Eyal Regev

The Hasmoneans

Ideology, Archaeology, Identity



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To my five sons Nadav, Tomer, Ori, Yotam and Amit
"זכרו מעשי אבות אשר עשו בדורותם" (1 Macc 2:51)

With 17 plates and 10 figures

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Preface

This book emerged from the study of the Hasmonean palaces as a window to the ideology and self-identity of the Hasmoneans themselves. In the course of the analysis of the evidence I realized that previous scholars did not attempt to examine fundamental questions regarding the ways in which the Hasmoneans ruled, as well as their self-identity and political and religious agenda. My aim here is to integrate historical and archaeological evidence in order to see more clearly who the Hasmoneans actually were.

Scholarship on the Hasmoneans risks falling into the traps of both the critical outlook of ancient Greco-Roman authors on these rulers who shattered Greek cities and sanctuaries, and the modern nationalistic Jewish-Israeli admiration of such acts. Yet, the thin line between Hellenistic culture and Jewish identity characterizes the Hasmoneans' rule. I suggest that the maintenance of this dichotomy between Judaism and Hellenism in the study of the Hasmoneans and their ethos is simplistic and anachronistic. According to my interpretation of the ideological and symbolic world of the Hasmoneans, and to certain extent that of their Jewish subjects, they created a new sense of Jewish identity using certain features of Hellenistic culture.

Several colleagues have read earlier drafts of the entire manuscript, chapters, or previous studies on which they were based. My thanks to Professors Eric Gruen, Bezalel Bar-Kochva, Joshua Schwartz, Albert Baumgarten, Boaz Zissu, and to the anonymous reviewers of my articles published in *BASOR*, *JSQ*, *Zion*, and *Tarbiz*. I would also like to thank the editors of these journals for the permission to use the contents of these articles. I am especially grateful to Hanan Eshel z"l, from whom I first learned about the Hasmonean state, and Ehud Netzer z"l for his support and advice concerning my study of the Hasmonean palaces. I hope that this book will be a fitting memorial for these two great and kind scholars.

I would like to thank Devroah Netzer for the permission to use Ehud Netzer's plans of the Hasmonean palaces, Mr. Michael Krupp for the pictures of the Hasmonean coins, and Mr. Zeev Radovan for the permission to use the pictures of the Hasmonenan palaces.

My sincere thanks to my dear mother-in-law, Andi Armon, and to Dr. Ruth Clements for editing the manuscripts, and to my student Esther Cohen-Shadmi, for her assistance. Special thanks are due to Armin Lange and the editorial board of the *Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements* for accepting this book into the series, and Christoph Spill and the Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht staff for handling the publishing process.

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Koschitzky Chair of the Department of Land of Israel and Archaeology at Bar-Ilan University, the Dr. Simon Krauthammer Chair in Archaeology, the Dr. Irving and Cherna Moskowitz Chair in Land of Israel Studies, the Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center of Jewish History, and the Bar-Ilan University Rector's research fund.

I would like to thank my parents, Zvi and Hannah Regev, and my brother and sister Yoav and Ofra for their encouragement. This book is dedicated to my loving wife Tanya, and my five sons, Nadav, Tomer, Ori, Yotam and Amit.

Eyal Regev
Neve Daniel, Gush Etzion, Israel Sivan 5972/June 2012

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Contents

Introduction 11
1. Hasmonean Ideology: Previous Scholarship and Methodology . 12
2. The Maccabean Revolution: The Transformation of Jewish Identity 15
3. The Pursuit of Hellenism 18
4. The Sources: Panegyric and Hostile Historiographies 25
1 Maccabees 25
2 Maccabees 27
5. Ideology, Legitimization, and Power 31
6. A Note on Terms and Translations 35

Chapter One
Ḥanukkah and the Temple of the Maccabees 36
1. Ḥanukkah as Days of *Millu'im* 36
2. Ḥanukkah as the "Festival of Tabernacles" in 2 Maccabees 38
3. Consecration Ceremonies, Ritual Legends, and Temple Ideology in the Second Letter of 2 Maccabees 47
4. Ḥanukkah as a Political Festival 54

Chapter Two
The Centrality of the Temple in Hasmonean Ideology 58
1. The Ideology of the Temple in 1 Maccabees 59
2. Eupolemus, Solomon's Temple, and the Maccabean Ideology . . 66
3. The Temple and Hasmonean Political Power according to Josephus 69
4. Temple Practices: the Half-Shekel Tribute and Pilgrimage 73
5. Diaspora Acquiescence: 2 Maccabees and *Aristeas* 82
6. Moral Opposition to the Hasmonean Temple: Qumran and the *Psalms of Solomon* 93
7. Conclusions: When Politics Meets Religion 98

Chapter Three
Leading the People: Establishing Hasmonean Authority 103
1. High Priesthood and Authority in the Persian and Hellenistic Periods 104
2. Mattathias the Zealot 107
3. Judah the Savior 108
4. Jonathan the Judge 111

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ISBN Print: 9783525550434 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647550435

5. Simon the Elected High Priest 113
6. John Hyrcanus the Prophet 117
7. The Hasmoneans as Religious Leaders 118
8. Priestly Descent and the Zadokite Problem 120
9. Becoming Monarchs: Hellenistic Honors and the Accumulation of Wealth 124
10. Conclusions: Hasmonean "National" Monarchy 127

Chapter Four
Hasmonean Kingship in Hellenistic and Jewish Contexts 129
1. Introduction: Were the Hasmoneans Legitimate Kings? 129
2. Hellenistic Royal Ideology 131
3. The Idea of Kingship in the Hebrew Bible 142
4. The Quest for Kingship in Ancient Judaism 147
5. The Pros and Cons of Hasmonean Kingship 154
6. Conclusions 173

Chapter Five
Hasmonean Coinage as Political Discourse 175
1. Introduction: Background and Method 175
2. Hasmonean Authority: High Priests or Kings? 182
3. *Ḥeber ha-yehudim* and the Hasmoneans' Collective Jewish Identity 186
4. The Symbols: Political, Religious, or "National"? 199
5. Reading Political History in the Hasmonean Coins 214
6. Conclusions 221

Chapter Six
Royal Ideology in the Hasmonean Palaces in Jericho 224
1. Introduction: Aims and Methods 224
2. Plain Courts: The Size and Function of the Hasmonean Palaces . 225
3. The Internal Structure of the Hasmonean Palaces: Access Analysis 232
4. Royal Water: Swimming Pools and Gardens 246
5. The Hasmonean Bathhouses 251
6. Jewish Royal-Priestly Purity: Ritual Baths 253
7. Excursus: Identifying the Palaces of Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II 255
8. Unembellished Pottery 257
9. Royal Feasts 260
10. Disposal of Vessels and Priestly Purity 261
11. Conclusions: Internal Modesty and External Propaganda 263

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ISBN Print: 9783525550434 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647550435

Chapter Seven
Hasmonean Construction of the Jewish Collective Identity 266
1. Popular Support for the Hasmoneans' Territorial Conquests . . . 267
2. Wars, Judaization, and Hasmonean Transformations of Jewish Identity 273
3. Novel Features of Hasmonean Jewish Collective Identity 278
4. Social Identity and the Symbolic Construction of Jewish Collectivity 284
5. Insights from Modern Nationalism 288

Conclusions: Power through Piety 293

References 297

List of Plates 324

General Index 331

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Introduction

In his description of the Hasmonean period, Josephus missed the spirit of the era. Josephus focused on military occupations and political tensions, without explaining what the Jewish people thought of the Hasmoneans and what the Hasmoneans thought of the Jewish people and themselves.[1] This book aims to fill this lack, uncovering the cultural and social character of the Hasmoneans as rulers, from Jonathan (and in certain cases from as early as Judah Maccabee) to Mattathias Antigonus. It explores how the Hasmoneans ruled the Jewish people, namely, the ways in which they legitimized their authority and built relationships with their subjects. It focuses on the Hasmoneans' construction and symbolic representations of their ideology in relation to the Temple cult, their early rule, and their subsequent kingship. The discussion is interdisciplinary in several senses. It merges historical sources with archaeological findings; Jewish and Hellenistic perspectives; traditional, text-oriented, and historical-critical methods with comparative and socio-anthropological approaches.

The first two chapters deal with the religious perceptions and activities of the Hasmoneans. Chapter 1 discusses the Maccabean view of Ḥanukkah as a Temple festival for the renewal of ancient cultic traditions. Chapter 2 examines the manner in which the Hasmoneans used the Temple, its protection, and its maintenance to legitimize their rule, and how they developed the Temple as the center of Judaism. Chapters 3 – 6 deal with manifestations of governmental and royal ideology. Chapter 3 explores how the Hasmoneans legitimized their rule, showing that they built their authority gradually as religious leaders, and suggesting that their state was not a conventional Hellenistic one. Chapter 4 explores Hellenistic royal ideologies and proposes that Hasmonean ideology resembled that of Macedonian "national" monarchy. The chapter also examines the emergence of Hasmonean kingship against its Jewish background. Chapter 5 aims to decipher the meaning of the symbols and epigraphs on the Hasmonean coins. It considers how Hellenistic symbols and Jewish concepts were used to reinforce Hasmonean authority and Jewish identity. Chapter 6 analyzes the Hasmonean palaces in Jericho, searching for the royal ideology they display by using the methodology of social archaeology, as well as comparisons with other Hellenistic palaces—especially the Herodian ones. The final chapter builds on the previous results, uncovering how the

1 This contrasts with his treatment of Herod's rule, where Josephus treats the king's self-image and the people's responses, and also adds his own personal (and critical) comments. See Rocca 2008:19 – 63; Regev 2010.

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Hasmoneans created a new Jewish collective identity. Here I use insights from sociology and anthropology as well as from theories of modern nationalism. My thesis is that in the course of the promotion and legitimization of their own rule, the Hasmoneans reinforced Jewish collective identity. This final chapter also demonstrates that the theme of this book is actually how the Hasmoneans created and represented elements of power and identity.

The purpose of the following introduction is to set the stage for these chapters. Here I will present previous scholarship; the major historical sources; my basic assumptions about the Maccabean Revolt, Hasmoneans and Hellenism; and the methodological presumptions and attitudes I bring to this exploration of Hasmonean ideology, legitimacy, and power. This introduction therefore aims at situating the study in its historical and scholarly context.

1. Hasmonean Ideology: Previous Scholarship and Methodology

Most of the studies on the Hasmonean period or the Hasmonean rulers have dealt with foreign affairs, relationships with the Seleucids, military campaigns, and territorial occupations, as detailed in 1 and 2 Maccabees and Josephus's *War* and *Antiquities*.[2] Many studies have also discussed the religious developments in that period, such as the emergence of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the struggles between them, the development of Jewish law (halakhah), etc.[3] Others have discussed the Hasmoneans in relation to the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Qumran sect.[4] Yet, a detailed history of the Hasmoneans' internal affairs, namely, their political institutions and their relationships with the people, cannot be written; the sources are too scarce,[5] and are highly biased either for or against the Hasmoneans.[6] The archaeological data (mainly fortifications, palaces and coins) are also not very helpful for reconstructing the political and social structure of the Hasmonean state, and in any event require a thorough analysis in order to serve as more than mere illustrations of Josephus. What remains for the historian is a more

2 See Schürer-Vermes-Millar 1973:137–286; Grabbe 1994:285–307; Stern 1995; Kahser 1990:58–191; Bar-Kochva 1989; 1996a; 1999; 2010:399–439. Notwithstanding its title, *Studies on the Hasmonean Period*, Efron 1987, does not deal with the Hasmonean rulers.

3 E.g., Baumgarten 1997; Regev 2005:247–292 and references.

4 See especially Eshel 2008.

5 See the reconstruction of Schalit 1972. His main conclusions are refuted throughout Chapters 4–6 below. See also the partial but valuable attempts of Bar-Kochva 1977 and Appelbaum 1989, discussed in Chapter 7.

6 See below the discussions of 1 and 2 Maccabees, and Josephus and his Hellenistic sources. Eshel 2008 turned to the Dead Sea Scrolls, attempting to understand the Hasmoneans' portrait and actual events from within the world of the Qumran sects. The result is an extremely negative assessment of their rule; but one should bear in mind that these texts were written by an opposition party.

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conceptual discussion of the character of the Hasmoneans as rulers and of the very notion of their statehood; namely, the reconstruction of certain features of Hasmonean policy, and especially of the political and cultural means they used to present themselves to the people.

My decision to address Hasmonean ideology and identity in its entirety instead of its direct historical development is derived not only from the unfortunate paucity of detailed historical sources, but also from the recognition of the bias in the historical evidence at hand. There is a considerable amount of evidence that represents the Hasmoneans' own outlook—1 Maccabees and to a certain extent also 2 Maccabees, as well as their coins and palaces—which provide keys to the Hasmoneans' own reflections on their beginnings: their self-presentation, or "narrative." The literary and archaeological data therefore enable us to reconstruct Hasmonean political and cultural ideology.[7]

Nonetheless, even if we knew much more about the political and personal lives of the individual Hasmonean rulers, we should still be interested in understanding the broader picture of their agenda: what were their political and cultural aims and how did they try to implement them? Ideology is the heart and soul of every strong political regime, as will be shown further below in this chapter. Discovering the essence of Hasmonean ideology would contribute substantially to our understanding of the individual Hasmonean rulers, as well as the culture, religion, and political system of the Judaean Jews in this period. As we shall see, the evidence on which this analysis is based is rich and varied, and it enables us to approach the question from several different angles, including the aspects of Temple, kingship, and Jewish collective identity.

Attempts to make sense of the self-image and political ideology of the Hasmoneans have been few and limited.[8] One study which requires special attention demonstrates the need for further research. In her article, "Hasmonean Kingship and the Invention of Tradition," Tessa Rajak discusses the manner in which kingship was conceptualized by the Jews in the Hasmonean period, in light of the background of biblical traditions, and in the context of the views of Ben Sira and certain Qumran scrolls on high priesthood and kingship. Rajak notes that the Hasmoneans drew their formal governmental power from the Seleucids and needed to legitimize it based on

7 Note the distinction between history and narrative in the debate on postmodern history. Cf. Regev 2007:20–22 and references there.

8 Scholars have preferred to address the subject of the hellenization of the Hasmoneans (Rajak 1990; Rappaport 1991; Gruen 1998:1–40), as discussed below. Seth Schwartz (1991) regarded the "nationalistic" ideology of 1 Maccabees as predating John Hyrcanus and Jannaeus. He also characterized the rise of the Hasmonean family as that of village strongmen who exploited local disorder to seize power, much like the Tobiads and Herodians (Schwarz 1993a). Provocative as they are, his studies do not seek to penetrate the Hasmonean belief system, and actually imply that the Hasmoneans only sought power.

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traditional Jewish traits, including anti-Gentile and militaristic tendencies.[9] Rajak's study shows the complexity of Hasmonean rule in terms of political and cultural perceptions and the challenges faced by the Hasmoneans in justifying their political and military power.

Rajak made some general observations on which she did not elaborate, stressing the potential of the Jewish background of Hasmonean rule, but a lot more needs further study. It is necessary to gather and analyze the actual evidence for Hasmonean views on politics and culture, both Jewish and Hellenistic, as gleaned from literary sources and the archaeological record. Furthermore, while it is clear that the Hasmoneans were affected by Hellenism, scholarly discussions on the subject have barely penetrated the Hellenistic foundations of Hasmonean political ideology and modes of action. What is needed is not only to identify Hellenistic elements, but to engage in the more delicate task of identifying the ways these were used and legitimized, as well as the needs they served.

The present project raises several challenges. First of all, it integrates very different materials: Second Temple Jewish literary sources (1 and 2 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeas*, the *Psalms of Solomon*, Josephus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls); Hellenistic political and cultural history; and Hasmonean and Hellenistic coins and palaces. Second, the evidence is not straightforward, and requires sifting relevant pieces without neglecting the context. For example, one cannot adduce *Aristeas*'s attitude towards the Temple without demonstrating the Hasmonean date of the letter and the relevance of the theme of the Temple to the author's general purpose. The Hasmonean coins and palaces are almost meaningless without a comprehensive comparison to their Hellenistic counterparts. The archaeological data should not be merely described but analyzed thoroughly in order to provide socio-cultural meaning, which requires the use of new socio-anthropological methods of architectural analysis.

Furthermore, the discussion demands conceptual sophistication and methodological complexity. The political and cultural intentions of the Hasmoneans and the manner in which these aims were represented to the masses are not transparent. I will use the concept of ideology according to which ideas and representations mask political, cultural, or social discrepancies and legitimize power. I will borrow additional models from sociology, anthropology, and critical theory to explore the nexus between power, ritual, and "nationalism." What follows is therefore an interpretive study rather than merely descriptive.

My use of Hellenistic (and sometimes also early Roman) evidence requires specific attention. In adducing this evidence, I seek to go beyond the conventional parallelism which simply argues for "influence." Comparisons with Greek and Roman notions of kingship, symbols on coins, palatial

9 Rajak 1996.

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architecture, etc., will not be confined to the identification of Hasmonean adaptations. The comparative method begins with pointing to similarities, but it becomes more productive when differences are noted, especially when their meaning or purpose is recognized.[10] Comparison provides theoretical perspectives and promotes generalization and explanation. It is an essential means of scientific interpretation, based on evidence rather than idiosyncratic intuition. Hence the Hellenistic evidence (as well as the more ancient biblical traditions) broadens our perspective on the Hasmoneans, even when the latter were not directly inspired or affected.[11]

2. The Maccabean Revolution: The Transformation of Jewish Identity

In 152 BCE, when Jonathan was nominated high priest and the Hasmoneans initiated their government, Judaean society and religion were already undergoing a process of transformation. Hasmonean rule was a consequence of three successive revolutions that took place beginning in 175 BCE (when the high priest Jason instituted hellenizing reforms in Jerusalem): the hellenization of the Jerusalem elite; the religious persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes; and the successful revolt against the Seleucids led by the Maccabees. The traditional political system and socio-religious worldview of the Judaean Jews had collapsed. Substantial portions of the Zadokite high priesthood and other priestly circles had been proven greedy, manipulative, and violent. The Seleucid kingdom, which had supported Jewish legal privileges in 198 BCE, became unpredictably antagonistic. And the core of Jewish identity, the Torah, was now endangered from two different angles: on the one hand, between 167 and 164 it was dangerous to live according to its precepts; and on the other hand, already from 175 BCE some Jews had come to be seen as less than committed to the Torah, even though they were members of the religious or priestly elite. All this must have occasioned not only daily distress but also overall confusion for Judaean Jews.

Military resistance, total commitment to the Torah, and the Maccabean leadership supplied alternatives to the overturning of the earlier political, cultural, and religious status quo. The military successes of Judah Maccabee gradually led to the development of an alternative system. Militarism was an innovation for the Jews, and its use in the service of religion was even more revolutionary.

10 Poole 1986. For the methodology of comparison, see Regev 2007:22–25 and references there.

11 For example, types of inscriptions on Greco-Roman coins that are unattested on Hasmonean coins show that the Hasmonean coins were intended to convey different messages.

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Although Judah began his career as a local military and (as we shall see in Chapter 3) religious leader, it seems that he already had political aspirations in 164, when he took over the Temple. Through their negotiations with the Seleucids on the cancellation of Antiochus IV's decrees, Judah and the Maccabees first became involved in politics, as defenders of Jewish religious rights.[12] In 162 – 161, after the religious persecutions had ended, Judah continued to fight against Nicanor, as the latter attempted to rule Jerusalem (1 Macc 7). During this period he also made a treaty with Rome (1 Macc 8). These acts show that he believed that the Judaean Jews should not live under Seleucid rule.[13]

The revolt led to far-reaching consequences following the reoccupation and rededication of the Temple, the death of Antiochus IV, and the cancellation of his decrees, when the Maccabees' antagonism became generalized against the Gentile (mostly Hellenistic) environment. In 163 BCE, Jews were harassed and threatened by Gentiles in the Hellenistic cities on the west coast and in Idumaea, the Galilee, and the Transjordan. Judah and his brothers went to save them and fought several battles far away from Jerusalem, bringing back thousands of refugees. They defeated the Gentiles and ruined and burnt several cities and temples, but did not attempt to capture any land (1 Macc 5).

In order to examine the religious cultural and political context of the Hasmoneans' rule in 152 – 37 BCE, it is essential to pay attention to their starting point as the leaders of the revolt. During the Maccabean revolt the Judaean Jews were beginning to transform themselves from a passive ethno-religious local community into a political entity which struggled against several surrounding ethno-political groups. The Jews became much more active politically and militarily. When the Seleucid decrees were cancelled the necessity for militarism only increased, due to new threats by the neighboring Gentiles who were not ready to accept the Jewish increase of power.

This chain reaction to the Hellenistic reform in Jerusalem and the decrees of Antiochus IV Epiphanes inevitably paved the way not only for a new Jewish political system, but also for a new type of Jewish identity. The Maccabees and their supporters were ready to die in the battlefield for religious freedom and to protect the lives of other Jews. Their identity was based on commitment to the Torah and hatred towards the idolatrous Gentiles. A new, "nationalistic" sense of Jewish collective identity was created. This construction of reality is provided by the author of 1 Maccabees.[14] The renewed sense of Jewishness

12 2 Macc 11:17 – 26, 34 – 38; Habicht 1976b; Flusser 1996:64 – 71.

13 Schürer-Vermes-Millar 1973:171; Flusser 1996:70 – 71. For the treaty with Rome, see Stern 1991:51 – 76.

14 For a historical survey based on 1 Maccabees, see, e. g., Mendels 1992:115 – 135, 161 – 178. Some read 1 Maccabees as mere propaganda, which conceals the true interests of the Hasmoneans. For Schwartz (1993a), Mattathias' family was considered, from a Hellenistic perspective, local aristocracy or "village strongmen," who resisted the loss of their political and civil status, and sought their own advancement within the "system." It should be noted that not all the Jews who suffered the persecutions thought highly of the Maccabees. For Daniel (11:34) they were of "little

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expressed in 1 Maccabees is thought to demonstrate the public atmosphere that promoted the Hasmoneans' rise to power and the emergence of an independent Jewish state in 152 BCE, and, I may add, nourished the flourishing of the Hasmonean dynasty (see Chapter 7). The revolt and Hasmonean independence also involved special religious phenomena that need attention.

Throughout the persecutions and the revolt, the Maccabees and their supporters stressed the ethos of commitment to the Torah and its commandments, which had been endangered by the Seleucid persecutions. Observing the scriptural commandments under the threat of death changed the meaning of commitment to the Jewish law. Devotion to the law was now a far-reaching and dangerous decision. Zeal for the Torah led to unexpected acts by the Maccabees, and this zealousness continued under the Hasmoneans. Mattathias and his supporters practiced forced circumcision of babies whose parents were too afraid of the Seleucids to perform this basic Jewish ritual. Later on John Hyrcanus and Judah Aristobulus forcibly converted the Idumaeans and Ituraeans.[15] When the citizens of Pella refused to embrace the ancestral practices of the Jews, Jannaeus destroyed the city (*Ant*. 13.397). Judah and Simon burned pagan temples in Qarnayim and Azotus.[16] Simon purified pagan defilement in Gezer and the Jerusalem Acra. Later on Jannaeus assaulted the Hellenistic cities in the coastal plain and the Transjordan: Ptolemais, Dor, Straton's Tower, Abthedon, Gaza and Raphia, Gadara, Amathus, Dium, Gerasa and Pella.[17]

The Maccabean and Hasmonean ethos of purity and rejection of pagan culture is documented by the archaeological record. Jewish ritual baths emerged in the Hasmonean period, and all the Hasmonean palaces in Jericho had several baths (see Chapter 6). Hellenistic or Rhodian amphorae, in which Greek wine was imported, were virtually absent from Jerusalem between 145 BCE and the beginning of the Herodian period, and are also unattested in the Hasmonean palaces. Such amphorae were extremely common in Jerusalem in 180 – 151 BCE and were probably used by the Seleucid soldiers and hellenizing Jews who dwelt together in the Acra in 168 – 143 BCE.[18] All this witnesses to the transformation of Jewish life in Judaea; its political, religious and ethnic manifestations were rapidly growing. But this was only one side of the coin. Hellenism was the other.

help." A similar attitude may be implied in the Animal Apocalypse (*1 Enoch* 85 – 90), on which see Regev 2007:204 – 211.

15 Weitzman 1999.

16 1 Macc 5:44, 68; 10:83; 11:66; 12:11; 13:47 – 48, 50.

17 1 Macc 13:47 – 48, 50; 14:4; *Ant*. 13.262 – 264, 374; Stern 1991:139 – 140, 149 – 150; Shatzman 1991:72 – 82. Those who occupied the Acra are characterized as "lawless" (*anomoi*), as having abandoned the law and the commandments (1 Macc 9:23, 58, 69; 10:61; 11:21, 25).

18 See Finkielsztejn 1999 and the discussion in Chapter 6.

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The independent Hasmonean state was established by Jonathan in 152 BCE and collapsed when Mattathias Antigonus was defeated by Herod (37 BCE). For the first time after the fall of the Davidic monarchy in 586 BCE, the Jews in Judaea were not governed by a Gentile empire. The Hasmoneans were the first to hold full control of the secular government since the Davidic monarchs, and thus directed both internal matters and foreign affairs, but since they were also high priests, they had a certain control over religious matters as well. Political independence and the flourishing state led to the development of three major religious factions: the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes. This diversity in religious outlooks provoked social conflicts over the enforcement of religious law in the Jerusalem Temple. Hasmonean independence also had far-reaching political consequences: later on, Judaean Jews had difficulties in coping with its loss under Roman rule, which resulted in the revolt against the Romans in 66 – 70 CE. Indeed, the Maccabean revolt and the emergence of the Hasmonean state sparked the rise of so-called Jewish "nationalism."[19]

3. The Pursuit of Hellenism

The turmoil of the Hellenistic reform, the anti-Jewish decrees of Antiochus IV, and the Jewish wars against the Seleucids and the Hellenistic cities are commonly seen as a clash of civilizations. For Elias Bickerman and Martin Hengel, the Jewish Hellenizers, especially Menelaus, attempted to force Hellenism on the Jews; the Maccabean revolt was directed against this coercion.[20] Later, however, it is commonly stated, the Hasmoneans themselves became hellenized: they used Greek names, hired Greek mercenaries, put on royal diadems, and even had a queen. Their royal courts were full of intrigues, just like those of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies.[21] Assuming that the Maccabees rejected Hellenism and Hellenizers, the subsequent Hasmoneans' infusion of Hellenistic elements would seem to have required compromise on issues of Jewish law and encouragement of assimilation. Eventually, according to this line of reasoning, Hellenistic civilization overcame its opponents.[22]

19 Farmer 1957; Mendels 1992:55 – 189. See Chapter 7.

20 Bickerman 1979; Hengel 1974. Compare the criticism of Millar 1974.

21 Tcherikover (1959:252) concluded that the Hasmoneans "were primarily military leaders who spent most of their time fighting…The Hasmoneans did the same as all the other monarchs of their time, having drinking parties, taking mistresses in addition to their lawful wives, and persecuting those of their relatives whom they suspected for personal or political reasons… The Hasmonean rule was a secular rule, hence the life of the court was secular also, possessing no higher a level than that of the courts of Antioch or the kings of Asia Minor." See Rappaport 1991 for a comprehensive survey of the extent of the Hasmoneans' hellenization. See already Bickerman 1962:153 – 165.

22 Bickerman 1962:133, 139, 149 – 150, 152 156, 178; Tcherikover 1959:235 – 265; Fischer 1990:17 – 19.

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Although the Hasmoneans' dealings with Hellenism do not form the main subject of this book, it will be shown that the Hasmoneans adopted certain Hellenistic elements while rejecting others. In the following chapters, Hellenistic and especially Seleucid culture and politics will be used as the historical and cultural background for understanding the Hasmoneans, their intentions and the means by which they ruled. It is therefore necessary to build on previous scholarship on Hasmonean attitudes towards Hellenism, including the concept of Hellenism in 2 Maccabees; the character of the Hellenistic Reform; and the attitudes of the Maccabees and Hasmoneans towards Hellenistic culture and political institutions.

"Hellenismus" and the Hellenistic Reform

In modern scholarship, Hellenism denotes "Greek ways," and hellenization is the adoption of Greek culture (including language and religion) by non-Greeks. Following the conquests of Alexander, the East was ruled by Macedonian kings who encouraged the immigration of new populations of Greek origins, took for granted the superiority of Greek culture, and preferred Greeks as administrators, friends and courtiers.[23] Hellenism, however, had no specific substance but was a cultural trend that could be adapted in various ways.

The noun *Hellenismus*, which first occurs in 2 Maccabees (4:10, 13; 11:24), is the invention of Jason of Cyrene, and means "the Greek way of living." The author also invented another novel noun, *Ioudaismos* (2:21; cf. 8:1; 14:38), a set of values based in the Jewish religion, for which one ought to fight. Although he never juxtaposes these two nouns,[24] since the book describes the clash between Seleucids and Jews, some readers might gain the impression that there is a conceptual opposition between Judaism and Hellenism as distinct and competitive cultural systems. The relationship between the two and the manner in which Jews were influenced by Hellenism has been the subject of many monographs in the past decades.[25]

However, conflict between Jews and "Greeks" (those of Greek descent or culture) was hardly inevitable. Both Josephus and the rabbis stressed Alexander's friendly encounter with the Jews and his acknowledgment of the Jewish religion. The earliest reports of Greek authors on Jews and Judaism were favorable.[26] Antiochus III affirmed the Judaean Jews' right to live according to their traditional laws; but this right was dependent on the king's

23 Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993:141–187; Levine 1998:16–25. Cf. Rajak 1990:263–265.

24 Habicht 2006:92.

25 E.g., Lieberman 1950; Tcherikover 1959; Hengel 1974; Kasher 1990; Gruen 1998; Collins 2000; Levine 1998; Bar-Kochva 2010. See also Habicht 2006.

26 *Ant.* 11.317–345; b. *Yoma* 69a. Note the mostly positive outlooks of Greek authors during the third century BCE (Bar-Kochva 2010:15–135).

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will, and the Seleucids were also able to deny the Jews the right to live according to the Torah, as did Antiochus IV. Jewish religious freedom was a privilege, and not irrevocable.[27]

The Hellenistic reform in Jerusalem was initiated in 175 BCE by Jason, the Zadokite high priest, who established a gymnasium and *ephebeion* in Jerusalem, and transformed Jerusalem into a Hellenistic *polis*.[28] In fact, Jason and Menelaus paid Antiochus a total sum of 5790 talents to allow them to take power.[29] Bickerman and Hengel argued that this was a religious reform and that Menelaus stood behind the institution of a pagan cult in the Temple.[30] Most contemporary scholars, however, believe that the reform was cultural, without aiming to countermand Jewish law, and that Menelaus and his associates were not involved in Antiochus IV's decrees and the erection of "the abomination of desolation."[31] The reformers were attracted to a Hellenistic lifestyle, which appealed especially to elites, but they may also have used Hellenistic culture to win the favor of the Seleucids. Thus, the Maccabean conflict with the Jewish Hellenizers also had political motivations and not only religious ones. Antiochus IV's decrees against Judaism and the establishment of a pagan cult at the Jerusalem Temple were probably a reaction to local resistance to Menelaus.[32] The king used the imposition of Hellenism as a means of political suppression.[33]

The Hellenization of the Maccabees

The report of Antiochus IV's decree that the Jews must change over to Greek ways (*Hellēnika*, 2 Macc 4:10; 6:9; 11:24) is misleading. The Maccabees did not resist everything that had to do with Hellenism, but only specific aspects which they found threatening. They opposed pagan cults and fought against

27 Hydahl 1990:190. See *Ant*. 12.138 – 144; Bickerman 1980b.

28 Tcherikover 1959:152 – 174; Bringmann 1983.

29 The Seleucid debt to the Romans following their defeat and the peace of Apamea in 188 BCE was 15,000 talents. The annual Roman tax on Judaea during the reign of Archelaus was 600 talents. See Hydahl 1990:191 – 192.

30 Bickerman 1979; Hengel 1974. Their views about Menelaus were partially followed by Bringmann 1983.

31 Tcherikover 1959:153 – 174; Hydahl 1990:193 – 194; Gruen 1998:29 – 31. See also the bibliography in Schwartz 2008:42 – 43. The letter of Antiochus IV to Menelaus and the *gerousia* (2 Macc 11:28 – 33), in which the king announced that Jews who ceased their resistance would be allowed to follow the Jewish law, was addressed to the Jewish Hellenizers (Tcherikover 1959:215 – 218; Habicht 1976b:11). Since the Hellenistic reform movement attempted to abort the decrees, it probably did not initiate them. Yet, the abundance of Rhodian amphorae in Jerusalem in 180 – 151 BCE (and to lesser degree, already from 211 BCE) is an archaeological indication of the halakhic laxity (or low social boundaries in relation to Gentiles) of the hellenized Jews.

32 For the view that the rebellion preceded the decrees, and not the other way around, see Tcherikover 1959:175 – 203; Habicht 2006:95.

33 Habicht 2006:96 – 97.

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the Seleucid troops who forced them to transgress the Jewish Torah. Their rebellion was against the political system which persecuted their religion and imposed paganism upon them.[34]

According to 1 Maccabees, Judah fought against the Gentile mercenaries of the Seleucids ("the nations"), not against "Greeks."[35] The non-Jews with whom Judah clashed in Transjordan and elsewhere were not designated as Greeks, but as "the surrounding nations."[36] The Maccabean wars against the Hellenistic cities resulted from ethnic and territorial conflicts, and not from an anti-Hellenistic attitude.[37] The Maccabees did not confront "Hellenists" as such, but Seleucids and other Gentile neighbors. They learned soon enough to negotiate and cooperate with the Seleucids when political interests were at stake. Hyrcanus captured and demolished the Hellenistic-Idumaean city of Marisa, but also maintained good relations with the Ptolemies and Romans.[38] All the Hasmoneans refrained from attacking Askelon, an independent Greek polis and an ally of the Ptolemies.[39]

In 164 BCE Judah and his supporters were involved in negotiations with Antiochus IV and the Seleucid authorities headed by Lysias, as well as with the Roman delegates.[40] In 152 – 143 BCE Jonathan and Simon collaborated with the Seleucid kings Alexander Balas, Tryphon, Demetrius II and Antiochus VII against their Seleucid foes. When Alexander Balas appointed Jonathan high priest he sent him purple garb and a gold crown (1 Macc 10:20). Jonathan attended Balas's wedding to the daughter of Ptolemy IV at Ptolemais (Akko); the king enrolled him among his "first friends" (and later on, following his military successes, among the king's "kinsmen") and named him *strategos* and *meridarch* (1 Macc 10:59 – 66, 89). Later on, Antiochus VI, guided by Tryphon, accorded Jonathan the privilege of wearing purple and gold (1 Macc 11:57), and nominated Simon *strategos* of the coastal plain.[41]

Maccabean politics went far beyond the Seleucids. Judah established a treaty with Rome that was continued by Jonathan, Simon, and John

34 Gruen 1998:4. Compare Rajak 1990:267 – 269.

35 Gruen 1998:5 – 8. On the ethnic composition of the Seleucid army, which also included Macedonians; see Bar-Kochva 1989:90 – 105.

36 Schwartz 1991.

37 Gruen 1998:27 – 28; Rajak 1990:272. Cf. Tcherikover 1959:247 – 249.

38 Kasher 1990:123 – 125.

39 Kasher 1990:150 – 151.

40 Lysias's letter (2 Macc 11:17 – 21) addresses the Jews as a crowd (*plēthos*), that is, as an unconstitutional body that is not competent to take part in negotiations. Note that the Jewish agents have Hebrew names rather than Greek ones. The letter from the Romans (2 Macc 35 – 38) was also addressed to the Maccabees. See Habicht 1976b:10 – 12.

41 Gruen 1998:14 – 18. For a summary of the relationship between the Maccabees and the Seleucids, see Fischer 1990. The extent of hellenization implied by these nominations is demonstrated by the identities of previous *strategoi:* Apollonius son of Tharseas and Apollonius son of Menestheus (2 Macc 3:5; 4:4; Goldstein 1980:204, 222). For the Seleucid political perspective, see Stern 1995:23 – 87. For purple as a sign of the kings' friends in the Seleucid kingdom, see Bikerman 1938:41 – 44.

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Hyrcanus.[42] Jonathan and Simon also fostered an alliance with Sparta; the author of 1 Maccabees ascribed to the Spartans special virtues and fantasized about Jewish participation in Greek civilization.[43] Thus, Judah and his brothers were more than willing to enter into formal relationships with Western Gentile powers.

1 Maccabees therefore discloses a "complex pattern of reciprocal relations and mutual dependency that undermines the concept of fundamental antagonism."[44] In fact, the growth of Maccabean authority in Judaea owed much not only to success in the battlefield but also to associations cultivated by the Hasmoneans with various Hellenistic rulers, who were also dependent on the favors of the Seleucids and granted public recognition by them. "Hasmonean success in war and politics owed more to connections than to conflict with the Hellenistic world."[45] Put simply, the Maccabees became an integral part of the Hellenistic political milieu.

As observant Jews, the Maccabees rejected many of the components of Hellenistic culture, but they did embrace others. Judah's commanders and delegates to Rome had Greek names: Eupolemus, Jason, Dositheus, and Sosipater.[46] Jonathan and Simon sent to Sparta and Rome delegates whose fathers' names were also Greek: Numenius son of Antiochus, and Antipater's son Jason.[47] Greek language was an integral part of the Hasmonean cultural milieu. Without it the Hasmoneans could not communicate with the world.

Simon built a monumental tomb for his father and brothers in Mode'in. It consisted of seven pyramids topped by trophies of armor and ships, inspired by Hellenistic (and Roman) monumental art—patterns also used by Seleucid generals. Simon thus employed Hellenistic models to commemorate the Maccabean family.[48] This attests to adjustment, adaptation, and the creative appropriation of Hellenism.

42 1 Macc 8:1–32; 12:1–4; 16:15–24; *Ant.* 14.145–148; Stern 1991:51–98; 1995:89–91; Sievers 1990:68–70.

43 1 Macc 12:7–23; 14:16–23; Gruen 1996. Katzoff 1985, however, pointed to the special unhellnized background of this treaty (based on a supposed descent from Abraham): both the Jews and Spartans had recovered laws that were abolished by the Acheaens or Seleucids.

44 Gruen 1998:9.

45 Gruen 1998:28.

46 1 Macc 8:17; 2 Macc 4:11; 12:24, 35.

47 1 Macc 12:16; 14:22, 24; 15:15.

48 1 Macc 13:27–30. Cf. the account of Josephus in *Ant.* 13.211, where the trophies and carved ships are omitted and the stress is put on the roofed colonnades. Fine 2005:61–65 stressed the aniconic character of the monument. For Greco-Roman parallels, see Sievers 1990:106–107 and references. The monument was still familiar to Eusebius, *Onomasticon* (ed. Klostermann, p. 132).

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The Hellenization of the Hasmoneans

In light of the hellenization of the Maccabees, the Hellenistic elements used by the Hasmoneans no longer seem innovations, but rather the continuation and acceleration of an existing cultural trend, although it is necessary to note the limits of this usage. Hyrcanus, Alexander, Aristobulus, Antigonus, and Alexandra were all Greek names (the Hebrew names of Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II are not recorded by Josephus). But these names are recorded by Josephus and other sources written in Greek, whereas the Hasmonean coins use mostly Hebrew names.[49] Roman edicts mention Hasmonean delegates; some had Greek names, such as Lysimachus son of Pausanias, Alexander son of Theodorus, and Patroclus son of Chaireas (*Ant.* 14.222, 307). The Hasmonean coins also adopted Hellenistic symbols, such as the cornucopia and the helmet, commonly seen on Seleucid coins.[50]

Hyrcanus and Jannaeus hired Greek mercenaries, and the battlefield was the center of their kingdom.[51] In fact, from the time of Judah's battle in Beth Zachariah the Maccabean army adopted Hellenistic models of warfare, including the use of cavalry and semi-heavy and heavy infantry. The Hasmoneans used Hellenistic, and to certain extent also Roman, military weapons and tactics.[52] Had they done otherwise, any confrontation in the open battlefield would have resulted in swift defeat. Some have regarded the institution of Hasmonean kingship as Hellenistic, and the reign of Queen Salome Alexandra may seem to have been directly influenced by that of the Ptolemaic Cleopatra.[53] Judah Aristobulus and his widow persecuted even their relatives, confining mothers and brothers to prison (*Ant.* 13.302, 320). Jannaeus had mistresses (*Ant.* 13.380). Some scholars have characterized the Hasmoneans negatively as Hellenistic rulers who pursued their rule at the price of jailing and even killing their sibling rivals.[54]

49 See Chapter 5. Rappaport 1991:486 – 487 concluded that the Greek names aimed to reflect openness towards the Hellenistic world, noting that Parthian and Nabataean rulers kept their native names.

50 Kindler 1993. See Chapter 5.

51 *Ant.* 13.374, 377 – 378; Rappaport 1991:492 – 493. Schalit (1972:283 – 284) pointed to the military character of Jannaeus's kingdom, in which noble warriors controlled the country. Thus, for example, the warrior aristocracy, like the members of any Hellenistic court, supported Aristobulos II's bid to take over the kingdom (*Ant.* 13.408 – 429; 14.45).

52 Bar-Kochva 1989:69 – 81, 432 – 437; 1999; Shatzman 1991:11 – 35.

53 Rappaport 1991:500 – 501. For conflict and marriages related to succession and the Hellenistic influences, see Geiger 2002.

54 Tcherikover 1959:252. Compare Plutarch, *Demetrius* 3.4, who termed the murder of brothers a common practice among princes who want to secure their rule. See also Josephus's lament on the decline and fall of the Hasmoneans *Ant.* 14.77 – 48, 490 – 491, which points to the internal *stasis* that ruined their rule.

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Scholars have concluded that the Hasmoneans conformed to the conventions of the Hellenistic world, but also accepted the restraints of Jewish law (e.g., no graven images).[55] In evaluating the extent and motivation of their hellenization, it is appropriate to distinguish between conscious and unconscious influences.[56] Some of the Hellenistic elements mobilized by the Hasmoneans were necessary for political survival (military tactics, armor, and mercenaries). Others, such as the institution of kingship, were predictable and even natural in antiquity (see Chapter 4). Certain practices penetrated the Hasmonean court in consequence of communication with the Hellenistic world (Greek names, diplomatic treaties). The tensions and intrigues within the Hasmonean family were not necessarily an imitation of the Hellenistic courts, but merely consequences of the centralization of political power.[57] Perhaps the most striking evidence for conscious hellenization is Josephus' assertion that Judah Aristobulus styled himself *philhellene*.[58] However, Aristobulus is also praised by Timagenes of Alexandria, as cited by Strabo, for converting some of the Ituraeans and acquiring their land. The impression is that his attraction to Hellenistic culture was not at the expense of commitment to Jewish identity. In fact, the very concept of mass conversion may have been inspired by the Hellenistic concept of *politeia*.[59]

We have seen how the success of the Maccabean revolt made it possible for ancient Jews to transform Greek culture for their own purposes. The adoption of Greek ways by the later Hasmoneans does not represent a reversal of Maccabean ideals. In many cases the association with Hellenistic kings advanced Jewish interests and did not result in compromises of Jewish integrity.[60] This is not very surprising once we realize that Judaism and Hellenism were not distinct or contrasting cultural entities, and that Judaism was not merely influenced by Hellenism or assimilated into it. Jews took an active part in Hellenistic culture and society from the time of Alexander throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods.[61] The Hasmoneans applied Hellenistic conventions towards their own (Jewish) ends, just like other rulers of the age.

This does not mean that Hellenistic culture prevailed in Judaea and its environs outside of the Hasmonean court. Until the Herodian period it penetrated slowly and gradually.[62] Also in Syria there was relatively slight

55 Tcherikover 1959:250 – 253; Rappaport 1991:489, 502; Rajak 1990:esp. 277 – 278.

56 Rajak 1990:265 – 266.

57 Rajak 1990:277 – 278.

58 *Ant*. 13.318. The title is typical of non-Greek rulers who supported Greek cultural values, including the Nabataean king Aretas III (Kasher 1990:134 – 136).

59 *Ant*. 13.319; Cohen 1998:109 – 139. See also Chapter 7.

60 Gruen 1998:40.

61 Satlow 2008 and references.

62 Stern 1991:3 – 21. Millar (1978:20) concluded: "The evidence shows how un-Greek in structure, customs, observance, literary culture, language and historical outlook the Jewish community had remained down the earlier second century, and how basic to it the rules reimposed by Ezra and Nehemiah had remained."

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Hellenistic influence, and only several new cities were established. There is a lack of evidence for "fusion" of Near Eastern and Hellenistic cultures outsides the urban centers and the upper classes. But even among the latter the Greek culture was absorbed without losing local traditions and non-Greek identity. In the Phoenician cities, which were not colonized but were hellenized at their own initiative, Phoenician culture nevertheless prevailed.[63]

It therefore seems that the Hasmoneans were not exposed to low levels of Hellenism in the borders of their own territories but rather to the highest levels, found in the royal courts of the Seleucids and Ptolemies.[64] Affirmation of this impression will be provided later in the discussion of the swimming pools in the Hasmonean palaces in Jericho, and I will try to show that their inclination towards Hellenistic culture was geared towards the strengthening of their rule.

My treatments of the hellenization of the Hasmoneans in the following chapters will therefore not deal with its extent but rather in the manner in which it was used: how the Hasmoneans translated Hellenistic features into their own culture and for what purposes these elements were implemented.

4. The Sources: Panegyric and Hostile Historiographies

Although the historical evidence on the Hasmoneans is relatively rich, the sources are notoriously unbalanced. 1 and 2 Maccabees praise the Maccabees; Josephus sometimes sympathizes with them, but mostly denounces them. A general assessment of the major sources, their dates, and their approaches towards the Hasmoneans is necessary before they may be used to uncover cultural history.

1 Maccabees

The author of 1 Maccabees expressed admiration and respect towards the Hasmoneans. He may even have been a Hasmonean court scribe.[65] Schunck argued that the author had transferred stories from Judah, or even Hyrcanus, back to Mattathias, in order to lend legitimacy to the Hasmonean dynasty through its founder.[66]

63 Millar 2006a:esp. 27, 30; 2006b.

64 Kasher 1990:137. For their good relationship with the Ptolemies, see Stern 1991:88–124.

65 Geiger 1928:206–219; Goldstein 1976:4–36, 72–78; Fischer 1992:441–442; Rappaport 2004:48–49. For admiration of the Hasmoneans, see, e. g., 1 Macc 2:65 (Simon); 5:62 (the family in general); 13:54; 16:23–24 (Hyrcanus).

66 Schunck 1954:62.

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Some scholars have dated 1 Maccabees to the days of Alexander Jannaeus.[67] Goldstein argued that the concluding reference to the reign of Hyrcanus (16:23 – 24) indicated that the book was written after his death, and that hence the author was an advocate of Jannaeus.[68] Goldstein also noted that Mattathias encouraged his descendants to be both high priests and kings (2:54, 57), thus foreseeing their appropriation of the royal title. Goldstein, however, needed to explain why, if the author supported Jannaeus, the wearing of the diadem was condemned (8:14)—which seems to critique the Hasmonean appropriation of kingship; Jannaeus was a king and the diadem itself appears on Jannaeus's coins.[69]

Most scholars have dated 1 Maccabees to the days of John Hyrcanus. Seth Schwartz argued that the nationalistic outlook attests to the beginning of Hyrcanus's reign, prior to the hellenization of the Hasmoneans. Rappaport noted that there is no mention of Hyrcanus's death, and thus dated the book to ca. 125 – 115 BCE.[70] Stern observed that since the author admires the Roman republic (8:14), he did not wholeheartedly support Jewish monarchical government. Bar-Kochva dated the book to the beginning of Hyrcanus's reign (ca. 129 BCE) since most of Hyrcanus' achievements and conquests are not mentioned, probably because the author was unacquainted with them. The only significant act that is ascribed to Hyrcanus is the building of the walls of Jerusalem (16:23), which most likely occurred at the beginning of his rule after the siege of Antiochus VII.[71] It therefore seems that there are sufficient arguments for ascribing the Hasmonean ideology of 1 Maccabees to John Hyrcanus and his associates.

The sources and reliability of 1 Maccabees were studied by Bar-Kochva. He concluded that the author, who wrote the original book in Hebrew, used eye-witness reports, oral testimonies, official archives of documents and chronicles (note the references to exact dates in Seleucid reckoning). The author was a witness to the Maccabean revolt, reliable and accurate in his detailed battle descriptions, despite his tendency to use biblical associations. Although he did add passages, especially speeches, from his own imagination, he produced consistent and coherent historical writing, especially in comparison to 2 Maccabees.[72]

67 Abel 1949:xxviii-xxix dated it to 100 BCE (with bibliographic survey).

68 Goldstein 1976:62, 64, 72 – 73.

69 Goldstein 1980:71 – 75, 81. He explained that the book was written before 90 BCE, when Jannaeus had struck only his high priestly coins (which are considered by some to be the earlier types).

70 Schwartz 1991:17, 36 – 38; Rappaport 2004:61; cf. Stern 1991:348 – 349. Momigliano 1980:564 – 566 dated 1 Maccabees no later than 129 BCE because of the absence of any reference to the elimination of Pergamum and the establishment of the Roman province Asia in chapter 8. For dating to the later days of Hyrcanus, see Fischer 1992:441 and references.

71 Stern 1991:348 – 349; Bar-Kochva 1989:162 – 164.

72 Bar-Kochva 1989:152 – 162, 166 – 170, 401 – 402. On the Hebrew original, see ibid., 168 – 169. Schunck 1954:36 – 51 suggested that the author also drew on Seleucid chronicles.

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2 Maccabees

In contrast to 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees was written in Greek by a Diaspora Jew, Jason of Cyrene, and abridged by an anonymous epitomist (2:23). The book describes the Jewish hellenization movement, the Seleucid persecutions, and the Maccabean revolt led by Judah Maccabee, ending with his victory over Nicanor in 161 BCE. The book's title is "on Judah Maccabee" (2:19). After his final victory over Nicanor, Judah is characterized as "he who with his whole body and soul had taken the lead in the struggle on behalf of his fellow citizens" (15:30). Several scholars have characterized the book as a "festal legend" which aimed to encourage the observance of Ḥanukkah and Nicanor's day.[73]

The author's attitude towards the Hasmoneans is sometimes considered to be indifferent, if not downright hostile: Mattathias is not mentioned at all, and the accomplishments of Judah's brothers also go unmentioned.[74] However, such assessments ignore the book's genre, that of pathetic-rhetorical Hellenistic historiography (also affected by the "tragic" school), which focuses on a single figure. For this reason 2 Maccabees focused its attention on Judah, and there is no reason to see here an opposition towards the Hasmoneans.[75] To the contrary, the admiration of Judah implies that the subsequent struggle of his brothers for the very same aims would have been favorably seen as well.

Dating 2 Maccabees based on internal evidence is difficult. The conventional view presumes that Jason of Cyrene wrote very close to the days of Judah Maccabee.[76] The epitome may be dated more concretely, based on the chronologies of the preceding letters. Momigliano and Habicht dated the epitome to 124 BCE, the presumed date of the first letter (1:9 – 10).[77] Doran argued that the epitome postdated the first letter since it was edited in order to align it with this letter; thus, the epitome was composed in the days of

73 For these holidays, see 2 Macc 10:8; 15:36. See Doran 1981:75, 105 – 106; Schwartz 2008:7 – 10, following Bunge and Momigliano. Nicanor's Day was still celebrated in Josephus's time (*Ant*. 12.412), and was mentioned in *Megillat Ta'anit* (Noam 2003:298 – 302). Schwartz, however, argued that the book originally established Nicanor's Day, while Ḥanukkah came only at a later stage. In his opinion, 2 Macc 10:1 – 8 is a later insertion, which separates Antiochus IV's death (ch. 9) from the summary of this event (10:9), and which was added when the introductory letters were joined to the epitome. Schwartz also noted that Ḥanukkah is not mentioned in the epitome except for this section (but, I would also add, Nicanor's Day is also mentioned only once).

74 Hengel 1974:1.97. Goldstein 1980:17 related this to his view of the Hasmoneans as "ineffective and at worst tainted by treason and sin." Goldstein's attempt to find anti-Hasmonean polemic in 2 Macc 10:19 – 22; 12:36 – 40 is forced, since the author mentioned sins amongst the Maccabean soldiers that were dealt with seriously by Judah.

75 Habicht 1976a:188; Geiger 1984; Bar-Kochva 1989:172 – 178.

76 E.g., Habicht 1976a 175 – 176 n. 45.

77 Momigliano 1975:82 – 84; Habicht 1976a:172 – 176.

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Hyrcanus.[78] Daniel Schwartz, however, dated the first letter to 143/142 BCE, and hence dated the epitome slightly earlier.[79] The admiration of Judah, and the implied favorable view of the Hasmoneans, should therefore be dated to the early days of John Hyrcanus, or perhaps to the days of Simon.

Although 2 Maccabees may have been written far from Jerusalem, the author had reliable knowledge of the Seleucids and their relationship with the Jews; note the authentic official documents in chapter 11.[80] Even the legendary story of Heliodoros (chapter 3), who attempted to plunder the Temple, has gained a certain credibility following the recent discovery of an inscription from the very same years in which Heliodorus was assigned to supervise the temples in Koilē Syria and Phoinikē.[81]

Josephus

Josephus's descriptions of the Hasmoneans and their rule pose complex methodological problems. Not only did he use various Hellenistic sources (some are critical and others more neutral), but his own attitude to the Hasmoneans was ambivalent. There is a general agreement that Nicolaus of Damascus was Josephus' sole source for his account of the Hasmonean period in the *Jewish War*. In *Antiquities*, Josephus continued to use Nicolaus, but he also employed other Hellenistic historians, especially Strabo.[82] This technique gave his presentation of the Hasmoneans strong Hellenistic characteristics that distorted the picture of their rule as seen by their Jewish contemporaries.

Nicolaus of Damascus was Herod's (Gentile) advisor and envoy. When he wrote his *Universal History* he glorified Herod, painted the Hasmoneans in dark colors, and minimized their achievements, in order to legitimize Herod's rule. He portrayed the reign of Hyrcanus II negatively, stressing the centrality of Antipater, Herod's father. The official Roman documents included in *Antiquities* Book 14, however, praise Hyrcanus II and attest to his authority, as earned from Julius Caesar, while Antipater is barely mentioned. Hence

78 Doran 1981:5, 112–113. Goldstein 1980:82–83 argued that the original book was written in response to (hence, later than) 1 Maccabees, possibly in 86 BCE.

79 Schwartz 2008:11–12, 139–140, 143–144, 519–529 followed the date "year 169" in 2 Macc 1:7, since he read in 2 Macc 1:9–10 "year 148" (164 BCE; he argued that this refers to the original festival of Ḥanukkah), instead of the conventional reading "year 188" (143/142 BCE).

80 Habicht 1976b. See also Bar-Kochva 1989:171.

81 Gera 2009a:148–150. Different conjectures have been raised concerning the author's sources, such as eyewitness testimony, oral traditions, and written sources. Schunck 1954 and Hengel 1974:1.96 argued that a history of Judah Maccabee was the common source of both 1 and 2 Maccabees, along with perhaps also a chronicle of the Seleucids.

82 See *Ant.* 13.251, 286–287, 318–319; 14.35, 68, 104; Hölscher 1916:esp. 1944–1949; Laqueur 1920. On Nicolaus and Strabo, and Strabo's incorporation of Posidonius and Timagenes, see Bar-Kochva 1996a: 2010:399–439; Stern 1991:425–431; Shatzman 1992:54–55; 1993; Schwartz 1994: 210–211.

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Josephus' narrative was based on Nicolaus, who gave Antipater the credit for Hyrcanus's achievements in order to justify Herod's rule.[83]

Furthermore, Josephus's description of Jannaeus's wars included more details about his enemies and the non-Jewish population than about the Jewish side, and was accompanied by sympathy toward the Greek cities, especially Gaza. Jannaeus's military achievements, such as his defeat of Antiochus XII and the Nabataeans, which is implied only in the references to Jannaeus's final territorial occupations, are minimized or even muted. The presentation of Judah Aristobulus's short reign focused on his court's intrigues with his brother Antigonus, whereas Strabo (based in turn on Timagenes) presented Aristobulus as an extremely successful ruler: he was kind, acquired further territories for the Jews, joined some of the Ituraeans to the Jewish nation, and called himself *philhellene*.[84] Although Nicolaus probably did not fabricate his descriptions of internal tensions within the Hasmonean family, or their Hellenistic court style,[85] he stressed these factors while understating other, more favorable characteristics.

Josephus was a descendant of the Hasmoneans (*Life* 2). He praised them as "a splendid and renowned (royal) house because of both their lineage and their priestly office, as well as the things which its founders achieved on behalf of the nation" (*Ant*. 14.490). This outstanding statement catches the essence of the Hasmonean ideology (see Chapter 3). In his rewriting of 1 Maccabees, for example, Josephus stressed the courage, piety, and righteousness of the Maccabees, but also their alliance with the Seleucids. They are committed to the law and fight for the liberty (*eleutheria*) of their people—namely, the right to live in accordance with the laws and customs of the fathers (*Ant*. 12.303; 13.198)—but not for political independence. In order to reduce the opposition between Jews and Gentiles, Josephus also omitted passages that condemn the Gentiles' idols, as well as Judah's call to fight against "the nations."[86] In *Antiquities* Josephus is much more sympathetic to the Hasmoneans than in

83 Schwartz 1994:esp. 211. For Nicolaus's history of Herod and his attitude towards Judaism, see Regev 2010:215–219. In his writings on the Hasmonean period before the rise of Hyrcanus II and Antipater, Nicolaus probably used earlier Hellenistic historians; most of them are unknown, although it seems that he used Diodorus for the description of the three delegations to Pompey (*Ant*. 14.37–46; see Chapter 4). See Stern 1991:459–460. Nicolaus's writings, however, were not entirely anti-Hasmonean. He designated Ptolemy Lathyrus's troops as "the enemy" in *Ant*. 13.388, 340, whereas Strabo (who used Timagenes of Alexandria, and hence identified with the Ptolemies) designates the Jews as the enemy (*Ant*. 13.280, 359, 360). See Bar-Kochva 1999:14.

84 Stern 1991:461–463. Compare Shatzman 1991:117–122. For Aristobulus, see *Ant*. 13.301–319; Stern 1993.

85 See Aristobulus's jailing of his brothers (*Ant*. 13.302, 320); John Hyrcanus's hatred of his son, Jannaeus (ibid., 322); and the call of Jannaeus's supporters to his *daimōn* after his death (ibid., 415–416).

86 Feldman 1994:esp. 45–47, 65. For Josephus' distortion of the Maccabean religious ideology of national freedom and his addition of the idea of martyrdom, see Gafni 1989.

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War; several explanations have been offered for this difference, which is certainly related to his exclusive use of Nicolaus in *War*.[87]

Nonetheless, Josephus criticized Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, and later on Mattathias Antigonus, lamenting the fact that their civil wars had led to the loss of the independence of the Jewish nation and its subjection to the Romans, as well as the loss of the land to "the Syrians" (*Ant*. 14.77 – 78, 490). In fact, Josephus is not overtly pro-Hasmonean in *Antiquities*, and it seems that several critical comments regarding Jannaeus and Salome Alexandra stem from his own pen.[88]

In contrast to his admiration of John Hyrcanus (*Ant*. 13.282, 299 – 301), Josephus described his grandson Hyrcanus II as unsuited for politics. He stressed Hyrcanus II's lack of capability and criticized the manner in which he accepted Antipater's rise to power. It seems that he would have preferred that Hyrcanus II withdraw from politics and let Aristobulus II rule.[89]

Other Hellenistic and Roman historians provide both positive and negative assessments of the Hasmoneans, especially in relation to their conquests of non-Jewish populations and the (supposed) destruction of Hellenistic cities. Most of the negative ones derived from cultural and political interests, such as siding with the Greek *poleis*. According to Shatzman, Strabo's characterization of the Hasmoneans as tyrants derived from Theophanes of Mytilene, who chronicled Pompey's conquests and was therefore hostile to the Hasmoneans.[90] On the other hand, the Roman historian Pompeius Trogus expressed a

87 Josephus's nationalist standpoint in *Ant*. has been broadly acknowledged, e. g., Stern 1991:453 – 459. According to Laqueur 1920:128 – 221 Josephus rewrote *Ant*. 14, altering Nicolaus by incorporating a more nationalist tone and a polemic against Antipater and Herod. Fuks 1990 suggested that during the period of 79 – 94 CE, after the Great Revolt, Josephus felt that the Romans had become less sensitive to Jewish nationalism; Josephus could therefore glorify the Hasmonean rulers, even though the later Hasmoneans resisted Roman occupation. For example, he added an account of Hyrcanus's destruction of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim (*Ant*. 13.256), along with detailed explanations for Jannaeus's cruel punishment of and revenge on the rebels, including the crucifixion of 800 of them and the slaughter of their families before their eyes. Josephus also mentioned that when the king was injured in the battles against the rebels, his opponents sought the aid of foreigners, and that due to the rebellion, he had lost to the Nabataeans territories in the Transjordan (*Ant*. 13.380 – 382); and he included Antigonus' claim that the Romans should not give the kingship to Herod, who was half a Jew and not a priest, but rather to Antigonus's royal family, "to those members who had committed no offence against the Romans" (14.403 – 404).

88 Schwartz 1994:215 – 216, 219. Jannaeus: *Ant*. 13.323, 381 – 383; Alexandra: *Ant*. 13.417, 430 – 433 (note the conflicting assessments of her reign and personality). Shatzman 1992:56 – 57 argued that the hostility towards the Hasmoneans also derived from Jewish traditions, e. g., the Pharisees' opposition.

89 Schwartz 1994:210, 218 – 232, esp. 228.

90 Strabo, *Geographica* 16.2, 40; Stern 1976:296 – 297, 301 – 302, 307 – 308; Shatzman 1992:39. For Strabo's evaluations, both positive and negative, see Shatzman 1992:35 – 40. For Diodorus's hostility and criticism, see Shatzman 1992:52. See also Tacitus, *Histories* 5.8, 3 (Stern 1980:20, 28, 47 – 49; Shatzman 1992:47 – 48) who stressed Jannaeus's brutal violence (perhaps referring to the civil war between Jannaeus and the Pharisees), as an expression of Roman stereotypic

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positive attitude towards the Hasmoneans as kings and priests, and associated Jewish independence with the Hasmonean treaty with Rome, although he also condemned the Hasmonean wars as robbery.[91]

5. Ideology, Legitimization, and Power

In the following chapters I draw on the concepts of legitimacy, ideology, and power. It is necessary to make clear what I mean when I use these terms and to articulate the social-scientific theoretical background that guides my analysis.

Legitimization

Legitimization is essential for every ruler or government who wishes the public to ascribe legitimacy to their acts and very existence.[92] The ruler's aim is that his subjects judge their own behavior by the criteria of their rulers, achieving ethical coherence.[93] The process of legitimization asserts the ruler's distinctive identity since this process entails being recognized as marked by particular qualities. It involves the construction and manifestation of identity, mainly through the use of symbols. Identification, however, also means sharing the same values with others (the ruler's subjects).[94]

As we shall see, some of the Hasmoneans' vehicles of legitimization, especially their coins and palaces, are also addressed to the Hasmoneans themselves. Here Barker's model of self-legitimization is especially relevant. According to Barker, it is important for rulers to cultivate their own self-identification, apart from the instrumental function of seeking prestige and power. They aim to mark their identity as distinctive, and to obtain a coherent sense of identity.[95] This self-legitimization of rulers through the symbolic enactment of their unique identity (e.g., in the case of the Hasmoneans, by using both Jewish and Hellenistic symbols of power on their coins) is part of the rationalization of their rule. When this rationalization fails, government fails.[96]

Every ruler and government aims to legitimate their actions. Roman imperial "ideology" during the Principate, for example, aimed to please the

views on eastern monarchies. On the Hasmonean policy towards the Hellenistic cities, see Shatzman 1991:43–82; 1992:53–54, 58–63.

91 Stern 1976:332, 338–342. See Shatzman 1992:45–46.

92 Weber 1948:78–79; 1978:213.

93 Eagelton 1991:55; Barker 2001:37–38.

94 Barker 2001:32, 35–36. Barker also reviewed previous scholarship on the subject.

95 Barker 2001:135, 137, 139. Cf. ibid., 2–4, 13–14, 30–31.

96 Barker 2001:65

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urban *plebs*, feeding and entertaining them, continuing the republican tradition. The conciliation of the Roman masses was necessary to achieving their consent.[97] In the Aztec state, the rulers validated their office through religious and legal institutions. The deities of conquered people were incorporated into the Aztec pantheon, while the Aztecs' major god was promoted to a preeminent place as a symbol for the unity of the entire empire. State benefits such as food distribution during crisis periods demonstrated the power of the state and enhanced the citizens' commitment.[98]

An important aspect of Hasmonean self-legitimization was the use of the religious sphere to achieve political justification: the establishment of the festival of Ḥanukkah to commemorate the rededication of the Temple (a festival that also involves ritual symbolism, which promotes political power); the exploitation of the relationship to the Temple to gain authority; and the portrayal of the Hasmoneans as religious leaders (for the latter, see Chapter 3). Geertz had pointed to the inherent sacredness of the sovereign power (e. g., the sacred characteristics of kings). He discussed several cases in which symbolic forms of expressing power justify its existence. Geertz concluded that this "political theology," in which sacredness is inherent in central secular authority, is required to produce a cultural framework to define political authority and advance its claims.[99]

Ideology

For some, ideology is a pejorative term, synonymous with propaganda, illusion (Marx), or "false consciousness" (Engels). According to Mosca, the ruling class possesses some resources or attributes which are esteemed by or influential in the society, and exploits these resources to advance its own power. The ruling class rules using ideology or "the political formula" to convince the population of its legitimacy; e. g., through the exploitation of religious and national sentiments.[100]

A more positive view of ideology was introduced by Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci inverted the classical Marxist theory, claiming that the struggle for hegemony by a social class depends not on the seizure of economic power but on the establishment of a political and a moral-intellectual leadership. For Gramsci, ideology is a worldview with norms for action, just

97 Griffin 1991.

98 Kurtz 1978.

99 Geertz 1977. For the claim that authority or kingship is a gift from God, used as a means of legitimization in the ancient Near East, ancient Israel, and ancient Greece, see Launderville 2003.

100 Mosca 1939. "Ruling classes do not justify their power exclusively by de facto possession of it, but try to find a moral and legal basis for it, representing it as the logical and necessary consequence of doctrines and beliefs that are generally recognized and accepted" (70).

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like religion. It is the terrain in which people acquire all their forms of consciousness and organize actions and practices. All ideologies are expressions of communal life, and are by and large political. The formulation of the collective will is a product of intellectual and moral reform that rearticulates social meanings and identities, with a national-popular character.[101]

Current critical theorists concur with this view. Broadly defined, ideology denotes a set of ideas by which people posit, explain, and justify the ends and means of organized social or political action, whether to preserve, amend, or uproot the social order.[102] Ideology serves to sustain relations of domination and submission, and legitimizes the power of a dominant social group or class. The dominant power may thus promote beliefs and values congenial to it, naturalize and universalize such beliefs to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable. It denigrates ideas which might challenge it, and excludes rival forms of thought and obscures social reality in ways convenient to itself.[103]

Successful ideologies render their beliefs natural and self-evident, creating a commonsense social order that nobody could imagine as organized differently. A tight correspondence is created between ideology and social reality, diminishing the relevance of critique against the ruler. The reality generated by ideology becomes a self-evident truth. When this is accomplished, the given ideology ceases to appear as a factional interest at all.[104] This applies to the Hasmonean Temple ideology, since the centrality of the Temple was taken up as a Hasmonean interest. Ideologies are often thought to be unifying and action-oriented. They lend coherence to the groups or classes which hold them, thereby allowing them to impose a certain unity upon society as a whole.[105]

Power

The manner in which these concepts of legitimization and ideology operated in practice depends on one's understanding of governmental power. If one follows Hobbes' *Leviathan* concerning society's concession of power to the sovereign in exchange for protection of life and property, the Hasmoneans

101 Mouffe 1979.

102 Eagleton 1991:6 – 7, following Seliger. See also the various case studies in Claessen and Oosten 1996.

103 Eagleton 1991:5.

104 Eagleton 1991:57 – 58. For Althusser 2001:118 – 119, ideology is always implicit or concealed and never presents itself as an ideology.

105 Eagleton 1991:45. According to Althusser's (2001:114 – 116) "material ideological apparatus," ideology operates through actions, practices, and rituals and constitutes concrete individuals as subjects.

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