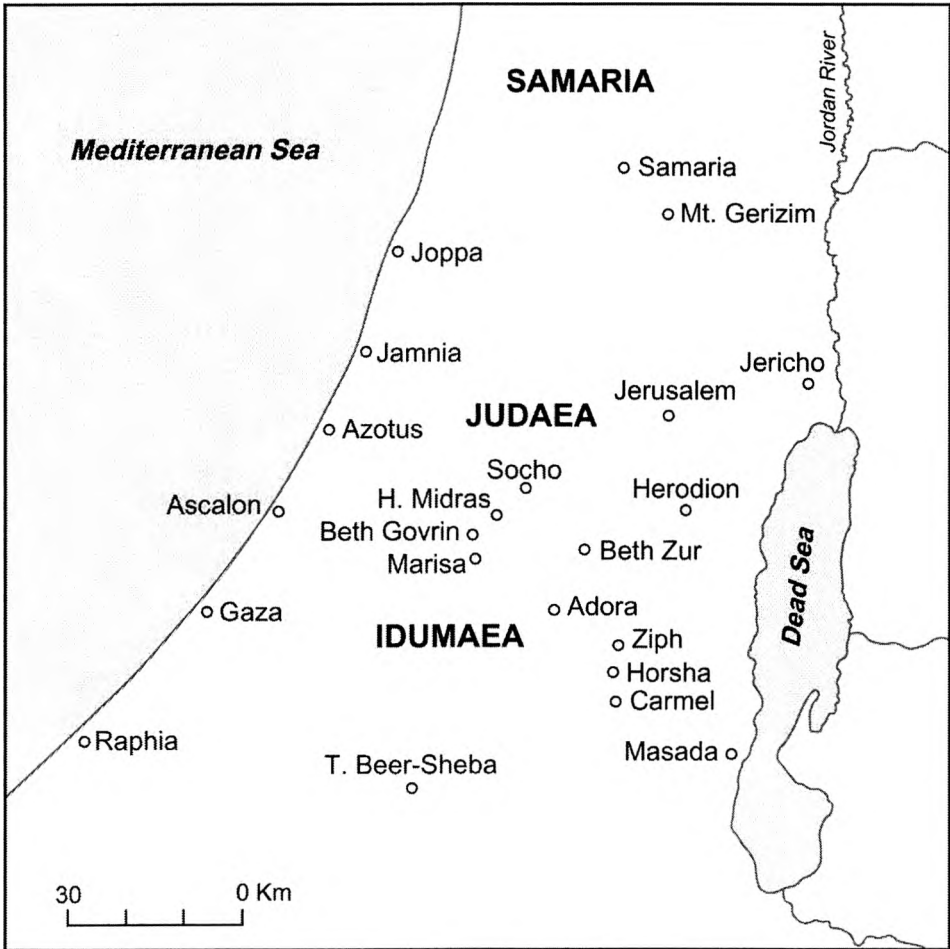
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The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Samaria, Judaea and Idumaea



A columbarium cave from H. Midras (Photo by Boaz Zissu)

