



CINNAMUS

CINNAMUS (< Gk. *kinnamon* or *kinnamōmon* “cinnamon tree,” a word borrowed from the Phoenician, according to Herodotus, 3.111; cf. Hebrew *qinnāmōn*), putative rival of **Artabanus** (Ardawān) II (12-38 c.e.) as king of the **Arsacids** (Flavius Josephus, 20.3.2). During his reign Artabanus faced a succession of challenges to his authority. After the failure in 36 of Tiridates II’s revolt, instigated by the Romans in league with Parthian nobles who feared the king’s power, Artabanus came to terms with the Roman governor of Syria, Vitellius, on a bridge of boats across the Euphrates in 37 (Josephus, 18.4.5; cf. Suetonius, *Caligula* 14; idem, *Vitellius* 2; Cassius Dio, 59.27.3; Mommsen, p. 378; Gutschmid, 1888, p. 122; Täubler, pp. 39ff.; Debevoise, p. 164; Ziegler, p. 62). The Parthian nobles remained dissatisfied, however, and Artabanus was forced to take refuge with his loyal vassal Izates II (36-60), king of **Adiabene**. The nobles are then reported to have chosen Cinnamus, supposedly a foster son of Artabanus, as their king. According to the report, Izates assumed the role of mediator and wrote to the dissidents, urging them to recall Artabanus. The Parthians did not explicitly refuse to receive Artabanus but insisted that they could not restore him to the kingship conferred on Cinnamus. Cinnamus himself, however, wrote privately to Artabanus, offering to yield the crown to him. In 37 or 38 he is supposed to have gone in person to meet the exiled Artabanus; by performing obeisance and by lifting the crown from his own head and placing it on Artabanus’s head, he recognized the latter as king. The only surviving report of this episode is that of Flavius Josephus (20.3.2), repeated by the Byzantine chronicler Ioannes Zonaras (fl. mid-12th century; 6.13; Gutschmid, p. 122; Weissbach, col. 483, s.v. *Kinnamos* 3; Debevoise, pp.



165-66; Kahrstedt, pp. 12, 20, 21, 26, 35, 52, 64, 65, 69, 80; Bivar, p. 75).

Some independent evidence seems to confirm the details of this report. For example, Strabo (11.9.3), citing the 2nd-century historian Poseidonius as his source, noted that the Parthian monarchs were elected by the assembled “kinsmen” (of the king) and “wise men” (Magians); though the kingship was hereditary in the family of the Arsacids, it thus was not passed on automatically by primogeniture (cf. Mommsen, pp. 343-44; Gutschmid, 1888, p. 57; Breccia, pp. 39-40; Wolski, pp. 61ff.).

On the other hand, Cinnamus is not a Parthian name; it appears in verses by the Latin poet Martial (*Epigrams* 6.17, 6.64, 7.67) and is also attested in inscriptions and epitaphs, mainly of freedmen and slaves, found at Rome (Weissbach, cols. 482-83; Solin, p. 1092). In the opinion of Ulrich Kahrstedt (pp. 21, 80), Flavius Josephus is likely to have garbled the name, which may actually have been that of Gotarzes (son of Gēv), who succeeded Artabanus II in 38.

Other puzzling features include Flavius’s statement that Cinnamus had been brought up by Artabanus, apparently referring to an educational practice that is well attested for Arsacid Armenia and Sasanian Persia and may also have been in vogue among the Parthians (see Widengren, 1969, pp. 64-65, 75; idem, 1976, pp. 251-52, 268-69, without mention of Cinnamus). The fact that Artabanus was his “foster father” or “tutor” would not, however, have provided sufficient grounds for Cinnamus to claim the throne. His extraordinary willingness to abdicate in favor of Artabanus, against whom he had only recently rebelled, is also unexplained.

There are thus several reasons for questioning the truth of the story of Cinnamus as transmitted by Flavius Josephus, especially as no coins minted for a ruler of that name have been found.



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