

*Fundamental rapprochement or
artful disguise? The Hellenization
of the Hasmoneans in the light of
the work of John C. Scott*

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Abstract

In the past seventy years, scholarly debate on the Hellenization of the Hasmoneans has often emphasised the dynasty's adoption of Hellenistic cultural idioms and political ideology. Whereas nineteenth century historians stressed the polarity between Greek and Jewish culture, in the wake of the work of Elias Bickerman and especially Martin Hengel, scholars of the mid to late twentieth century have tended to posit that the Hasmoneans embraced Hellenism. Only recently have some, such as Eyal Regev and Edward Dabrowa, sounded a more cautionary note.

This dissertation seeks to offer a different perspective on a long-standing debate by utilising the sociological-anthropological model of John C. Scott. Scott exhorted scholars to seek the 'hidden transcript' of historically subordinate groups by analysing discrepancies between their actions 'in the face of power', and the policy they pursue when the dominant elite is vulnerable. Eventually, Scott suggests, ongoing elite weakness will result in a 'rupture of the cordon sanitaire' between the hidden and the public transcript, allowing for an 'unbridled expression' of the 'off-stage agenda'.

As subordinates to the Seleucids, the Hasmoneans operated within such a structure. Case studies from the period of the rule of Jonathan and Simon reveal that 'fugitive political conduct' allowed them to advance an orthodox agenda while simultaneously conforming to the 'public transcript' of imperial hegemony. John Hyrcanus I and Alexander Jannaeus, meanwhile, were able to exploit the decline of the Seleucid Empire, first to 'rupture the cordon sanitaire' and then to give 'unbridled expression' to the hidden transcript. On the basis of this model, it will be argued not only that the Hasmoneans frequently rejected Hellenism, but that they advanced an agenda which was rooted in Jewish tradition. The dissertation will conclude by considering the implications for the wider scholarly debate about the 'Hellenization of the Hasmoneans'.

Introduction

What kind of rulers were the Hasmoneans and what was the nature of the state they created? The debate around this issue has elicited a variety of contrasting interpretations. Since the 1970s, a number of eminent historians, operating in the shadow of the Protestant theologian Martin Hengel, have adopted the position that, with the dissipation of the initial zealotry of the Maccabean Revolt, the dynasty became increasingly Hellenized.¹ For such historians, a *modus vivendi* was swiftly established between the Hasmoneans and the Hellenistic world, so that, despite intermittent tensions, the two were essentially compatible.²

Israeli scholars, by contrast, have often made efforts to recapitulate Hasmonean orthodoxy, emphasising *inter alia* their policy of 'Judaization' or the attempts of Alexander Jannaeus to resurrect the kingdom of David and Solomon.³ More recent scholarship has also begun to question the paradigm of Hasmonean Hellenization. Edward Dabrowa, for instance, stresses the dynasty's adherence to Jewish tradition and urges caution in assuming that their adoption of Greek cultural and political forms connotes an embrace of Hellenism.⁴ Thus the question, unresolved, still begs itself: were the Hasmoneans an essentially Hellenized dynasty, or were they more orthodox than is sometimes acknowledged?

This dissertation aims to offer a fresh perspective on the debate by applying to the case of the Hasmoneans the theory of domination and resistance developed by James C.

¹ Feldman 2002: 295; Hengel 2001: 22

² Gruen 1998: 2; Rajak 1990: passim

³ Kasher 1991: 344; Shatzman 2007: 43

⁴ Dabrowa 2010: 8-12; Dabrowa 2016: 98

Scott. In particular, it draws on Scott's insights into the tension between a 'public transcript' that exists between dominant and subordinate groups in a situation of unequal power relations, and the 'hidden transcript' of subordinates, usually relegated to the 'off-stage arena', but which manifests itself at times of elite weakness.⁵ It also utilises Scott's concepts of 'the rupture of the cordon sanitaire' and the 'unbridled expression' of the subordinate agenda.⁶ Through four focused case studies, it explores the behaviour of Hasmonean rulers as the authority of the Seleucid Empire waxed and waned. In line with Scott's exhortation, it also seeks to identify discrepancies between Hasmonean conformity to the public transcript in times of Seleucid dominance and the policies they pursued when Seleucid vulnerability negated the necessity for the 'reproduction of hegemonic appearances'.⁷

Mutatis mutandis, this interpretation has implications for the debate on the Hellenization of the Hasmoneans, suggesting that their adoption of Hellenism was not in fact as extensive as has sometimes been contended. It is argued here that when conformity to the public transcript was rendered redundant by ongoing Seleucid decline, the orthodox components of the Hasmonean agenda, including their desire to limit rather than extend the influence of Hellenism in Eretz Israel, were revealed. In this sense, it supports the interpretations of more recent scholars such as Kenneth Atkinson and Edward Dabrowa, as well as echoing the emphasis of Israeli scholars on Hasmonean fidelity to Jewish orthodoxy and tradition.⁸

⁵ Scott 1990: 1-16 and passim

⁶ Scott 1990: passim

⁷ Ibid 1990: 197

⁸ Atkinson 2016: passim and see *infra*; Dabrowa 2016: passim and see *infra*.

Chapter 1: The Hellenization of the Hasmoneans: a review of the scholarship since 1800

Any survey of the historiography on the 'Hellenization of the Hasmoneans' should, from the outset, acknowledge a few key precepts. Firstly, that the relevant scholarship has often been influenced by the wider academic, socio-cultural and political context in which it has been produced, a truism that applies as much to western scholarship as to Israeli historiography.⁹ Secondly, that such studies have encompassed a variety of definitions as to what constitutes 'Hellenism,' as well as exploring its different manifestations, from institutional and governmental 'models' (supposedly borrowed from the Hellenistic world), to imitations of Hellenic art, architecture and epigraphy, as

⁹ In terms of western scholarship, the examples of Elias Bickerman and the German Protestant theologian and historian Martin Hengel are illuminating. Bickerman's *Der Gott Der Makkabaer* (1938) was published in the year of Kristallnacht and, according to Shaye J D Cohen, should be viewed as a 'message of hope for Jews in Nazi Germany.' Bickerman not only praised the early Maccabees and the Maccabean martyrs as defenders of monotheism, but also stressed the role of the 'Jewish Hellenizers' in instigating the Antiochene persecutions rather than Antiochus IV himself. Bickerman was at pains to emphasise that Greek kings were generally tolerant of the religious *praxis* of their subjects, no doubt in contrast to the Nazi regime's increasingly brutal anti-Semitism. Bickerman also seems to have viewed the Hellenizers as forerunners of the Reform Judaism propagated by Rabbi Abraham Geiger in nineteenth century Germany, on the basis that both groups sought to stress their 'integration' into contemporary society. In his later work *From Ezra to the Maccabees* (1962), Bickerman contended that the Hasmoneans crafted a *modus vivendi* with the Hellenistic world. That the book's publication coincided with the grim spectacle of the Eichmann trial (April to December 1961) doubtless made his emphasis on the Hasmoneans' rapprochement with the forces of Hellenism seem all the more germane. See Shaye J.D. Cohen, 'Elias J. Bickerman: An Appreciation', *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Society*, 1984, volume 16. Martin Hengel's Christology, so influential in studies of Hellenistic Palestine, can also be seen as rooted in the academic context in which he was operating. By the early 1970s, New Testament scholars had begun once more to place an increasing emphasis on understanding the social context in which early Christianity emerged. Hengel's exploration of the impact of Hellenization on Palestine as well as the Jewish Diaspora was in part an attempt to understand the development of early Christianity in its broader historical context. In the introduction to *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, Hengel states that the 'prehistory of Christianity' is 'one of the indispensable foundations of a true understanding of the New Testament', and it is his search for this 'prehistory' that colours his interpretation. See Hengel 1974: 1; cf. D.G. Horrell, 'Berger and New Testament Studies', in Woodhead, L. Heelas, P. and Martin, D. 2001. *Peter Berger and Religion*. London: Routledge. From an Israeli perspective, much of the scholarship produced in the mid-twentieth century seems to have been influenced by the political situation surrounding the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Thus Joseph Klausner, a committed Zionist and candidate for Israeli president in the election of 1949, placed much emphasis on the Hasmonean policy of trying to resurrect the kingdom of David and Solomon. For Klausner, whose interpretation of Christ in his books *Jesus of Nazareth* and *From Jesus to Paul* was also deeply rooted in a nationalistic Judaism, the efforts of Judah Maccabee and his successors to re-create Eretz Israel were both laudable and consistent. See David Fox Sandmel, 'Into the fray: Joseph Klausner's approach to Judaism and Christianity in the Greco-Roman World' (University of Pennsylvania PhD Dissertation, 2002).

well as the nature of Hasmonean foreign policy, which Katell Berthelot has recently termed ‘the paradigm of the re-conquest of the promised land’.¹⁰ Moreover, scholarly investigation has often overlapped with other areas of enquiry, especially the extent of the dynasty’s religious orthodoxy, versus its oft-positing ‘worldliness’.¹¹ Nevertheless, the outline of a pattern over time can be traced and in regard to the scholarship of the 20th and 21st centuries especially, it demonstrates what might be termed the ‘perpetual paradox’ of Hasmonean historiography, in that scholars who either maximise or minimise the extent of the dynasty’s Hellenization are nonetheless forced to take into account an abundance of evidence in favour of the opposite argument.

1.1: Interpretations of the Hasmoneans from the period of the Enlightenment to c1900

Scholarly interpretation of the Hasmonean dynasty in the nineteenth century was often – though, not exclusively – influenced by a sense of the polarity between Hellenic and Hebraic culture that had emerged in the wake of the Enlightenment.¹² That movement’s lionisation of the culture of classical Greece fostered a dichotomy whereby the notion that ‘the confrontation between Judaea and Greece was one of the world’s large historical processes’ became something of a cultural *sine qua non* – or, as the German Romantic poet Heinrich Heine expressed it, ‘alle Menschen sind entweder Juden oder Hellenen’.¹³ Such a perspective undoubtedly influenced scholars’ views of the Maccabean Revolt and the Hasmonean dynasty, as can be seen in the work of the

¹⁰ Berthelot 2018: passim

¹¹ References to Hasmonean ‘worldliness’ are a recurrent theme in the scholarship on the dynasty, from Joseph Klausner’s mid-20th century characterisation of Alexander Jannaeus as ‘hiloni’ to Edward Dabrowa’s recent emphasis on Jonathan and Simon’s ‘political pragmatism’. Katell Berthelot also believes that a distinction should be made between the ‘worldly’ or ‘secular’ nature of the Hasmonean dynasty and its supposed ‘hellenization’. She notes, for instance, that the Hasmoneans could be ‘culturally Hellenized’ and yet still subscribe to biblical precepts.

¹² Rajak 1999: passim

¹³ Ibid: 60

German historian Heinrich Gratz. Gratz's *Geschichte der Juden von den alttesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart* (1891), lauded Judah Maccabee as a 'true hero' because he 'only resorted to bloodshed' when compelled to do so by Seleucid oppression, emphasising the polarity between Greek hegemon and oppressed Jew.¹⁴ Gratz characterised Judah as a freedom fighter and believed that it was the Hasmoneans' aim – consistently pursued - to build on his achievements and to accomplish both political and religious independence, throwing off the yoke of Greek tyranny and, in the case of John Hyrcanus, emulating the reign of Solomon.¹⁵ Gratz accepts that Hyrcanus ultimately became a more 'worldly potentate' but claims that 'religion was still the great motive power in the country'.¹⁶

It is true that some nineteenth century scholars emphasised the 'secularity' of the later Hasmoneans; thus the Franco-German Orientalist Joseph Derenbourg (1811 to 1895) would contrast the struggle of Mattathias against 'the blasphemers,' with the 'entirely political' preoccupations of most of his successors, while Ernest Renan (1823 to 1889) could claim that the dynasty ultimately '[forgot] its origins', becoming 'fanatical without piety'.¹⁷ Yet both men accepted the premise that the Hasmoneans were motivated by a religious zeal that included the elimination of Greek settlements from the land of Israel.¹⁸ The German historian, Egyptologist and Orientalist, Eduard Meyer would later echo this view (perhaps unsurprisingly in view of his anti-Semitism), portraying the Hasmoneans as fanatical believers in the prescriptions of the Book of Deuteronomy who

¹⁴ Gratz 1891: 461; cf. Berthelot 2018: 20

¹⁵ Ibid: 461

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Derenbourg 1867: 123; Renan 1887-1893 vol. 5: 32

¹⁸ Derenbourg 1867: passim; Renan 1887-1893 vol. 5: 124

could admit to no real accommodation with the forces of Hellenism.¹⁹ Thus, in nineteenth century scholarship, it was the dynasty's religious zeal and its anti-Hellenistic stance that was most commonly emphasised.

1.2: 'Geschichte des Hellenismus': The encroachment of Hellenism from c1900 to c1965

The debate between Orthodox Judaism and Zionism which characterised the closing years of the nineteenth century – the publication of Nathan Birnbaum's *Self-Emancipation* (1890), as well as Theodore Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* (1897) and the convening of the First Zionist Congress at Basel (also 1897) being among its more salient manifestations - ensured that the trope of the polarity between Hellenism and Judaism would continue to find a home amongst scholars of the Hasmonean period.²⁰ However, from the late 1890s onwards, other trends in Hasmonean scholarship became more evident. Firstly, the emancipation of Jewish communities in a number of European countries at this time, in tandem with continued persecution in places such as Russia and the Ukraine (1881 to 1884; 1903 to 1906; 1918 to 1920), encouraged those who supported the Haskalah movement to emphasise the integration of Judaism within Gentile society.²¹ At the same time, a number of scholars, operating under the influence of Johann Gustav Droysen's *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (1831), began to stress the infiltration of Hellenic culture into Jewish Palestine in the aftermath of Alexander the Great's conquests. Thus the Protestant theologian Emil Schurer, whose *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (1886) often emphasises the

¹⁹ Meyer 1921-23: 281

²⁰ Rajak 1999: 65

²¹ Ibid: 60. Emancipation of the Jews took place in England in 1858; in Hungary in 1867; in Italy in 1870; in Germany in 1871; and in Norway in 1891.

‘secular’ character of the dynasty, would note that John Hyrcanus’s wars of conquest were ‘no longer fought.....with a Jewish army.....but [with] mercenaries’, in what would become an oft-cited example of the Hasmonean emulation of Hellenistic military models.²² Yet, in his assessment of Alexander Jannaeus’s attack on the Hellenized cities of Coele-Syria in the 90s and 80s BCE he claims that Jannaeus was ‘Jew enough’ to be motivated by the desire to destroy Greek culture.²³ Schurer’s interpretation offers us an early example of the ‘perpetual paradox’ that was to become something of a *leitmotif* of twentieth century scholarship on the Hasmoneans. He explicates the ‘secular’ and ‘Hellenistic’ aspects of John Hyrcanus’s rule but is obliged to acknowledge that, as late as the reign of Jannaeus, a genuine commitment to an orthodox agenda remained.

An even greater emphasis on the advance of Hellenism in Palestine, and in Jerusalem particularly, can be seen in the work of Elias Bickerman, whose hypothesis in *Der Gott der Makkabaer* (1938) regarding the Hellenistic Reform in Jerusalem (175 to 167 BCE) was later adopted in the influential work of Martin Hengel.²⁴ Bickerman argued, in contrast to many previous scholars, that the internal strife of these years was not the result of Antiochus IV’s desire to impose Hellenism on the Jews, but was initiated by those whom he terms ‘Jewish Hellenists’, a faction of the Jerusalem elite that included the High Priests Jason and Menelaus.²⁵ It was they, Bickerman contended, who encouraged Antiochus to issue his decrees and who yearned to turn Jerusalem into a Greek city. Extending his hypothesis to the Maccabean period, Bickerman argued that the Hasmoneans’ success in securing and maintaining power was a result of their ability

²² Schurer 1896: 165; cf. Berthelot 2018: 29

²³ Ibid: 232

²⁴ Bickerman 1938: passim; cf. Hengel 1974: 4-5 and passim.

²⁵ Bickerman 1938: passim

to craft a *modus vivendi* vis-à-vis the forces of Hellenism.²⁶ Bickerman's work was to have a long-term influence on scholars interested in Hellenistic Judaism and the Hasmonean dynasty, and it reflects an increasing trend in early twentieth century scholarship towards viewing the Hasmoneans as Hellenized rulers.²⁷

In the wake of the creation of the state of Israel (1948) and the bitter recriminations that followed, some Israeli scholars turned once more to the nationalistic perspective that had pervaded the work of many of their nineteenth century predecessors. The Zionist Joseph Klausner, editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia Hebraica* in the early days of the Hebrew University, was one such scholar.²⁸ In his *History of the Second Temple* (1948), Klausner emphasised the piety of Judah Maccabee and his followers who, he claimed, wished to revive the kingdom of David and Solomon.²⁹ Moreover, in contrast to later scholars, such as Tcherikover and Hengel, who detected a rupture between the religious zeal of the early Maccabean movement and the increasing secularity of the dynasty from Hyrcanus onwards, Klausner argued that the desire to re-create Eretz Israel remained a persistent Hasmonean aspiration.³⁰ He notes, for instance, Simon's attempts to Judaize the lands under his control, a policy which was followed by his successors and which for Klausner evoked the separatism of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9.1-10; Neh. 3).³¹ Klausner admitted a degree of Greek influence on the dynasty, referring to Alexander Jannaeus as 'hiloni' ('secular'), and explaining the Pharisaic

²⁶ Bickerman 1962: 278-341

²⁷ Besides Bickerman, see also Momigliano 1931: 10-11; Wittmayer-Baron 1937: 163-164; Tcherikover 1959: 252-253.

²⁸ Berthelot 2018: 35, notes the importance of the creation of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1925 in giving birth to modern Israeli historiography in Hebrew.

²⁹ Klausner 1948: 162

³⁰ Klausner 1948: *passim*; cf. Tcherikover 1959: 240-241, 248; Hengel 1974: 311.

³¹ *Ibid*: 201

opposition to him as the consequence of this, but he believed that Jannaeus, like his predecessors, began his reign with the aspiration of reviving the territorial trappings of the United Monarchy.³²

While it is clear that Klausner's interpretation was very much influenced by his Zionist sympathies, the argument he makes should not be dismissed out of hand. Klausner's view that the decline of the Seleucid Empire catalysed the advance of the Hasmoneans' orthodox agenda seems convincing. While one should perhaps acknowledge to a greater degree than he does the Hasmoneans' adaptation of Hellenistic *models*, it is the superficiality of this phenomenon which ought to be stressed, and the purpose to which it was put. For the Hasmoneans, this meant the deft advancement of an orthodox Jewish agenda and ultimately an attempt to reduce the level of Hellenistic influence in Eretz Israel.

A different view of the Hasmonean dynasty and its interaction with the forces of Hellenism was advanced by Victor Tcherikover, whose 1959 book *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* remains a keystone in the historiography of this subject. Like Klausner, Tcherikover was a Zionist and incumbent of the Hebrew University; and he too acknowledged the Hasmonean desire to resurrect the kingdom of David and Solomon.³³ For Tcherikover, however, these aspirations were nationalistic rather than religious in nature, reflecting perhaps a more 'secular' Judaism, which placed emphasis on the national and ethnic, rather than religious character of Eretz Israel. Tcherikover did not believe that the Hasmoneans' actions betokened a hatred or fundamental rejection of

³² Klausner 1948: 197

³³ Tcheikover 1959: 248-249

Greek culture or political models.³⁴ Indeed, he claimed that in many ways the later Hasmoneans emulated the excesses of other Hellenistic kings, holding banquets, keeping mistresses and brutally avenging themselves on treacherous relatives. The 'life of the court', he writes, 'was fashioned on the model of the court life of the Hellenistic monarchies', and to support this contention he cites from Josephus examples of the cruelty and sadism of, *inter alia*, Aristobulus I and Jannaeus.³⁵ Thus, in Tcherikover's work, the paradigm of polarity which had characterised much of the scholarship on the Hasmonean period in the nineteenth century was tempered by the view that the dynasty accommodated itself to Hellenism. Tcherikover too was a conduit for the 'perpetual paradox' of Hasmonean history.

1.3: Martin Hengel and the Protestant theological perspective

Louis Feldman, in his review of the volume of essays edited by John Collins and Gregory Sterling, *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (2002), noted the undeniable impact of the work of Martin Hengel, calling his two-volume study *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palastinas bis zur mitte des 2 Jh.s v. Chr.* 'monumental' and 'a point of departure.....in the field of the response of Judaism to Hellenization in the Hellenistic age.'³⁶ Hengel's fundamental thesis was that Hellenism had advanced gradually, but extensively, among the Jewish population well before the beginning of the Hellenistic Reform in Jerusalem, and that this was true both of Diaspora Judaism and of its Palestinian counterpart. Such infiltration, he argued, could be detected not only in the Jewish literature of the pre-Maccabean era, but even in the less

³⁴ Ibid: 233

³⁵ Ibid: 252

³⁶ Feldman 2002: 290

likely reaches of Hellenistic Palestine, such as the writings of the Qumran communities.³⁷ While Hengel believed that the Maccabean Revolt brought a temporary halt to this process, he also argued that the 'advance of Hellenism' stole a new march under the later Hasmoneans, who were necessarily turned into Hellenistic potentates by the context in which they operated.³⁸ As a Protestant theologian seeking to shed some light on the origins of early Christianity and fascinated by Paul's preaching to the Gentiles, it is perhaps unsurprising that Hengel sought examples of accommodation rather than conflict between Greek and Jew in the preceding period.³⁹ Nevertheless his view has largely prevailed in the scholarly community.

It is true that Hengel's thesis, though almost always admired, was not universally accepted. Feldman noted that Hengel's hypothesis that the Hasmoneans were hellenized 'by necessity' applied only in 'external matters'; but on the whole his argument focused more on opposing Hengel's belief that the *masses* of Jewish Palestine were hellenized, and he accepted that the Hasmonean kings themselves may have enthusiastically adopted Greek ways.⁴⁰ Indeed, Hengel's influence on the study of the Hasmoneans continued to be felt throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as a variety of scholars adopted and extended his interpretation. Edouard Will and Claude Orrieux's *Judaïsmos-Hellenismos: essai sur le judaïsme juéen à l'époque hellénistique* (1986) placed much emphasis on the Hellenistic framework in which the dynasty operated.⁴¹ Four years later, in an essay entitled *The Hasmoneans and the Uses of Hellenism* (1990),

³⁷ Hengel 1974: passim

³⁸ Hengel 1974: passim; Hengel 2001: 43

³⁹ See Fergus Millar on this point in his *Reflections on the Maccabean Revolution* (1979).

⁴⁰ Feldman 2002: 295. See also Millar 1979.

⁴¹ Will and Orrieux 1986: passim

Tessa Rajak argued that while aspects of the advance of Hellenism in Palestine might have caused tension, the forces of Hellenism and Hebraism were on the whole compatible.⁴² For Rajak, many scholars have mistakenly applied Judah's militancy to the whole of the dynasty, for example by over-emphasising Hasmonean attempts to remove Gentile populations from Eretz Israel while simultaneously underplaying their similarity to Greek tyrants.⁴³ Uriel Rappaport's *The Hellenization of the Hasmoneans* (1992) identified a dichotomy between the dynasty's embrace of the cultural aspects of Hellenism and their rejection of its political forms, while his 2013 book *The House of the Hasmoneans: The People of Israel in the Land of Israel in the Hasmonean Period* looked to Hellenic models to explain the foreign policy of Alexander Jannaeus.⁴⁴ By contrast Aryeh Kasher, in his 1990 study of the relations between the Jews and the Hellenistic cities of Eretz Israel in the Second Temple period, would claim that the Hasmoneans viewed such cities as Canaanite and Philistine settlements, hotbeds of idolatry to be eradicated, and thus operated within the framework of a biblical *Weltanschauung*.⁴⁵ On the whole, though, such views have found less favour than those which regard the Hasmoneans as a fundamentally Hellenized dynasty.⁴⁶

Erich Gruen also reiterated Hengel's thesis in his 1998 book *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of the Jewish Tradition*.⁴⁷ Gruen proved to be one of Hengel's most devoted disciples, effectively extending Hengel's thesis to cover the complete span of the

⁴² Rajak 1990: 16. Rajak also notes that the term 'tyrant' was applied to Alexander Jannaeus by his near-contemporary Strabo.

⁴³ Ibid: 274

⁴⁴ Rappaport 1990: passim; 2013: passim.

⁴⁵ Kasher 1990: 145

⁴⁶ See, for instance, Martin Goodman's 1993 review of Kasher's *Jews and Hellenistic Cities in Eretz-Israel: Relations of the Jews of Eretz-Israel with the Hellenistic Cities in the Period of the Second Temple, 332 BCE to 70 CE*.

⁴⁷ Gruen 1998: 1-40

Hasmonean dynasty. For whereas the latter believed that the early Maccabean movement represented an orthodox, nationalistic reaction against the persecution of Antiochus IV and the efforts of the 'Jewish Hellenizers' to undermine the iron grip of Mosaic Law, Gruen posited that even Judah Maccabee accommodated himself to the forces of Hellenism, since he willingly negotiated with the Seleucid viceroy Lysias after the Battle of Beth-Zur (164 BCE) and concluded a peace accord with the Syrian general Nicanor. In Gruen's eyes, therefore, the Hasmoneans' inclination to find an accommodation with the Hellenistic world was a continuation of, rather than a departure from, previous policy. Indeed, he argues that there was no inherent contradiction between the two forces:

The cultural contest [between Hellenism and Judaism], in short, has been overplayed.....Even the arena of warfare and diplomacy show less than implacable enmity.....The Hasmonean age, in fact, discloses a complex pattern of reciprocal relations and mutual dependency that undermines the concept of fundamental antagonism.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, having gone to some lengths to substantiate his view that the Hasmoneans reconciled themselves to the Hellenistic world from an early stage, Gruen finishes his chapter by listing ways in which the dynasty stayed true to its Jewish roots, from Hyrcanus's use of mercenaries to 'bolster a Jewish national army,' to Aristobulus I's policy of forced Judaization in the upper Galilee and the Hermon area.⁴⁹ Even here, then, in the work of a scholar largely in thrall to Hengel's hypothesis, the 'perpetual paradox' makes its discomfiting appearance.

⁴⁸ Gruen 1998: 19

⁴⁹ Gruen 1998: 40

1.4: A more cautious approach? Contemporary scholarly trends

Under the influence of Hengel, it is fair to say that the inclination of scholars in the later twentieth century has been to amplify the extent of the Hasmonean dynasty's Hellenization, to the point that John Ma could ponder why the Maccabees, 'in creating their post-Seleukid state, turn[ed] into a Hellenistic kingdom of their own?'⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in the most recent scholarship there have been some indications of a challenge to the dominant view. Kenneth Atkinson, whose *The Hasmonean State: Josephus and Beyond* (2016), seeks to assess the accuracy of that venerable historian's account, believes that the Hasmoneans' longevity and ability to 'maintain an independent state for eighty years' was due to their 'religious zeal' – on the whole Hellenism and Hellenistic models play an unusually limited role in his interpretation.⁵¹ In *The Hasmonean and their State: A Study in History, Ideology and the Institutions* (2016), the Polish historian Edward Dabrowa also emphasises the more orthodox aspects of Hasmonean rule. Dabrowa does not deny that the Hasmoneans imitated Hellenistic models, for instance in constructing their system of government, but suggests that they ultimately 'applied solutions which were their own inventions rather than copies of models existing in neighbouring countries or known in a broadly understood Hellenistic world.'⁵² Eyal Regev's 2017 paper '*The Hellenization of the Hasmoneans Revisited: The Archaeological Evidence*' offers a thorough analysis of the remains of the Hasmonean palaces at Jericho and concludes that while there were some Hellenistic aspects to their art and architecture, there is also a great deal of evidence for Hasmonean orthodoxy. He

⁵⁰ Ma 2003: 193

⁵¹ Atkinson 2016: 22

⁵² Dabrowa 2016: 97. See also his perceptive 2006 article in *Electrum*, 'The Hasmonean Monarchy in the Hellenistic Context'.

notes that the complex contained only a 'limited palette' of Hellenistic design motifs, and that the presence of twelve miqva'ot testify to the emphasis the Hasmoneans placed on ritual purity.⁵³ On balance, it can be argued that Atkinson, Dabrowa and Regev are right to stress the orthodoxy at the heart of the Hasmonean dynasty. Yet even the work of these scholars contains echoes of older tropes. Thus, despite the overall tenor of his piece, Regev highlights a number of 'Hellenistic markers' at Jericho, such as grand swimming pools and hot baths or the presence of pottery types which imitate aspects of Hellenistic design. Dabrowa, meanwhile, repeats the view that whereas Mattathias and Judah Maccabee had been inspired by a deeply felt religious zeal, from Jonathan onwards the Hasmoneans operated in the realm of 'political pragmatism'.⁵⁴

Moreover, Hengel's influence continues to be felt in even the most recent scholarship. Katell Berthelot's *In Search of the Promised Land: The Hasmonean Dynasty Between Biblical Models and Hellenistic Diplomacy* (2018) challenges what the author terms 'the paradigm of the re-conquest of the Promised Land'. Berthelot underplays the biblical models for this policy in favour of emphasising the context of Hellenistic diplomacy and argues that the resurrection of Eretz-Israel was never a consistent part of the Hasmoneans' agenda.⁵⁵ In this essay, by contrast, it will be argued that the orthodox zeal of the dynasty remained intact, albeit with an inevitable variation between rulers, and that their pragmatism in the political realm ultimately served these ends. It is of

⁵³ Regev 2017: passim

⁵⁴ Dabrowa 2016: 65. Writing of Jonathan and Simon, he concludes, in a manner similar to Hengel, that 'their political purposes and methods of achieving them differed radically from those of Mattathias and Judah Maccabee', an interpretation which echoes the view of earlier scholars such as Tcherikover and Hengel. Atkinson too repeats this notion, arguing that it was John Hyrcanus rather than Simon who 'actually created a true Hellenistic state' (page 46). See also Abraham Schalit's chapter in volume VI of *The World History of the Jewish People* (1972), page 282, where he contends that under Jannaeus Hasmonean rule 'was brought dangerously close to the Hellenistic conception of monarchy'.

⁵⁵ Berthelot 2018: passim

note that Berthelot concedes that ‘the fact that some of the behaviours of the Hasmoneans point to their “Hellenization” does not mean that they had “strayed from Judaism” or were no longer “pious”.⁵⁶ In other words, Berthelot too cannot avoid addressing the ‘perpetual paradox’ of the Hasmonean dynasty.

Gruen’s solution to this paradox is that a ‘fundamental understanding’ or *modus vivendi* was reached between the Hasmoneans and the forces of Hellenism – one in which the dynasty embraced Hellenistic models but retained fundamental aspects of its Jewish identity.⁵⁷ While this dissertation agrees to an extent with that contention, it also suggests that scholars could arguably place more emphasis on the expediency of Hasmonean Hellenization, a process in which they adopted the more superficial aspects of Hellenistic culture in order to ultimately undermine Hellenism or at least to stall its encroachment. In this sense, its argument tends more towards the interpretations advanced by Regev and Dabrowa, as well as echoing aspects of earlier analyses such as that of Klausner. But it also seeks to offer a fresh perspective. It is one of the aims of this dissertation to tentatively propose another solution to the ‘perpetual paradox’ outlined above. Using the socio-anthropological model of John C Scott (see *infra*), it suggests that we should view the Hasmonean adoption of Hellenism as their contribution to a ‘public transcript’, maintained in the face of Seleucid power but discarded, at first on an *ad hoc* basis and then ever more consistently, as that empire’s fortunes waned.⁵⁸ It is perhaps something of an irony that Martin Hengel offers us a foundation on which to build this interpretation. In his essay *Judaism and Hellenism*

⁵⁶ Ibid: 62

⁵⁷ Gruen 1998: 3

⁵⁸ Scott 1990: 1-16

Revisited', part of a collection of writings by scholars who are mostly in thrall to his thesis, he notes that:

The dilemma of the new Maccabean high priests and later kings was that they could only exist politically as Hellenistic states, with an army trained and equipped in the Greek manner, with Greek fortress- and palace-building, with an efficacious economy and tax-collecting in Greek style and use of Greek language at least in all foreign affairs with other city states and kingdoms.....Greek civilization had become a necessity.⁵⁹

In this passage Hengel hints at the basis of what will be a key aspect of the argument of this dissertation. In the international context in which the Hasmoneans found themselves, imitating Hellenistic models was indeed a *necessity*, something which the dynasty's rulers recognised because of their acute sense of *Realpolitik*. But the examples Hengel lists are outward accoutrements that do not truly betoken a deep embrace of Hellenism. That this was the case seems evident both in terms of Hasmonean foreign policy and the agenda they followed in Judea itself. Thus, it will be argued here, that the Hasmoneans did not create a Hellenistic state in the true sense, but instead carefully crafted a *trompe l'oeil* of shadow and mirrors, designed to undermine Hellenism and to promote their own orthodox agenda.

⁵⁹ Hengel 2001: 22

Chapter 2: Methodology - A suggestion for unlocking the perpetual paradox

How, then, might the perpetual paradox discussed above be resolved? It will be suggested in this dissertation that the use of Hellenism by the Hasmoneans was rooted in an acute sense of *Realpolitik* that stemmed from the nature of the power relations between the Hasmonean state and the wider Hellenistic world.⁶⁰ Though the Hasmoneans undoubtedly appropriated Hellenistic models and cultural idioms, this was often for pragmatic purposes, to allow them to operate effectively in the international context in which they found themselves, while consistently advancing an orthodox Jewish agenda. To support this interpretation, the dissertation makes use the analytical model of the social scientist John C Scott. It is Scott's central argument that comparing the hidden transcript of 'subordinates' with the public transcript fostered by a 'dominant elite' can allow the historian to draw back the veil of domination, throwing light on an unvarnished subordinate agenda.⁶¹ Scott posits that because of their position *vis-à-vis* dominant elites, such groups often have recourse to 'fugitive' political conduct.⁶² As a result of its 'deliberately opaque' quality, the behaviour of these groups in the 'on-stage' arena of power relations – which Scott terms 'the public transcript' – does not always correspond to their real socio-political agenda (the 'hidden transcript').⁶³ The methodology of this dissertation is rooted in the view that applying the central tenets of Scott's analysis to the Hasmonean dynasty is both feasible and desirable. It also posits that the results of that investigation can shed light on the true

⁶⁰ See Rajak 1990 for the phrase 'uses of Hellenism'.

⁶¹ Scott 1990: xi

⁶² Ibid: 17

⁶³ Ibid: 1-16; 136-182.

extent of Hasmonean Hellenization, much of the evidence for which forms part of a 'public transcript' to which the Hasmoneans themselves deftly contributed.

Scott suggests that shows of domination are maintained through public 'enactments of power', 'euphemization' and 'discursive affirmations', in which subordinates play a scripted part that is expedient for both parties.⁶⁴ For the hegemon, the performance upholds and perpetuates the appearance of 'unanimity'.⁶⁵ For the subordinate group, such 'enactments' become a means by which they can exploit the self-image of the elite to advance their own agenda.⁶⁶ Open resistance is often heralded by 'the refusal to reproduce hegemonic appearances'; like the pressure of water against a dam, moments of elite weakness can permit the hidden transcript of the subordinate to puncture the infrastructure of domination and advertise itself more openly.⁶⁷

It is important to begin with a caveat. The basis for Scott's thesis was his study of the behaviour of subordinate groups in a Malaysian village, where quotidian strategies for resisting domination were employed by the least powerful.⁶⁸ In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, he extended this thesis to cover other historically subordinate groups, such as the *sans-culottes* of pre-revolutionary France or the plantation slaves of the antebellum South. It is obvious that the Hasmoneans were not truly subordinate in this sense. Indeed, they were, within Judea at any rate, hegemons

⁶⁴ Ibid: 51

⁶⁵ Ibid: 55; 70

⁶⁶ Ibid: 69

⁶⁷ Ibid: 204-219

⁶⁸ Scott notes, for instance, the way in which poor Malaysian villagers accepted for their own expedient purposes the description by the well-off of a grain bonus as 'zakat'. The use of this term enhanced the reputation of the wealthier members of the community as charitable benefactors, but was seen by their subordinates as 'no more than what they were entitled to as compensation for their work'. Yet this view was never aired in the teeth of power, because the balance of power in the village was stacked in favour of the well-off, while the poorer villagers in any case benefited pragmatically from the bonus. See Scott 1990: 57

themselves, and this status was further enhanced as the decline of the Seleucid Empire became ever more precipitous.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the Maccabean project was born of abject subordination during the persecutions of Antiochus IV, and the path from Judah Maccabee's guerrilla warfare campaign to the assumption of the diadem by Aristobulus I was a long and perilous one (see 1 Macc. 1: 29-64; 2 Macc. 3-7; cf. Jos. AJ. 13. 300-303).⁷⁰ Seleucid decline too was a protracted affair and the empire intermittently rallied under more effective rulers, who asserted their dominance over the Hasmoneans when the opportunity arose. To highlight just a few examples, Jonathan's appointment as High Priest in 152 BCE came courtesy – at least in the public transcript – of Alexander Balas (1 Macc. 10. 16-21), while nearly two decades later a resurgent Antiochus VII Sidetes swiftly laid siege to Jerusalem (Jos. AJ. 13.8.236-244) and compelled John Hyrcanus to accompany him on his fatal expedition to Parthia in 131 BCE (Jos. AJ. 13. 250-251).⁷¹ Alexander Jannaeus, meanwhile, reaped the whirlwind of Egyptian intervention for his aggressive expansionism, as the brutal Ptolemy Lathyrus ravaged Judaea and Cleopatra III threatened to incorporate his kingdom into the Ptolemaic realm (Jos. AJ. 13. 354).⁷² Potential or real subjugation to the Hellenistic empires thus provided a constant backdrop to Hasmonean activity.⁷³

Moreover, Scott's model dovetails surprisingly well with what is already known about the operation of kingship in the Hellenistic world. John Ma stresses the 'local role-

⁶⁹ On this point, there has been much scholarly consensus, cf, *inter alia*, Tcherikover 1959: 251; Gruen 1998: 25; Dabrowa 2016: 14

⁷⁰ On the extreme subordination of the Jews under the terms of Antiochus IV's 'edict', see especially Portier-Young 2011: 195-215. See Grainger 2012: passim for a detailed narrative of the military struggles of the Maccabees/Hasmoneans to 104 BCE.

⁷¹ See also Dabrowa: 70; Atkinson 2016: 115-117

⁷² See also Gruen 2003: 269.

⁷³ Scott 1990: 134

playing before different constituencies' in which Hellenistic kings were obliged to participate in order to maintain a show of dominance.⁷⁴ In this model, the king's ideological power as the centre of a 'unitary state' had by necessity to be held in some sort of equilibrium with the entrenched agenda of local communities.⁷⁵ These communities could extract concessions by harnessing the language of euergetism; *Realpolitik* thus dictated that they should perpetuate the public transcript for expedient purposes. Yet, when they had the strength, opportunity or will to do it, the cities could resist Hellenistic kings more openly, as when Smyrna and Lampsakos refused to allow Antiochus III to 'grant them their liberty' during his conquest of Asia Minor in 197-196 BCE.⁷⁶ There is, as we shall see, plentiful evidence for the Hasmoneans artfully engaging in this role play.

How, then, might one go about shedding light on the hidden transcript of the Hasmoneans? Here, a brief example will suffice. From 1 Maccabees and Josephus, we learn that in 152 BCE both Demetrius I and the pretender, Alexander Balas, made persistent efforts to court the support of Jonathan. Demetrius proclaimed that Jonathan could raise and equip an army of his own, while Balas tried to outdo him by appointing Jonathan as High Priest and naming him one of the 'king's friends' (Jos. AJ. 2. 35-58; cf. 1 Macc. 10.15-21). Jonathan immediately took advantage of these offers, using his newly raised troops to enter Jerusalem, fortify its walls and instigate a construction programme on the Temple Mount (Jos. AJ. 2.47-48; cf. 1 Macc. 10:22-47). Josephus makes it clear that he also accepted Balas's appointment of him as High Priest without

⁷⁴ Ma 2003: 186

⁷⁵ Ibid: 190

⁷⁶ Ma 2003: 186; cf. Livy 33.38. 1-7

any reticence (Jos. AJ. 13.2.46-47). Not to be outdone, Demetrius dispatched a further letter to Jonathan making yet more concessions, among which Josephus (who purports to give us the full text of Demetrius's letter) records the following:

And it is my wish that the city of Jerusalem be sacred and inviolable and be free to its borders from the tithe and tolls. And the citadel I place in the hands of your high priest Jonathan, and such men as he shall judge to be faithful and friendly to him, he may place in it as a garrison to guard it for us. (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 13. 2. 51-53 translation Marcus).

Here, we have an example of the kind of 'public transcript' which Seleucid kings sought to promote as part of their 'role-playing before local constituencies'.⁷⁷ In the cases of both Alexander Balas and Demetrius the concessions to Jonathan appear in the official record as the benefaction of a Seleucid overlord or, to use Scott's terminology, an 'enactment of power'.⁷⁸ Indeed, although Demetrius promised to withdraw Seleucid troops from 'the citadel' (Jos. AJ. 13.2.51), the public transcript obliged him to claim that Jonathan's men would continue to 'guard it for us' (Jos. A.J. 13.2.53). Jonathan's acceptance of these concessions allowed for 'the social production of hegemonic appearances', in spite of the fact that Demetrius was operating from a position of relative political vulnerability.⁷⁹

Gruen takes grants like these as evidence that the Hasmoneans were content to act as Seleucid vassals and were therefore fully enmeshed in the political fabric of the

⁷⁷ Scott 1990: 1-16; cf. Ma 2003: 186-187

⁷⁸ Scott 1990: 48

⁷⁹ Ibid: 53. Both Josephus and 1 Maccabees make it clear that Demetrius's situation was desperate. Josephus records that Demetrius faced an invasion from the pretender Alexander Balas and that the garrison in the city of Ptolemais vouchsafed him entry because of their hostility to Demetrius (Jos. AJ. 13. 32-26). In 1 Maccabees, meanwhile, news of Alexander Balas's move to appoint Jonathan to the High Priesthood left Demetrius 'mortified'. According to the author, Demetrius demanded, 'How did we come to let Alexander forestall us.....in gaining the friendship and support of the Jews?' (1 Macc. 10.22-24)

Hellenistic world.⁸⁰ Yet the presence of an off-stage set of objectives consistently guiding Jonathan's actions can be detected. It may be inferred that Demetrius, desperate to detach Jonathan from Balas, realised that an offer to withdraw the Seleucid garrison from the Akra would be particularly appealing to the Jewish agenda. The nature of the power relations between Jonathan and the Seleucids, as well as Jonathan's own situation in Judea, had until this point forced him to acquiesce in the presence of the Akra garrison, but Demetrius's offer shows that he knew that its removal remained an abiding Jewish aspiration. Indeed, it would not be long before Jonathan, who was to be unshackled from loyalty to Alexander Balas by Ptolemy Philometer's intervention in Seleucid affairs, went ahead and attacked the Akra.⁸¹ In other words, his policy was one of careful opportunism.

Moreover, such an agenda was entirely in keeping with what had become, by the end of the Persian period, an orthodoxy about the sacred nature of Jerusalem itself.⁸² Jerusalem's status as Israel's political and religious centre had increased exponentially since the destruction of the northern kingdom at Assyrian hands (722 BCE), such that by the Second Temple period the Chronicler could designate it as God's exclusive choice for the location of His Holy Temple (see 1 Chron. 21:26; cf. Ex. 15:17). Ezra and Nehemiah extended the inviolability of the Temple Mount to the whole of the city, emphasising its separateness from 'the Nations roundabout' and pursuing such isolationist policies as

⁸⁰ Gruen 1998: 28. See also Rajak 2001: 45.

⁸¹ Greenspoon 1998: 335. In 1 Maccabees we learn that Jonathan attacked the Akra at the time that Demetrius II became king, a moment of Seleucid weakness in the aftermath of the civil war between Balas and Demetrius I. The author notes that 'a number of renegades, enemies of their own people, went to the king and reported that Jonathan was besieging the citadel', thus connecting the garrison once again with apostate Jews as well as Syrian soldiers. See 1 Macc. 11. 28-37.

⁸² Levine 1998: 33. See also Weinfeld 1993: 201-202.

banning foreign merchants on the Sabbath and expelling foreign wives (Neh. 11.1).⁸³

Little wonder, then, that Jonathan took steps to capture Jerusalem as soon as the opportunity afforded itself, and that once the city was in his hands he moved to 'purify' it of foreign influence just as Judah had purified the Temple itself (Jos. AJ. 11.32-36).⁸⁴

In order to detect similar aspects of the 'hidden transcript', it will also be necessary to take into consideration a range of archaeological, numismatic and epigraphic evidence.⁸⁵ Following this methodology one can begin to explain the 'perpetual paradox', since in the model suggested by Scott's work, Hasmonean 'Hellenization' becomes an element of the public transcript of interaction with the hegemonic power rather than a genuinely felt embrace of Hellenic values. That the Hasmoneans were *influenced* by Hellenistic models, albeit in an expedient manner, is clear enough from the historical record; but the notion that they were *genuinely emulating* Hellenistic systems and behaviours is to be contested. There were, of course, variations between individual Hasmonean rulers in this as in other respects, although pulling away the veil of domination reveals that this was a dynasty with an orthodox heart.

⁸³ Levine 2001:

⁸⁴ That Jonathan did not immediately seize the Akra upon re-entering Jerusalem seems to have reflected the political realities of the time. For instance, we learn in 1 Macc 10.46-47 that Jonathan 'did not believe' Demetrius's proposals and opted to remain loyal to Alexander Balas because he had been 'the initiator of peaceful overtures'. Such a careful weighing of the political possibilities should not be seen as surprising from the point of view of a subordinate group. However, when the opportunity afforded itself, Jonathan did lay siege to the citadel.

⁸⁵ Scott 1990: 5.

Chapter 3: Harnessing the Potential of the Public Transcript: The ‘fugitive political conduct’ of Jonathan

As noted, one of the key objectives of this dissertation is to examine the Hasmoneans’ engagement with the public transcript of Seleucid dominance and to identify discrepancies between this and their behaviour at moments when imperial weakness allowed them to operate more independently. The first chapter will thus investigate the ‘fugitive political conduct’ of Jonathan, with a particular focus on the events leading up to and following his appointment as High Priest in 152 BCE.⁸⁶ It will be argued that Jonathan’s position of subordination *vis-à-vis* the Seleucids necessitated his participation in a ‘dramaturgy of domination’, while also heeding Scott’s exhortation to look beneath the surface of the ‘official transcript’ of power relations to detect a hidden agenda.⁸⁷ The second chapter will focus on the honorary inscription for Simon (140 BCE), which has often been cited as evidence of the Hasmoneans’ Hellenization.⁸⁸ By contrast, it will be argued in this chapter that the inscription represents an example of what Scott terms the ‘euphemization’ of power relations, with its form and structure tailored to the idiom of the dominant Hellenistic culture, but its substantive contents celebrating achievements which would have been interpreted as orthodox and anti-Hellenistic by a Jewish audience.⁸⁹ The third chapter explores aspects of the ‘wars of conquest’ conducted by John Hyrcanus, and in particular his treatment of Samaria, and argues that Hyrcanus exploited a ‘rupture of the cordon sanitaire’ to advance an

⁸⁶ Scott 1990: 17-44

⁸⁷ Ibid: 186-187; cf. Ma 2003: 185-186. See also Ma 2000: 179-242 for a detailed exploration of this mechanism in the case of Antiochus III (reigned 222 BCE to 187 BCE).

⁸⁸ Gruen 1998: 20-22; Van Henten 2001: 116- 135

⁸⁹ Scott 1990: 158

orthodox agenda.⁹⁰ The final chapter investigates Alexander Jannaeus's foreign policy, focusing on his assault on the Greek cities of the Mediterranean coast and his campaigns east of the River Jordan, to assess the extent to which this most 'worldly' of Hasmonean rulers pursued anti-Hellenistic aims at a time when Seleucid decline permitted Judea greater freedom of manoeuvre. It will be argued that the terminal weakness of the Seleucids allowed Jannaeus to effectively disregard the official transcript of subordination to imperial overlords and to 'give unbridled expression to the sentiments voiced in the hidden transcript'.⁹¹

3.1: Jonathan's stealthy advance of the Maccabean-Hasmonean agenda (152-150 BCE)

A key element of Scott's model emphasises that in circumstances where power relations are skewed in favour of the hegemon, it is in the interests of the subordinate group not to openly contradict the narrative of the official transcript of domination even if their hidden agenda remains at odds with that transcript.⁹² In the years before 152 BCE, Jonathan found himself in precisely such a predicament, for after the death of Judas (161 BCE), the Maccabean cause fragmented. Josephus tells us that 'all those who remained of the godless, and the transgressors against their country's manner of life' seized on the opportunity to turn against them (Jos. AJ. 13.1-5; cf. 1 Macc. 9.23); that such people were 'entrusted with the government of the country' by Bacchides, who first attacked Jonathan in the marshes of the Jordan and then besieged him at Bethlaga (Jos AJ. 13. 12-27); and that even after Jonathan had made peace with Bacchides, he was confined to the city of Michmash and unable to enter Jerusalem (Jos. AJ. 13. 1-5; cf.

⁹⁰ Ibid: 186-187

⁹¹ Scott 1990: 196

⁹² Ibid: 70

1 Macc. 10.1). This last development was a victory of sorts for Jonathan, who had previously been hounded by Bacchides, but its continuation surely depended on favourable relations with the hegemonic Seleucids, since it resulted from the 'compact of friendship' made with a Seleucid general (Jos. AJ. 13.33-34). Clearly, therefore, Jonathan's subordination to the Seleucids, whose ongoing dominance over nearby Jerusalem was manifested by the presence of the Akra, necessitated his interacting with imperial forces in such a way as to conform to the official transcript of their dominance.⁹³

How would such an interaction take place? Firstly, Jonathan appears to have accepted the necessity of participating in 'discursive affirmations' of the hegemon's power.⁹⁴ Scott defines these as a kind of symbolic theatre in which acts of deference and ranking 'manifest and reinforce a hierarchical order'.⁹⁵ Jonathan's involvement in this process is well attested in both 1 Maccabees and the writings of Josephus. Alexander Balas ranked him among 'the King's Friends' and enrolled him 'in the first class of the order' (1 Macc. 10:65), while Demetrius I further enhanced this benefaction by making him 'head of the first class' itself (1 Macc. 11.27; cf. Jos. AJ. 13.36-42). That Jonathan actively courted such favour, participating in a 'strange theatre' which sought to outwardly affirm Seleucid hegemony, is clearly evident.⁹⁶ According to 1 Maccabees, he obsequiously plied both Balas and Ptolemy VI with glittering gifts during a journey 'in state' to Ptolemais (1 Macc. 10:59-60; cf. Jos. AJ. 13. 80-85); in return, he was ceremoniously robed in purple on the order of Balas. In essence Jonathan had, as Scott expresses it,

⁹³ Tcherikover 1959: 189

⁹⁴ Scott 1990: 51

⁹⁵ Ibid: 69; see also Foucault 1979: passim, on the importance of ceremony.

⁹⁶ For the concept of 'strange theatre' see Foucault 1979: 234

adopted ‘the safest and most public form of political discourse.....which takes as its basis the self-flattering of elites.’⁹⁷ It is thus evident that, in terms of the use of public affirmations to bolster the dominance of the elite, Scott’s model may be applied to the relations between Jonathan and his Seleucid overlords.

3.2: Jonathan’s appointment as High Priest – advancing the orthodox agenda by stealth?

There is thus clear evidence of Jonathan’s involvement in the ‘collective theatre’ of Seleucid domination.⁹⁸ Yet, ironically, it was the arrival of Alexander Balas at Ptolemais in 152 BCE which permitted him to advance an orthodox agenda. An important aspect of Scott’s theory is the notion that subordinate groups often use mechanisms inherent in the structure of domination, particularly the expectation that the hegemon will act as *euergetes*, to extract concessions; indeed, this kind of relationship is well documented for Hellenistic kingship in general.⁹⁹ Jonathan’s behaviour in the wake of Balas’s challenge to Demetrius I conforms to the paradigm. Firstly, he used Demetrius’s attempt to bid for his support to undermine the position of the Seleucid garrison in the Akra and to raise an army (Jos. AJ. 13.38-39); next, he ‘took up residence in Jerusalem, making various repairs in the city and arranging everything to his own liking’ (Jos. AJ. 13. 40-41); finally, he rebuilt the walls of the city, which according to Josephus caused ‘the defenders of the garrisons in Judea’ (with the exception of the Akra) to flee ‘to Antioch’ (Jos. AJ. 13. 42-43).

⁹⁷ Scott 1990: 18

⁹⁸ Ibid: 55

⁹⁹ Scott 1990: 54. Herod, of course, made even greater use of this mechanism as part of the *patronus-clients* relationship he enjoyed first with Mark Antony and then with Octavian/Augustus. See Pazout 2015: 206-217.

It is worth reflecting on these actions, since Scott exhorts us to look for discrepancies between the official transcript promoted by the dominant elite and the 'hidden transcript' of subordinate groups, which can be inferred from the subordinate's actions when the hegemonic power is vulnerable.¹⁰⁰ This was certainly the case when both Balas and Demetrius felt compelled by the insecurity of their position to court an alliance with Jonathan.¹⁰¹ Jonathan's attempt to undermine the position of the Seleucid garrison in the Acra conformed to a desire to control the Temple and its environs; a desire which, as we have seen, was a central tenet of the post-exilic worldview of the Jews.¹⁰² His determination to achieve this aim may be further evidenced by the way in which he used his time as High Priest to launch a second attack against the citadel of the Akra, deftly exploiting an opportunity caused by the deterioration of relations between Alexander Balas and Ptolemy VI Philometer.¹⁰³ It seems reasonable to believe that in doing so Jonathan sought to advance an orthodox agenda. The destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the atomization that had followed the Babylonian conquest of 586 BCE had rendered 'the land' less relevant in the eyes of many diaspora Jews than the 'Temple city', and its purity was of paramount importance.¹⁰⁴ In such a context, it is notable that the author of 1 Maccabees lamented the Hellenization of Jerusalem under the auspices of the Reformers, and especially the transformation of the Temple Mount into 'a residence for foreigners' (1 Macc. 38 cf. Ex 15.17). Jonathan's taking up residence in the city itself seems to reflect this point of view. Meanwhile, the departure of Seleucid garrisons from the fortresses of Judea would fulfil the

¹⁰⁰ Scott 1990: 70

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Weinfeld 1993: 133; Levine 1997: 13

¹⁰³ Atkinson 2016: 29-30

¹⁰⁴ Levine 1997: 14

requirement of Numbers 32.16-27 to remove the 'security threat' posed by non-Israelites and was also a means of curtailing Hellenistic influence. Thus, whereas in the public transcript Jonathan continued to affirm the hegemony of Demetrius I by acknowledging his benefactions, his actions in Judea itself are at odds with the notion that he accepted his subordination or that his conformity to it was anything more than pragmatic.

It was in an attempt to outbid Demetrius that Alexander Balas granted Jonathan the post of High Priest itself (Jos. AJ. 13.43-45). The extraction of the High Priesthood from Balas must have been for Jonathan a *coup de grace*, yet it has often been cited by scholars as evidence of his political rather than religious ambition.¹⁰⁵ If this were the case, it would undermine the present argument, since it would follow that Jonathan had used the conflict between Balas and Demetrius I to advance a cause that was rooted in untrammelled political ambition rather than orthodoxy.

On the one hand, it is true that the author of 1 Maccabees alluded to biblical models to justify the Hasmonean assumption of the High Priesthood, possibly to 'whitewash' a flagrant disregard for the Zadokite claim. Thus, the comparisons drawn between Mattathias and Phinehas in 1 Maccabees 2:15-28 may have been intended to evoke Ecclesiasticus 45: 23-4, where Ben Sira describes the 'covenant of friendship' that God established with Phinehas, bestowing on him and his descendants 'the dignity of the high priesthood for ever'. It also seems reasonable to suggest that this may have been a propagandistic ploy to justify the assumption of the High Priesthood by the descendants

¹⁰⁵ Gruen 1998: 17; Berthelot 2018: 109; Rajak 2001: 45

of Mattathias, and that it acted as an *apologia* for what might be regarded by conservative Judeans as an unpalatable act of innovation.¹⁰⁶

On the other hand, it is quite possible to believe that the acquisition of the High Priesthood by Jonathan did much to advance the orthodox cause. In accordance with Scott's model, the appointment was presented in the public transcript as a gift of the Seleucids. According to Josephus, when Balas designated Jonathan High Priest in 152 BCE, he dispatched to him the gift of a purple cloak and a gold crown (Jos. AJ 13.45), while at the state ceremony which took place the following year at Ptolemais in the presence of Ptolemy VI, Jonathan was again ostentatiously robed in purple (Jos. AJ 13.83-85). This, of course, was the colour most associated with the King's Friends in Seleucid royal convention.¹⁰⁷ Here we see a highly public 'discursive affirmation' of the pattern of domination on which Seleucid power was based, with Jonathan preserving the 'unanimity' of the public transcript by accepting the honours bestowed upon him.¹⁰⁸ Alexander Balas's original letter to Jonathan captures the essence of this 'dramaturgy of domination' as well as an element of reciprocity inherent in the Seleucid 'empire of interaction':

*We therefore elect you this day high priest of the Jews and the title of my Friend. I have also sent you as gifts a robe of purple and a gold crown; and I request you, who have been honoured by us, to act toward us in like manner. (Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, 13.45-46 translation Marcus).*¹⁰⁹

Yet there is considerable evidence that, behind the show of Seleucid domination, Jonathan's appointment allowed him to advance orthodox aims. High Priests' had been

¹⁰⁶ Morton Smith 1996: 115

¹⁰⁷ Bickerman 1938: 41-44

¹⁰⁸ Scott 1990: 51-53; cf. Foucault 1979: 103-105

¹⁰⁹ My italics.

rulers of the nation in the Persian and early Hellenistic periods and were at the fulcrum of Yehud's interaction with foreign powers; it made sound political and religious sense for Jonathan to accept this position if Hasmonean ambitions were to be fulfilled.¹¹⁰ Tcherikover convincingly argues that under John Hyrcanus, the Pharisees moved to strip the Hasmoneans of the High Priesthood (rather than questioning their royal status) because it was the sacerdotal office that gave the dynasty true authority over the people.¹¹¹ This view is supported by Josephus's account of Eleazar's challenge to Hyrcanus, in which the wily old man dredges up a scurrilous story of his mother's having been a captive in the days of Epiphanes (Jos. AJ. 13. 288-299).¹¹² It is true that the Hasmoneans were not Zadokites (see 1 Kings 1.28-45), but nor were the most recent pre-Maccabean High Priests; and while at least one of these (Alcimus) could claim descent from Aaron, all had abused their position to advance the Hellenistic cause, even if only by default.¹¹³ Indeed, it was the actions of the High Priest Jason from 172 BCE onwards that had permitted the Hellenistic Reform so deplored by the author of 1 Maccabees (1 Macc. 1. 10-15).¹¹⁴

Nor, it seems, was this negative view of the recent holders of the sacerdotal office confined to texts which could be characterised as Hasmonean propaganda. For instance, 4Q390 fragment 2, from the writings deposited in Cave 4 at Qumran, also appears to attack the 'Hellenizing' High Priests. Hanan Eshel suggests that the end of the first line of

¹¹⁰ See Sievers 1990: 85-86. Sievers notes that it 'is well known that since Ptolemaic and probably since later Persian times high priesthood and political leadership in Judea were commonly combined.'

¹¹¹ Tcherikover 1956: 260.

¹¹² A parallel account of John Hyrcanus's abandonment of the Pharisees and embrace of the Sadducees is told in Antiquities 13.288-98.

¹¹³ Menelaus was not of the Zadokite line. Alcimus, appointed by Bacchides in 162 BCE, was a Seleucid nominee though, as Gruen notes, he was 'a scion of the Aaronide line'. See Gruen 2008: 11

¹¹⁴ Dabrowa 2016: 16-17; cf. 1 Macc. 1. 10-15.

the second fragment should read 'they profaned', so that the line immediately following then reads '[they profaned] My house and My altar and the Holy of Holies.' In line 5, these same subjects are accused of 'violating all My laws and all My commandments.' Eshel believes that these lines refer to Jason, Menelaus and Alcimus.¹¹⁵ If so, it seems possible to conclude that a loathing for the incumbent High Priesthood was prevalent both among supporters of the Maccabees and among those who eventually opposed them.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, in the Second Temple period it seems to have become more common to associate the sacerdotal and the royal office, as shown in Ecclesiasticus 50.1-4 where the High Priest Simon II is lauded for his building projects, a function which had previously been portrayed as a preserve of the secular monarch.¹¹⁷ In this context, the Hasmonean dynasty's decision to combine the royal and sacerdotal offices seems less an innovation than the evolution of a long-standing development.¹¹⁸ Jonathan's acquisition of the High Priesthood should thus be seen as a means of advancing the orthodox aims of the Hasmoneans rather than contradicting them.

Thus, we have already seen that several of Jonathan's actions at moments of Seleucid vulnerability attest to an orthodox agenda that had by necessity to be relegated to the off-stage arena during the phase of Seleucid dominance that followed Judas's defeat. Scott also suggests that subordinate groups may reveal the nature of their hidden transcript when they take advantage of unforeseen opportunities to press their agenda

¹¹⁵ Eshel 2008: 24

¹¹⁶ Eshel also believes that 4Q390, which was seemingly attributed to Jeremiah, does not exhibit the features typical of a text produced by the Qumran community itself. He therefore suggests that the text was brought to Qumran but originated outside the community. If so, this could suggest once more that the views contained in it regarding the 'Hellenizing High Priests' represented a fairly widespread view among those of a religiously conservative persuasion. See Eshel 2008: 22

¹¹⁷ Honigman 2014: 213

¹¹⁸ See Morton Smith 1996: 121

and thus proclaim their aims more openly.¹¹⁹ Jonathan's behaviour after the arrival of Demetrius II from Crete attests to the validity of this view (Jos. AJ. 13.86-87). It may be inferred from 1 Maccabees 10.74-89 that Jonathan made an opportunistic decision to burn the temple of Dagon at Azotus (Ashdod) after the defeated cavalry of Apollonius's army took refuge there. According to the text, he had already 'set fire to Azotus and its surrounding villages' and plundered them too. The forces of Apollonius had been convincingly trounced, the infantry routed by Simon and the horsemen 'scattered across the plain' (1 Macc. 10.82-83). The burning of the temple was, therefore, unnecessary from a strategic and military point of view. From the perspective of Jonathan as heir to the orthodox agenda of Mattathias and Judas, however, this action was symbolically charged, for Ashdod was the place to which the Philistines had taken the ark of Yahweh after Israel's defeat at the Battle of Ebenezer (c 1050 BCE; 1 Samuel 5.1-12) as well as one of the cities of the Philistine pentapolis.¹²⁰ Berthelot argues that the story was rhetorical and a means of conjuring up a connection between the Hasmoneans and the wars of the Israelites against the Philistines.¹²¹ Yet there is also evidence to suggest that the Hasmoneans consistently targeted Ashdod's pagan altars. During his expedition against Idumaea and 'Philistia', we are told that Judas 'turned aside' to destroy the altars and idols of the city (1 Macc 5: 55-69).¹²² The excavations of Andrea Berlin have shown that Ashdod was also attacked in the time of John Hyrcanus; it seems that its pagan shrine was destroyed and there is evidence that the area was resettled.¹²³ It thus

¹¹⁹ Scott 1990: 81

¹²⁰ Stager 1998: 119-129

¹²¹ Berthelot 2018: 145

¹²² In doing so, the author of 1 Maccabees was doubtless aware that this would fulfil the prescription of Deuteronomy 7.5 to destroy the altars and graven images of the Canaanites.

¹²³ Berlin 1997: 33

seems reasonable to conclude that the Hasmoneans viewed Ashdod as an enemy of the Judean state.¹²⁴

Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that the targeting of Ashdod may also be regarded as an anti-Hellenistic move. Greeks and Philistines seem to have become conflated in the Maccabean mind, as for instance is indicated by a reference made in 1 Maccabees to 'Philistia' in the context of Judas's defeat of the Seleucid commander Seron near the pass of Beth-horon (1 Macc. 3.10-24).¹²⁵ These references suggest that, while the Philistines themselves had long vanished from the area, the coastal region, and the Hellenistic communities there, were ideologically associated with the old enemy of Israel.¹²⁶ And while it is true that idolatrous Ascalon was spared Ashdod's fate, it should be remembered that Jonathan lacked complete freedom of action vis-à-vis his Seleucid overlords (Jos. AJ. 13.101-102). The destruction of Dagon's temple could be justified as part of his campaign against Apollonius; but Jonathan remained subordinate to Alexander Balas and could not afford to wantonly wreak destruction on Seleucid cities. If so, this suggests that, in accordance with Scott's model, Jonathan as the representative of a subordinate group resorted to artfully weighing the reality of the

¹²⁴ Other biblical texts also advocate the destruction or purification of Ashdod and Philistia. In Zechariah 9 (Second Zechariah), during the first "Oracle", God promises that 'a mongrel people shall settle in Ashdod, and I will make an end of the pride of Philistia.' He goes on to say that 'its abominations' shall be removed 'from between its teeth', which as NRSV notes suggests that the inhabitants of Philistia will have to follow the Jewish dietary laws.

¹²⁵ Other direct references to 'Philistia' include 1 Macc. 3.41 and 4.22.

¹²⁶ Bartlett 1973: 48 notes that the Philistines had long since disappeared. Such conflation may be found in other parts of 1 Maccabees too. When, after the murder of Jonathan, Simon hears that Tryphon is planning to invade Judea (143 BCE), he summons an assembly in Jerusalem to rouse the populace to resistance (1 Macc. 13.3-6). In his speech, Simon tells them: 'But I will take vengeance for my nation and for the holy places and for your women and children, for *all the nations* have gathered together to annihilate us out of enmity [my italics].' Here, the word 'nations' must include the Greeks since the speech is made in reaction to Tryphon mustering his forces. That the speech is likely rhetorical is less relevant than the fact that the author of 1 Maccabees, a Hasmonean court historian and purveyor of their ideology, conflated the symbol of Hellenism, the Seleucid empire, with 'the nations'. All, it seems, were enemies of Israel.

power relations that existed between Judea and the empire, unfurling the flag of the hidden transcript during moments of Seleucid weakness but reverting to the 'theatre of domination' when obliged to do so.¹²⁷

In sum, the events of the period immediately before and after 152 BCE reveal that while Jonathan participated in the theatre of Seleucid domination, his actions, especially during periods when the Seleucids were in disarray, were rooted in a more orthodox agenda. The discord between his performance in the public arena, where he contributed to and willingly sustained the official transcript of Seleucid domination by participating in ceremonies and accepting benefactions which perpetuated the ideology of Hellenistic kingship, and his 'off-stage' behaviour when the position of the Seleucids was more vulnerable, reveals a hidden transcript at odds with the image he often presented as a Seleucid vassal.¹²⁸ Far from embracing Hellenistic models, as scholars like Gruen have suggested, Jonathan's actions suggest a thoroughgoing rejection of them.¹²⁹ And while his assumption of the High Priesthood has sometimes been regarded as innovative, we have seen that it is quite possible to draw the opposite conclusion. Thus, while Gruen may be right to argue that the Hasmonean relationship with the Seleucids was characterised by 'reciprocal relations and mutual dependency', the conclusion he draws from this, which is that such relations 'undermine the concept of fundamental antagonism', should be questioned.¹³⁰ Reciprocal relations under Jonathan were in fact used to advance an orthodox agenda which was antagonistic to Hellenism rather than sympathetic towards it.

¹²⁷ Scott 1990:11

¹²⁸ Ibid: 45-69

¹²⁹ Gruen 2003: 264-279

¹³⁰ Gruen 1998: 40

Chapter 4 – ‘Orthopraxy’ without ‘orthodoxy’? The honorary decree for Simon (140

BCE)

In his analysis of the power relations between subordinate and hegemonic groups, Scott notes that the former tend to adopt ‘manifold strategies insinuating resistance’ to the dominant ideology.¹³¹ We have already noted Jonathan’s artful participation in the ‘collective theatre’ of Seleucid domination and the way in which he used this to advance an orthodox agenda.¹³² However, Scott also notes other, more subtle, examples of the strategies used by subordinates. In particular, he stresses that resistance can find its way in a ‘disguised form’ into the public transcript.¹³³ In this aspect of his model, Scott suggests that subordinate groups imitate aspects of the dominant culture in order to conduct an ‘undeclared ideological guerrilla war’.¹³⁴ Using cultural forms which are by their very nature ‘polysemic’ – that is, capable of multiple readings by different audiences – the subordinate can appear to emulate aspects of the dominant ideology while simultaneously expressing resistance to it. For Scott, such a procedure can be described as ‘orthopraxy’ without ‘orthodoxy’.¹³⁵ In this chapter, it will be argued that the honorary inscription for Simon of 140 BCE exemplifies precisely such a strategy.

4.1: The nature of power relations at the beginning of Simon’s rule

In both 1 Maccabees and Josephus, Simon’s rule is presented as a watershed, the period during which Judaea achieved its independence from the Seleucid empire and ‘Israel was released from the Gentile yoke’ (1 Macc. 13.41 cf. Jos. AJ. 13. 213-214). In fact, as

¹³¹ Scott 1990: 136

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid: 137

¹³⁵ Ibid: 114

Gruen has indicated, Simon was far from an independent potentate after 142 BCE.¹³⁶ He had secured the office of High Priest from Demetrius II and became one of the Seleucid monarch's 'friends' in much the same manner as his predecessor Jonathan; later, he incurred the wrath of Antiochus VII Sidetes, who demanded that Simon return Joppa, Gazara and the Akra to imperial control (1 Macc. 15. 25-39; cf. Jos AJ 13.225-228).¹³⁷ When Simon demurred, Sidetes dispatched Cendebeus, *strategos* of the coastal plain, to blockade Judea and to menace him (Jos. AJ. 13.225-228). Thus, for all the rhetoric of 1 Maccabees and Josephus, Simon remained subject to the 'structure of domination' imposed by the Seleucids and he too was obliged by the nature of prevailing power relations to resort to 'fugitive political conduct'.¹³⁸

4.2: The honorary inscription for Simon – emulating a Hellenistic model?

A number of scholars have pointed to the honorary decree for Simon (140 BCE) as evidence of the increasing Hellenization of the Hasmoneans.¹³⁹ Jan Willem van Henten directly compares the structure and content of the decree to such Ptolemaic equivalents as the Canopus decree (238 BCE), the Memphis decree (217 BCE) and the Alexandria decree (186 BCE) and concludes that, 'notwithstanding considerable differences', it can be regarded as 'the outcome of a lively interplay between Jewish and non-Jewish Hellenistic views and conventions about political power and rulership'.¹⁴⁰ A close reading of the inscription, however, reveals a process 'euphemization', in which the

¹³⁶ See Goldstein 1976: 479-80 and Gruen 1998: 21.

¹³⁷ Dabrowa 2016: 60-61

¹³⁸ Gruen 1998: 21 to 22

¹³⁹ Gardner 2007: 327-343; Gruen 1998: 21; Sievers 1990: 110-122.

¹⁴⁰ Van Henten 2001: 116 to 133. The quote is on page 133.

dominant ideology (or in this case cultural idiom) is imitated by the subordinate group in order to obscure the 'hidden transcript' that lies beneath the surface.¹⁴¹

It is true that there are structural parallels between the decree honouring Simon and other inscriptions from the Hellenistic world. In addition to the Canopus decree, this chapter will focus on a decree of Samothrace in honour of the Ptolemaic governor Hippomedon, son of Agesilaus (IG XII.8.156), which dates to the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes.¹⁴² The preamble of the inscription in honour of Simon opens by specifying the date and place of the decree (lines 28-29), just as does the decree for Hippomedon. It justifies the decision to honour Simon, commemorating his noble deeds and listing his extensive benefactions to the people (lines 29-40). Likewise, the Samothracian decree explains how the governor 'honours the [sanctuary]' (line 5), shows 'every care for the security of the fort' (line 9) and 'wishes [always] to oblige our city in everything that it requests' (line 15). The inscription for Simon then recapitulates this 'vote of thanks' by explaining how 'the Jews and their Priests confirmed Simon as their leader and high priest in perpetuity until a true prophet should appear' (lines 41-42). Indeed, it even specifies that Simon 'was to wear the purple robe and the gold clasp' in terms reminiscent of the opulent attire of Hellenistic rulers (lines 43-44).¹⁴³ Finally, the inscription emphasises that it was 'King Demetrius' who confirmed Simon in the office of

¹⁴¹ Bourdieu 1977: 159-197

¹⁴² For the Samothracian decree, see Austin 2006: 269. The choice of this decree seems apt, since Gruen has argued that Jonathan and Simon became, in effect, high officials of the Seleucid Empire. See Gruen 1998: 18

¹⁴³ See Ma 2003: 186-191

High Priest (lines 38-39). Thus, in its structure and outward form, the inscription concedes the monopoly of the dominant culture over the mode of expression.¹⁴⁴

4.3: The hidden transcript beneath the outer form of the honorary inscription for Simon

However, a closer analysis reveals that the substantive details of Simon's deeds fulfil the objectives of an orthodox Jewish agenda. It is for his benefactions to the citizens of Samothrace, his care for the island's security, and his piety towards its sanctuary that Hippomedon is honoured. Similarly, in the Canopus decree for Ptolemy III and Berenice (4th March 238 BCE), we find references to the 'great many benefactions' bestowed by the pair on 'temples throughout the land' and their 'constant care for Apis and Mnevis', as well as the peace and *eunomia* ('good government') they have provided (lines 8 - 15).¹⁴⁵ Ptolemy III is also praised for the defensive wars that he has fought against Egypt's enemies (line 12). While there is clearly some convergence with the Simonide inscription, especially in regard to the gratitude shown by 'the people' for the benefits Simon bestowed on Judea (he funded an army from his own pocket) and the way in which he secured the land (through the fortification of 'the towns of Judea' as well as Bethsura, 'formerly an enemy arsenal'), such achievements were in themselves victories for the orthodox, nationalistic cause (1 Macc. 14. 32-33; 34-36). Simon is applauded for successfully resisting the attempts of Judea's enemies to 'invade their land and destroy it, and to attack the temple', thus reiterating yet again the ideology of the sanctity and centrality of the Jerusalem Temple (line 32). He is also praised for having 'stationed a

¹⁴⁴ Scott 1990: 54

¹⁴⁵ Austin 2006: 271 = OGIS 56; BD 164

garrison of Jews' at Bethsura, in a move which, like that of Jonathan before him, arguably fulfilled the exhortation of the Book of Numbers to remove non-Israelites as a security threat to Israel (1 Macc. 11: 66; 14: 33; cf. Num. 32.16-27).¹⁴⁶ He receives honours for having 'expelled' Gentiles from the land and in particular for ejecting the Seleucid garrison – which had regularly 'sailed forth to bring defilement' on the Temple precinct and had thus polluted the environs of Mount Zion - from the hated Akra (lines 36-37).

Furthermore, the inscription suggests that Jonathan and Simon had artfully harnessed the Maccabean alliance with Rome, first initiated by Judas in 161 BCE, to extract concessions from the Seleucids; we are told that Demetrius II confirmed Simon as High Priest in part because 'he had heard that the Romans were naming the Jews friends, allies, and brothers' (lines 39-40). Thus, Simon's participation in the public transcript of subservience to Demetrius allowed him not only to secure from his Seleucid overlord confirmation of the High Priesthood (a position which, as we have seen, permitted the Hasmoneans to more effectively advance their agenda both in Judea and beyond) and an influential position as one of the King's Friends, but also to acquire Demetrius's *de facto* acquiescence in the gains made so far, including the expulsion of the Seleucid garrisons from Gazara (1 Macc. 13:43-48) and the Akra (1 Macc. 13:49-53).¹⁴⁷ The author of these passages emphasises that Simon purified both places, including the

¹⁴⁶ See also 1 Macc 13:47, where Simon captures and purifies Gazara, ridding it of 'the houses in which the idols stood'.

¹⁴⁷ See also Krentz 2001: 151

‘houses in which the idols stood’ (lines 47-48) in Gazara and, of course, the citadel in Jerusalem itself.¹⁴⁸

From this analysis, it should be concluded that the honorary inscription for Simon was artfully polysemic. On the one hand, it emulated the form and structure of other Hellenistic inscriptions, and could thus convincingly convey a message of subordination to the dominant culture for those inclined to perceive it that way. The fact that the inscription highlights Demetrius II as the source of Simon’s High Priesthood certainly suggests that its authors wished to suggest an ongoing conformity with the public transcript of Seleucid domination. Yet it was also a conduit for what Scott terms ‘polyvalent symbolism’.¹⁴⁹ For a conservative Jewish audience, and indeed for the supporters of the Maccabees themselves, many of the achievements attributed to Simon would have been eminently welcome, from the particularistic rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls to the expulsion of Gentiles and, especially, the destruction of the much-loathed Acra. All of these actions should surely be understood as seeking to counteract the influence of Hellenistic forces in Judea rather than embrace them. To use Scott’s terminology, the honorary inscription for Simon was a case of ‘orthopraxy’ without ‘orthodoxy’; patterned on the Hellenistic model, it simultaneously celebrated gains of which Mattathias and Judas would have thoroughly approved.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ It is perhaps significant in this regard that Gazara (Gezer) was once a Philistine coastal town, though by the time of the Maccabees it may have been located in the lowlands of Idumaea. See Berthelot 2018:198; cf. Honigman 2014: 283

¹⁴⁹ Scott 1990: 158

¹⁵⁰ Scott 1990: 117. By ‘orthodoxy’ here, I wish to indicate the genuine embrace of Hellenistic culture. See also Rappaport 2013: 220- 226 and Rappaport 1990-1991: 477-503; Goldstein 1976: 501; Dabrowa 2016: 59.

Chapter 5: ‘Rupturing the cordon sanitaire’? The policies of John Hyrcanus I in An Era of Seleucid Disarray

Thus far, this dissertation has emphasised the ‘fugitive political conduct’ of Jonathan and Simon during periods when the Hasmonean state was subordinate to the authority of the Seleucid Empire. Another component of Scott’s model which has yet to be addressed is what he terms ‘the rupture of the cordon sanitaire between the hidden and the public transcript’.¹⁵¹ Scott characterises the relationship between dominant elites and subordinate groups as a ‘material struggle’ in which both sides ‘are continually probing for weaknesses’ as part of a ‘constant testing’ of the power relations between them.¹⁵² Drawing on reactance theory, he emphasises that once any weakness in the surveillance or enforcement capacity of a dominant group is detected, it is likely to be quickly and ruthlessly exploited. In these circumstances, he argues, ideological opposition which had previously been ‘veiled’ is able to ‘venture forth and speak its name’.¹⁵³ Thus, by investigating the actions taken by subordinates in such a situation, we can detect the nature of the hidden transcript they previously sought to conceal. Such a phase is heralded by what Scott calls the ‘refusal to reproduce hegemonic appearances’, in which subordinates no longer participate in the official transcript of domination but instead openly flout it.¹⁵⁴ In this chapter it will be argued that it was during the rule of John Hyrcanus that such circumstances first arose for the Hasmonean dynasty. Whereas in times of Seleucid strength, the Hasmoneans had a vested interest in perpetuating the ‘production of hegemonic appearances’ in order to enhance their

¹⁵¹ Scott 1990: 191

¹⁵² Ibid: 184

¹⁵³ Ibid: 192

¹⁵⁴ Ibid: 69

own status or to ward off imperial encroachments, developments following the death of Antiochus VII Sidetes in 129 BCE allowed the hidden transcript of the Hasmoneans to unfurl itself on the foreign stage.¹⁵⁵ The nature of the policy which thus manifested itself was, it is contended, both orthodox in nature and aimed at curtailing the influence of Hellenistic forces.

5.1: The hidden transcript 'ventures forth': John Hyrcanus's attack on the Gerizim Temple

John Hyrcanus's destruction of the Mount Gerizim temple effectively signalled the 'rupture of the cordon sanitaire' that Scott describes. According to Josephus, Hyrcanus launched his assault in the immediate aftermath of Sidetes's death during the Parthian campaign of 131-129 BCE (Jos. AJ. 13.247-252; cf. BJ. 1.55). The account in *Antiquities* makes it clear that Hyrcanus acted with ruthless opportunism, just as Scott suggests, and we may conclude that his actions fractured the official transcript of Seleucid domination that had prevailed since the siege of Jerusalem:

....for after the death of Antiochus he [Hyrcanus] too revolted from the Macedonians, and no longer furnished them any aid either as a subject or as a friend; instead, his government progressed and flourished during the reign of Alexander Zebinas and especially under these brothers (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13. 272-274 translation Marcus).

It seems reasonable to infer on the basis of this passage that Josephus believed that Hyrcanus's loyalty to Sidetes and his presence during the campaign against Parthia had been largely pragmatic, since upon the king's death he immediately withdrew his support from the Seleucids (he 'no longer furnished them any aid') and exploited their weaknesses to foster his own ambitions. In other words, Hyrcanus refused 'to reproduce

¹⁵⁵ Ibid: 85

hegemonic appearances' in the way that he had done while Sidetes lived. Josephus also reports that Hyrcanus 'openly showed his intention' when Antiochus Cyzicenus, who had been ravaging Judea, lost the backing of his Egyptian allies (and thus a key prop for his power); it was at that point, we are told, that 'he marched against Samaria' (Jos. AJ. 13.275).¹⁵⁶ It may be concluded that Seleucid disarray, catalysed by the death of Sidetes and then by the internecine conflict between Antiochus Grypus and Antiochus Cyzicenus, allowed Hyrcanus to advance ambitions that had hitherto been relegated to the 'off-stage arena'.¹⁵⁷

There may be numismatic evidence of this 'hidden transcript'. Houghton, Lorber and Hoover have concluded that Hyrcanus struck a series of coins somewhere between 133 and 130 BCE, just before the death of Sidetes. The obverse of these coins featured a lily rather than a likeness of the king, and it is probable that this image also had biblical connotations, featuring in both Hosea 14.5 and in the Song of Songs 5.24. It is therefore conceivable that these coins reflected Hyrcanus's underlying ambition to assert Jewish independence from Antioch, since the iconography which adorned them implied a subtle rejection of Hellenistic models, though the dominance of Sidetes after the siege of Jerusalem meant that in the first instance these aspirations had by necessity to be obscured.¹⁵⁸

It was the deterioration of Seleucid power, however, which finally allowed Hyrcanus to rupture the confines of public subordination to the Seleucids and to pursue the Hasmonean agenda. According to the *Jewish War*, he exploited this opportunity to

¹⁵⁶ Dabrowa 2016: 70-71.

¹⁵⁷ Scott 1990: 183

¹⁵⁸ Houghton 1983: 83-84 and numbers 831-834; Houghton, Lorber and Hoover 2008: 391-392, number 2123.

attack first the Gerizim temple and those living around it and later the city of Samaria itself (Jos. BJ. 1.72-87). It is true that some scholars believe, on the basis of archaeological evidence, that Josephus's chronology of these events is flawed.¹⁵⁹ The destruction of the Gerizim temple has traditionally been dated to 128 BCE which, if true, would seem to support the view that the death of Sidetes was the catalyst for Hyrcanus's actions.¹⁶⁰ Dan Barag, by contrast, dates the territorial expansion of Hyrcanus much later, to between 112 and 107 BCE.¹⁶¹ Accepting Barag's interpretation does not, however, alter the essential premise that Hyrcanus was able to opportunistically abandon the official transcript of subordination to the Seleucids, since it was during these years that intra-Seleucid rivalry was at its height.¹⁶² Josephus makes this abundantly clear when he writes that, after Cyzicenus lost the support of his Egyptian backers, 'both he and his brother were faring badly in their struggle against each other' (Jos. AJ. 13.274-275). So emboldened was Hyrcanus by these favourable circumstances that, Josephus says, 'he showed contempt for both of them' (Jos. AJ. 13.274).

Thus, it seems that Hyrcanus behaved in conformity with the model suggested by Scott. As subordinate, he had perpetuated the public transcript in the immediate aftermath of the siege of Jerusalem by appearing to support Sidetes in his campaign against Parthia; but the latter's death weakened the empire's capacity for both surveillance and enforcement, a situation perpetuated by ongoing rivalries within the imperial house.

¹⁵⁹ Menahem Stern also doubts that Hyrcanus would have been able to undertake so many campaigns in so short a period as 129-128 BCE. See Stern 1976: 201.

¹⁶⁰ Bartlett 1973: 46

¹⁶¹ Barag 1992: 9-12.

¹⁶² Grainger 2012: 85-91

Hyrchanus refused to 'reproduce hegemonic appearances', since the Seleucids lacked the authority to enforce them, and the stage was set for the advancement of the hidden transcript.¹⁶³

It is true that Hyrchanus's motivations in Samaria have been contested. Josephus explains his actions as being partly driven by revenge. Hyrchanus, he writes, struck at the Samaritans because they were 'scoundrels' who had done 'injuries' to the people of Marisa, 'colonists and allies of the Jews' (Jos. AJ. 13. 275-276).¹⁶⁴ Bar-Kochva argued that Hyrchanus's expansionism was propelled by economic considerations.¹⁶⁵ Bourgel sees Hyrchanus's policy as a continuation of the extension of Hasmonean territory under Jonathan, who had already acquired the Samarian districts of Lydda (Lod), Aphareima

¹⁶³ Scott 1990: 69

¹⁶⁴ There may, however, be a reasonable explanation for Josephus's failure to emphasise the religious agenda of the Hasmonean dynasty. For his account of the rule of John Hyrchanus, Josephus seems to have largely relied on Hellenistic historians such as Strabo and Nicolaus of Damascus. Ralph Marcus believed that Josephus's paraphrase of 1 Maccabees ended with the alleged acquisition of Judean independence under Simon (1 Macc 13.42). From this point on, he argued, Josephus relied heavily on Nicolaus, envoy and adviser to Herod from c14 BCE onwards. See Marcus 1943: 334. Louis Feldman suggested that this was because Josephus regarded him as a more reliable source, but Nicolaus's loyalty to Herod might well have motivated him to offer a hostile portrait of the Hasmoneans. Certainly, there are many contradictions in Josephus's work which may be accounted for by the fault lines between his own perspective and that of his sources. The tendency of Hellenistic historians to focus on issues of diplomacy and warfare could also help to explain the under-representation of religious motivations in Josephus's account. See Feldman 1984: 112. Josephus mentions on a number of occasions that he has used Strabo's no longer extant *Historica Hypomnemata* as a source, as well as books 16 and 17 of the *Geography*. In *Geography* 16.2.37-40, Strabo paints a very negative picture of the Hasmonean dynasty, claiming that it was 'a tyrannical government' which 'produced robbery' and plundered 'both their own and neighbouring countries' (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.37). It is quite clear that he believed that the Hasmonean dynasty was in essence a secular one, motivated by greed and self-aggrandizement. According to Bar-Kochva, Strabo based his assessment on the work of Posidonius, who was himself critical of the Hasmoneans if sympathetic towards the central tenets of the Mosaic Law. See Bar-Kochva 2010: 450. If so, it adds further credence to the notion that Josephus's reliance on Hellenistic authors and sources contributed to his downplaying of the role of religious orthodoxy in the actions of the Hasmoneans. Josephus also reveals a reliance on Hellenistic sources in *Contra Apionem*, 2.83-84, where he cites the views of 'Polybius of Megalopolis, Strabo the Cappadocian, Nicolaus of Damascus, Timagenes, Castor the chronicler and Apollodorus.' All of this has led Eyal Regev to conclude that 'in his description of the Hasmonean period, Josephus missed the spirit of the era.' See Regev 2013: 11.

¹⁶⁵ Bar-Kochva 1977: 167-196

(Ephraim) and Ramathaim (Rama).¹⁶⁶ Berthelot, meanwhile, dismisses the notion that the principle motivation for the destruction of the Gerizim temple was religious:

Far from celebrating an idolatrous cult, [the temple] was dedicated to YHWH, who was as much the God of the Samaritans as the Judeans. As such, it is not possible to suggest that this destruction exhibited Hyrcanus' wish to rid the land of idolatrous practices.¹⁶⁷

However, in making this argument, it seems that scholars such as Berthelot have somewhat overlooked the diachronic context of Judeo-Samaritan relations, both as illustrated by biblical sources and as they developed in the post-exilic period. From the creation of the Divided Monarchy, there was recurrent tension and conflict between the Northern kingdom of Israel and the Southern kingdom of Judah (2 Chron. 13.13-21). In depicting these and other events, the Chronicler portrays the religion of the southern kingdom as legitimate and that of the northern kingdom as not.¹⁶⁸ Later, during the seventh century, the reforms of King Josiah (640 to 609 BCE) restricted all sacrificial worship to Jerusalem and sought to centralize the celebration of the Passover there, in concurrence with the requirements of Deuteronomy (2 Kings 23.21-23; cf. Deut. 12.1-32).¹⁶⁹ Poor relations between Jerusalem and Samaria are also attested for the early Hellenistic period, at least in some circles. Thus Jesus, Son of Sirach speaks of the 'two nations I detest', listing the Philistines and 'the senseless folk that live at Shechem'

¹⁶⁶ Bourgel 2016: 515; cf 1 Macc 11.34. See also Davies 1982: 144.

¹⁶⁷ Berthelot 2018: 257

¹⁶⁸ The argument that 2 Chronicles could in fact be a composition of the Hellenistic period has an important bearing on this point, since if so it implies that the rejection of the religion of the northern kingdom was an ideology contemporaneous with the period when the Hasmonean dynasty emerged. For a useful summary of this argument, see Israel Finkelstein, *Hasmonean Realities behind Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles*, SBL Press, 2018: 159-163.

¹⁶⁹ Cogan 1998: 258-62; cf. Genesis 12: 7-8, where Abraham carries out sacrifices at Shechem and near Bethel.

among them (Ecclus. 50: 25-6).¹⁷⁰ It might well be argued, therefore, that John Hyrcanus's attack on Samaria reflected the continuity of what had, by the second century BCE, become a long-standing animosity, and should thus be characterised as an essentially orthodox component of the hidden transcript of the Hasmoneans.

In striking at the Gerizim Temple, was John Hyrcanus also laying assault to the forces of Hellenism? There is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that, during the 'rupture of the cordon sanitaire', this was indeed the case. Seth Schwartz has convincingly argued that, at the time of the Maccabean revolt, there were 'Hellenizers' present at the Mount Gerizim temple just as there had been in Jerusalem.¹⁷¹ Citing Josephus's reference to the 'Sidonians who were in Shechem' (Jos. AJ. 12.257-264), he notes that in the course of the persecutions of Antiochus IV, the sanctuary at Gerizim became dedicated to Zeus Xenios.¹⁷² He even suggests that Hyrcanus's destruction of the sanctuary would have been welcomed by those Samaritans who were of a religiously conservative persuasion.¹⁷³ Schwartz's thesis is supported not only by the evidence of Josephus but also by 2 Maccabees 5.22-23, where we are told that Antiochus appointed the official Andronikos to supervise the Gerizim Temple, as well as 2 Maccabees 6.1-28, where the king exhorts the Athenian Geron 'to defile both the temple in Jerusalem and the temple on Mount Gerizim'. Hanan Eshel contradicted Schwartz's hypothesis by pointing out that, according to 2 Maccabees 11.22-25, the persecutions ended in the

¹⁷⁰ Note also the admonishment of Hosea 8.5, who began his work in the final days of Jeroboam II of Israel (reigned 788 to 747 BCE). Here Hosea prophesies – 'Your calf is rejected, O Samaria' – and attributes this to idolatrous kingship: 'They made kings, but not through me/they set up princes, but without my knowledge/With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction.'

¹⁷¹ Schwartz, S. 1993: passim

¹⁷² See also Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 12.258-61 – the 'Sidonians of Shechem' petition Antiochus IV to rename their temple after Zeus Hellenios.

¹⁷³ Schwartz, D. 2008: 107.

reign of Antiochus V, but this does not rule out the possibility that a Hellenizing element remained in control of or were influential at the Gerizim temple, just as the Jerusalem Hellenizers found refuge in the Akra, and indeed were dislodged only with great difficulty.¹⁷⁴ It is thus possible to conclude that the anti-Hellenistic tendencies of the hidden transcript also guided Hyrcanus's actions in Shechem.

5.2: John Hyrcanus's treatment of Hellenised Samaria

Josephus also reports that, after a prolonged and violent siege by his sons Aristobulus and Antigonus, Hyrcanus wrought a particularly intense and vengeful destruction on the city of Samaria (Jos. AJ. 13. 280-284). Importantly, there is evidence that Samaria was strongly Hellenised; Bourgel claims that it was inhabited primarily by the descendants of Macedonian settlers.¹⁷⁵ Archaeological data also attests that the city met with a violent end. Adam Zertal's survey showed that, whereas there were eleven settlements in its vicinity in the Hellenistic period, by the Roman period this had declined to only four.¹⁷⁶ In addition, Gerald Finkelstein's excavations revealed that imported Rhodian amphorae reached the city until the early months of 108 BCE, suggesting an abrupt termination of the trade that seems most explicable in the context of Hyrcanus's wars of conquest.¹⁷⁷ Thus, there is clear evidence that, when afforded the opportunity to do so by the rupture of the cordon sanitaire, Hyrcanus pursued a policy that was both anti-Hellenistic

¹⁷⁴ Eshel 1991/1992: 410.

¹⁷⁵ Bourgel 2016: 507

¹⁷⁶ Zertal 2004: 63

¹⁷⁷ Finkelstein 1998: 42

and in conformity to what had by the early Hellenistic period become an orthodox conception of Judea's relations with Samaria.¹⁷⁸

What may be concluded from this analysis? Firstly, it seems reasonable to suggest that after the death of Sidetes, Hyrcanus no longer felt the need to 'reproduce hegemonic appearances'.¹⁷⁹ This policy was possible because the official transcript of Seleucid domination had, *de facto*, been rendered irrelevant by the death of Sidetes and the blood-soaked rivalry of Zebinas, Cyzicenus and Grypus. In these circumstances, the 'surveillance and enforcement' mechanisms on which the power of the dominant Seleucids rested were weakened, presenting the opportunity for Hyrcanus to advance his aims.¹⁸⁰ This situation fostered the rupture of the cordon sanitaire which separated the hidden transcript from the public, revealing the dynasty's true objectives. The evidence cited above demonstrates that there are grounds for considering these objectives to be orthodox in nature, with the destruction of the Gerizim temple fitting very well into the context of ongoing religious hostility between Judea and Samaria. Moreover, the treatment meted out to Hellenised Samaria suggests that far from embracing Hellenism, John Hyrcanus used this opportunity to reject it in a most violent fashion. The hidden transcript revealed by the 'rupture of the cordon sanitaire' was thus deeply at odds with the official transcript which had hitherto prevailed, contradicting once more the view of scholars who advocate the notion of a fundamental rapprochement between the Hasmoneans and the Hellenistic world.

¹⁷⁸ Scott 1990: 202-227

¹⁷⁹ Ibid: 69

¹⁸⁰ Ibid: 206-212

5.3: Orthodoxy in the 'off-stage arena'? Developments in Judea under John Hyrcanus I

Scott argues that, in addition to investigating discrepancies between the public transcript and the hidden transcript at times when the hegemonic power is weak, it is important to look for evidence of the behaviour of subordinate groups in the 'off-stage arena'.¹⁸¹ He cites the example of the 'hush arbours' of nineteenth century plantation slaves as a place where the agenda of the subordinate group could manifest itself openly.¹⁸² As already noted, it is clear that there are some limits to this parallel insofar as the position of a plantation slave and a Hasmonean ruler were in many ways diametrically opposed.¹⁸³ Yet ironically, the difference between them proves greatly efficacious in the study of the hidden transcript of the Hasmoneans. Scott contends that, because of their desire to obscure the hidden transcript, the off-stage agenda of many subordinate groups 'is irrecoverable for all practical purposes'.¹⁸⁴ By its very nature, however, the Hasmonean dynasty left plentiful material evidence of its activities in Judea, itself an 'off-stage' arena which was increasingly removed from Seleucid surveillance as time wore on. If the overall hypothesis of this dissertation has merit, then, *mutatis mutandis*, one would expect to find evidence of a religious orthodoxy in Judea, and indeed such evidence is by no means lacking.

Ehud Netzer's excavations of the remains of four Hasmonean palaces at Jericho offer a physical manifestation of the tension between the hidden and public transcript of the dynasty.¹⁸⁵ As Regev notes, the adornments of these palaces displayed the Hasmoneans'

¹⁸¹ Scott: 136 and *passim*

¹⁸² *Ibid*: 137

¹⁸³ See *supra*

¹⁸⁴ Scott 1990: 138

¹⁸⁵ Netzer 2001: 220

wealth and appeared to advertise their Hellenic credentials in accordance with the official transcript of Hellenistic domination.¹⁸⁶ The southern wing of the Buried Palace, which Netzer believes was built by John Hyrcanus somewhere between 125 and 115 BCE (that is, at the very time when he advanced an orthodox agenda on the foreign stage), contained Doric capitals which he speculates may have formed part of a *distylos-in-antis* entrance as well as a colonnade surrounding the pool complex.¹⁸⁷ To the east of the Buried Palace, the gardens also contained two pools and a large pavilion surrounded by Doric style porticos.¹⁸⁸ However, in those areas which were removed from public view, and could therefore act as sites for the hidden transcript *par excellence*, the emphasis appears to have been on ritual purity. Netzer's excavations revealed a number of miqva'ot, including ritual bath A(A) 209, which he believes might be the oldest yet discovered in Judea.¹⁸⁹ There were two ritual baths in the Eastern Mansion of the Buried Palace and a further three in the Western Mansion.¹⁹⁰ This evidence suggests that, whereas the outer façade of the Buried Palace, which would be immediately visible to the outside world, contained features which conveyed a superficial embrace of Hellenistic cultural idioms, those areas of the palace which were more removed from public view speak of a genuine devotion to Jewish halakha. In turn, this provides further support for the view that the hidden transcript of the Hasmoneans was rooted in an orthodox outlook.

¹⁸⁶ Regev 2017: 182

¹⁸⁷ Netzer 2001: 223; Regev 2017: 177

¹⁸⁸ Netzer 2001: 172

¹⁸⁹ Ibid: 149

¹⁹⁰ Ibid: 153, 157

The coinage of John Hyrcanus provides further evidence of this artful orthodoxy.¹⁹¹ The majority of the extant coins belonging to this period identify the official authorities in Hebrew on the obverse, while the Hellenistic iconography of the double cornucopia and pomegranate are confined to the reverse. The coins are minted in the name of 'Yehohanan the High Priest and the Hever (Council/Assembly) of the Jews', with the use of paleo-Hebrew inscriptions which doubtless deliberately evoked the period of the First Temple.¹⁹² Even the symbol of the pomegranate may have biblical associations.¹⁹³ In Exodus 28.31-35, we learn that Yahweh commanded that the hem of Aaron's priestly robe was to be adorned with woollen pomegranates and golden bells, which according to Carol Meyers could have been worn as part of the ritual during which the High Priest approached the Holy of Holies.¹⁹⁴ It seems possible, therefore, that this imagery would have had orthodox associations for many in Judea, utilising exactly the sort of 'polyvalent symbolism' already noted as a feature of the honorary inscription for Simon. Figural representations were assiduously avoided on Hasmonean coinage; indeed, in this respect the Hasmoneans seem to have offered a more uncompromising vision of biblical orthodoxy than their predecessors, eschewing the figurines and depictions of the Holy Ark or the lions of Solomon's throne that having been found in a variety of Israelite settlements, and rejecting the images of humans and animals that adorned some of the coins from Persian Yehud.¹⁹⁵ This too suggests that the 'Hellenization of the

¹⁹¹ For the debate about when the Hasmoneans started to make use of coinage, see Kanael 1963: 44; Meshorer 1974: 59; Barag/Qedar 1980: 10-15; Meshorer 2001: 23. In general, scholars believe that Hyrcanus began striking coins from somewhere between 133 and 130 BCE, between the lifting of the siege of Jerusalem and the start of the Parthian expedition.

¹⁹² Regev 2017: 189

¹⁹³ Meshorer 1982: 45

¹⁹⁴ NRSV: 123.

¹⁹⁵ Levine 2007: 6

Hasmoneans' was less extensive than has often been supposed, lending support to the view that the 'hidden transcript' of the dynasty contradicted the 'official transcript' to which it had been forced to subscribe in the days of Jonathan and Simon.

Chapter Six: Alexander Jannaeus and the ‘unbridled expression’ of the hidden

transcript

If John Hyrcanus effected a ‘rupture of the cordon sanitaire’, allowing the ‘off-stage agenda’ of the Hasmoneans to advertise itself more openly, then it was under Alexander Jannaeus that the opportunity arose for what Scott terms the ‘unbridled expression’ of the hidden transcript.¹⁹⁶ To explain this aspect of his model, Scott compares the official transcript of domination to a dam under pressure.¹⁹⁷ If the dominant power lacks the means to stifle or punish acts of insubordination, then its vassals can give full rein to their agenda, much as a torrent of water bursts through a dam.¹⁹⁸ In this context, it might be expected that Alexander Jannaeus would pursue a policy that was aggressively anti-Hellenistic and rooted to some degree in orthodox Jewish ambition.

6.1: The position of Alexander Jannaeus vis-à-vis the Seleucids

There is plentiful evidence to indicate that the weakness of the Seleucids vis-à-vis the Hasmonean state was such that Alexander Jannaeus could begin to pursue policies which had hitherto been relegated to the realm of the hidden transcript. Josephus, for instance, indicates that the decision to lay siege to the city of Ptolemais in 103 BCE was facilitated by Seleucid in-fighting, noting that ‘as Antiochus Philometer and his brother.....were fighting each other and destroyed their own forces, no help could be given by them to the people of Ptolemais’ (Jos. AJ. 13.325-326). The favourable circumstances in which Jannaeus operated at this juncture are also indicated by his interaction with Ptolemy Lathyrus, after the latter intervened in the conflict (Jos. AJ. 13.

¹⁹⁶ Scott 1990: 9-10

¹⁹⁷ Ibid: 196

¹⁹⁸ Ibid: 202

334-337). Though he sought an alliance with Ptolemy, Jannaeus does not appear to have negotiated from a position of subservience; rather, he effectively offered Lathyrus a bribe for his co-operation and brazenly sought to extract from him the territory of Zoilus, tyrant of Dora.¹⁹⁹ He was not, therefore, obliged to participate in the same 'dramaturgy of domination' as Jonathan had when dealing with Demetrius I, or even as John Hyrcanus did during the ascendancy of Sidetes. It is true that Josephus characterises Jannaeus's overtures to Cleopatra III as obsequious; with Lathyrus vanquished, he was faced with the possibility that the queen might herself covet Judean territory, and thus approached her 'with gifts and such marks of attention as were to be expected' (Jos. AJ. 353-354). But this did not herald a resurrection of the old structure of domination. Ptolemaic Egypt was from the Judean perspective a comparatively remote and isolationist power, and Cleopatra did not move to occupy Jewish territory; on the contrary, she contracted an alliance with Jannaeus at Scythopolis (Jos. AJ. 13.355).²⁰⁰ Indeed, so precipitous was Seleucid decline in the first half of the first century BCE that Jannaeus even felt able to abandon the Maccabean alliance with Rome.²⁰¹

6.2: Jannaeus's attack on the Hellenised cities in Eretz Israel as the 'unbridled expression' of the hidden transcript

Thus, in the late second and early first century BCE, circumstances were ripe for the 'unbridled expression' of a hitherto hidden transcript.²⁰² One would therefore expect to detect, both during and after the War of Sceptres, evidence of an aggressively anti-

¹⁹⁹ See also Atkinson 2016: 177-178.

²⁰⁰ Berthelot 2018: 277. At this point, fear of Roman reprisals may have caused Cleopatra to stay her hand.

²⁰¹ Wilker 2018: passim

²⁰² Scott 1990:9-10

Hellenistic agenda which had been previously relegated to the ‘off-stage arena’.²⁰³ In fact, this is precisely what our sources do suggest, for Jannaeus seems to have used the defeat of Lathyrus and the ongoing conflicts within the Seleucid house as an opportunity to launch an attack on the Hellenised cities in Eretz Israel, starting with Gaza (Jos. AJ. 13.365). It is true that some scholars have interpreted the attack on Gaza as an act of revenge for its support of Ptolemy, or as motivated by the desire to acquire for Judea an outlet to the sea.²⁰⁴ But Jannaeus’s actions go beyond those necessitated by such ambitions. According to Josephus, having captured Gaza (96 BCE), Jannaeus brutally massacred the city’s councilmen in the sanctuary of Apollo, in a gesture which echoed the destruction of Dagon’s temple in Ashdod (Jos. AJ. 13.364-365).²⁰⁵ The fact that Gaza, like Ashdod, had been part of the Philistine pentapolis and later became a centre of Hellenic learning after its capture by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, may partly explain the decision of Jannaeus to wreak destructive vengeance upon it, since as we have seen ‘Greeks’ and ‘Philistines’ seem to have become conflated in the Maccabean worldview (Jos. AJ. 13.360; cf. BJ 1.87).²⁰⁶ The evidence of Strabo also suggests that Jannaues conducted a thoroughgoing destruction of the city, since it ‘remained uninhabited’ after he had ‘razed it’, an action which belies the notion that he simply wanted to secure the region as a conduit for trade.²⁰⁷ Moreover, according to the Masoretic Text of Judges 1.18, Gaza, along with the Philistine cities of Ashkelon and Ekron, had been conquered

²⁰³ Scott 1990: 45-69

²⁰⁴ Levine 1974: 66; cf. Berthelot 2018: 270

²⁰⁵ See *supra*.

²⁰⁶ Stager 1998: 114

²⁰⁷ Strabo. *Geog.* 16.2.30.

by Judah, supplying a biblical precedent for the desire of the Hasmoneans to capture and purify it.²⁰⁸

In the *Jewish War*, Josephus also suggests that, after the arrival of the Romans in Palestine, Gabinius rebuilt a number of other cities which he found 'in ruins'. He lists Scythopolis, Samaria, Anthedon, Apollonia, Jamnia, Raphia, Marisa, Adora, Gamala and Azotus as having been 'repeopled' with colonists on Gabinius's orders, suggesting that they had been 'de-populated' in the wars of Hyrcanus and Jannaeus and had therefore suffered extensive destruction (Jos. BJ. 1.65-66). Literary and archaeological evidence suggests that common to these sites was the degree of their Hellenization. Scythopolis (previously Beit-Shean) had been occupied by Scythian mercenaries in the wake of Alexander's conquests and came under the direct control of the Seleucids after 198 BCE.²⁰⁹ Excavations carried out by Bar-Nathan and Mazor at Tel Istabab showed that it was a heavily Hellenised settlement and also revealed a destruction layer dating to c108 BCE, at the height of Hyrcanus's conquests (cf. 2 Macc. 12.29-31).²¹⁰ Anthedon, a Hellenistic port located northwest of Gaza, was originally populated by Boeotian colonists (Jos. AJ. 13.13.3). Gamala was founded as a Seleucid fort during the Syrian

²⁰⁸ Stager 1998: 97

²⁰⁹ Rowe 1940: 44

²¹⁰ Bar-Nathan and Mazor 1994: passim. By 'Hellenised site' or 'Hellenised settlement' in the context of this dissertation, I wish to indicate those sites which had, for various reasons, become influenced by Greek culture and/or lifestyle, due to the settlement of a 'Greek'/'Macedonian' population there, as was the case for Scythopolis (Beit-Shean), with its population of Scythian mercenary veterans, and Anthedon, which was inhabited by immigrants from Boeotia, and which may have been characterised by Hellenistic cultural markers, such as Greek temples and an agora (as was the case with Anthedon) or may even have adopted aspects of Greek religion (as has been argued for Samaria). See on Samaria, Bourgel 2016: 88; on Scythopolis, Rowe 1930:44; on Maria, Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* 22.9.1. Excavations at Tel-Istabab, just north of Scythopolis, by Yohanas Landau and Vassilios Tzaferis, provide further information on the settlement in the Hellenistic period. See Landau, Y. and Tzaferis, V. 'Tell-Istabab, Beth-Shean. The Excavations and Hellenistic Jar Handles', *Israel Exploration Journal* 29. 314. 1979: 152-159.

Wars of the third century BCE.²¹¹ Idolatrous Jamnia, meanwhile, had incurred the wrath of Judas Maccabeus himself for plotting the massacre of its' Jewish population (2 Macc. 12.7-9; cf. 2 Macc. 12.38-40). We may therefore conclude that both Hyrcanus and Jannaeus targeted cities which had connections to the Seleucid Empire or were suppositories of Greek culture.

In his description of the Mediterranean coast in *Geography*, Strabo omits Dora completely, which may provide evidence that this city too was destroyed by Jannaeus.²¹² Given that the first edition of this work was published in 7 BCE and that Herod's project at Caesarea Maritima, which Strabo alludes to, was initiated shortly after the visit of Augustus to the region (23 BCE), it seems reasonable to conclude not only that Strabo provides an accurate account of the condition of the Hellenised cities but that the extent of their destruction could still be witnessed first-hand in the Herodian period.²¹³ Overall, it may be reasonably inferred that the agenda pursued by Jannaeus in the wake of the rupture of the cordon sanitaire was anti-Hellenistic in nature, providing further support for the view that Hasmonean Hellenization had been superficial, adopted at times of Seleucid strength but discarded when imperial dominance waned. This very much conforms to Scott's thesis that, whereas the aims of subordinate groups must be obfuscated at times when the hegemonic power can assert its dominance, the decline of the hegemon permits the true nature of the subordinate agenda (in this case the Hasmoneans' anti-Hellenism) to be unleashed.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Berlin and Overman 2002: 152

²¹² Strabo *Geography*, 16.2.27-30. See also Stern 1984: 122-123

²¹³ Kolman-Marshak 2015: 272

²¹⁴ Scott 1990: 202-227

Evidence from Qumran may provide further support for the view that Jannaeus's 'unbridled' agenda was anti-Hellenistic.²¹⁵ 4Q161 – the 'pesher on Isaiah,' – appears to contain a number of allusions to the War of Sceptres.²¹⁶ It is true that this pesher has been interpreted in a variety of ways. For instance, Allegro proposed that lines 6 to 11 of Column 3 refer to the Messiah's journey to Jerusalem in the time of the eschaton, while Burrows believed that the same passage alluded to the campaign of Gog and Magog.²¹⁷ However, according to Eshel, fragments 5-6 make reference to Ptolemy Lathyrus's arrival outside the walls of Jerusalem after his violent campaign on Judean soil, most directly when the author writes '[He shakes] his hand towards the mountain of the daughters of Zion, the hills of Jerusalem' (4Q161, frs. 5-6, vv 9-10; cf. Jos. AJ. 13.344-347).²¹⁸ There is thus a noteworthy reference in fragment 8, where the author claims that the interpretation of Isaiah 10.33-34 'concerns the Kittim who shall crush the house of Israel and the humble.' (4Q161 fr. 8. v4). Though the Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin associated 'the Kittim' with the Romans, Eshel has convincingly demonstrated that this term was sometimes used to designate the Seleucid Empire.²¹⁹ He also notes that in the Second Temple Period Syria was often called Ashur, so that the reference to the 'Kittim of Ashur' referred to in line 6 of column 1 of 1QM would also refer to the Seleucids.²²⁰ The designation 'of Ashur' implies that the Kittim could be equated with Greeks in general, so that it also seems possible to believe that the term could have encompassed Ptolemy Lathyrus and his army from Cyprus (Jos. AJ. 13.328-332). Thus,

²¹⁵ Ibid: 222-223

²¹⁶ Vermes 1998: 88; Eshel 2008: 96-100

²¹⁷ Allegro 1969: 237; Burrows 1957: 104-5

²¹⁸ Eshel 2008: 153

²¹⁹ Ibid: 163-179; cf. Yadin 1962: 258.

²²⁰ Ibid: 171

the pesher on Isaiah provides evidence not only that 'the Kittim' (i.e. the Hellenistic empires) continued to be regarded as an abiding enemy of Judea, but also that Jannaeus's actions against them would have been regarded positively even by those who opposed his regime, since the author emphasised that God intervened to save Jerusalem from Lathyrus.

6.3: Giving 'unbridled expression' to orthodox aims? Jannaeus and the resurrection of the Solomonic-Davidic realm

East of the Jordan River, between 83 and 80 BCE, Jannaeus also reduced a number of Greek cities; a policy which, like that in the west, was pursued at a time of Seleucid weakness following the death of Demetrius III (Jos. AJ. 13.384-388).²²¹ The case of Pella is salient: according to Josephus, this Hellenised city's refusal to adopt Judean laws led to its destruction (Jos. AJ. 13.395-97). This policy might also be placed in the context of an attempt to reconstruct the boundaries of the Davidic-Solomonic kingdom. It is true that biblical texts are ambiguous about whether the land east of the Jordan comprised part of Eretz Israel. Numbers 34.1-12 offers a 'minimalist' conception of the boundaries of the Promised Land, restricting them to the west side of the Jordan River and northern Transjordan, but elsewhere, descriptions of the Land encompass a much wider geographical scope.²²² Genesis 15.18-19 posits Israel's inheritance as stretching to 'the great river, the river Euphrates', a position echoed in Deuteronomy 11.24 and also in Joshua 1.3-4. Importantly, there is evidence that this particular vision of Eretz Israel prevailed in the Hasmonean period. This is suggested by the fragmentary evidence of

²²¹ Schwartz 2001: 38

²²² Berthelot 2018: 241

Eupolemus, a Jewish-Hellenistic historian whose book *On the Kings of Judah* is partially preserved in the writings of Eusebius.²²³ In an extract which can be found in *Praeparatio evangelica*, Eupolemus ruminates on the conquests of David, whom he says ‘subdued the Syrians on the banks of the Euphrates, Commagene, the Assyrians of Galadene and the Phoenicians.’²²⁴ While the reference to Commagene seems anachronistic, it should be noted that Eupolemus refers to ‘the banks of the Euphrates’ in his discussion of the Davidic kingdom. If, as some scholars believe, Eupolemus is to be identified with the ambassador dispatched to Rome by Judas in 161 BCE, then we may infer that the Hasmoneans and their supporters subscribed to the maximalist vision of the Promised Land, and that Jannaeus’s campaigns east of the River Jordan might thus be situated in this context.²²⁵ *Mutatis mutandis*, it follows that the erosion of Seleucid power had also given Jannaeus the opportunity to give ‘unbridled expression’ to the orthodox dimension of the hidden transcript of the Hasmoneans.²²⁶

Thus, the application of Scott’s model to the reign of Alexander Jannaeus provides evidence that the ‘rupture of the cordon sanitaire’ which had begun in the time of John Hyrcanus was perpetuated under his rule. The Seleucid Empire, weakened ever more fatally by bitter blood-letting within the royal house, could no longer consistently assert its dominance through the ‘theatre of domination’ or even through coercion.²²⁷ Instead, the anti-Hellenistic tendencies of the dynasty, as well as its orthodox character, were able to advertise themselves ever more openly and aggressively, both in Jannaeus’s

²²³ Wacholder 1974: 231-235

²²⁴ Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* 9.30.1-2.

²²⁵ Gruen 2016: 171

²²⁶ Scott 1990: 224

²²⁷ Ibid 1990: 28-36

attacks on the Hellenised cities in Eretz Israel and in his attempts to capture territory which he may have regarded as legitimately belonging to the Promised Land. In turn, this suggests that the dynasty's Hellenism had taken only shallow root; when it was practically possible, they moved against the forces of the Hellenistic world.

Conclusion: The debate around the 'Hellenization of the Hasmoneans' in the light of

John C. Scott's model

This dissertation defined its' aims as three-fold: firstly, to investigate relations between the Hasmonean state and the Seleucid Empire in the context of John C. Scott's model of a hidden and public transcript, focusing on disparities between the two which might illuminate the Hasmoneans' off-stage agenda; secondly, to consider the implications of this approach for the scholarly debate around the extent of the dynasty's Hellenization; and thirdly to suggest a resolution to the 'perpetual paradox' facing historians of the Hasmonean state, in which evidence for the Hellenization and orthodoxy of the Hasmoneans must be reconciled. It is time to draw these strands together in order to offer some tentative conclusions. Though the case studies addressed here do not – indeed, cannot – offer a comprehensive analysis of all aspects of Hasmonean history, they do suggest a fresh perspective on a long-standing scholarly debate.

In terms of the power relations which prevailed between the Hasmonean state and its Seleucid overlords, it seems reasonable to conclude that the behaviour of the dynasty conformed to that of other subordinate groups. In the period from c.161 BCE to 134 BCE, when Jonathan and Simon faced a situation in which the Seleucid hegemon could harness considerable coercive power to assert its dominance, both participated in the 'reproduction of hegemonic appearances'.²²⁸ Jonathan accepted the High Priesthood in 152 BCE as the gift of Alexander Balas, a Seleucid overlord. Simon was honoured with an inscription which in form and structure conceded the cultural monopoly of the Hellenistic elite. Yet both also exploited the weaknesses of the hegemonic power to

²²⁸ Scott 1990: 69-70

advance a more orthodox agenda, with Jonathan taking advantage, *inter alia*, of Demetrius I's concessions to regain control of Jerusalem and rebuild its walls in the manner of Nehemiah, and the inscription for Simon celebrating such achievements as the destruction and purification of the Acra. The discrepancy between the conformity to the official transcript of Seleucid domination at times of Hasmonean vulnerability and the agenda they pursued when the Seleucids were weakened by internecine conflict, suggests a 'hidden transcript' which aimed at opportunistically curtailing the influence of their Hellenistic overlords.²²⁹

Such a conclusion is also supported by the behaviour of John Hyrcanus, when the death of Antiochus VII Sidetes allowed him to effect what Scott terms 'a rupture of the cordon sanitaire'.²³⁰ The policy he then followed in Samaria conformed not only to what seems to have become, by the early Hellenistic period, an orthodoxy about the nature of Judeo-Samaritan relations, but also to an agenda which sought to limit the influence of Hellenism in the land of Israel, since there is evidence to suggest that there was a 'Hellenizing party' in Shechem at the time that Hyrcanus moved against it. Finally, in the reign of Alexander Jannaeus, circumstances conspired to permit the 'unbridled expression of the hidden transcript'.²³¹ With Seleucid authority in terminal decline, Jannaeus took the chance to strike openly at the Hellenised cities of the Mediterranean coast and to pursue a policy east of the Jordan which arguably resurrected the territorial claims of the United Monarchy. Such behaviour also suggests that those scholars who have emphasised the rupture between the orthodoxy of the early Hasmoneans and the

²²⁹ Scott 1990: passim

²³⁰ Ibid: 192-196

²³¹ Ibid: 69-70

more ‘secular’ preoccupations of the dynasty from Hyrcanus onwards have somewhat overstated their case.

The implications of this model for the debate surrounding the ‘Hellenization of the Hasmoneans’ are salutary. Firstly, they suggest that the Hasmonean emulation of Hellenistic idioms was largely superficial. In the case of both Jonathan and Simon, participation in the theatre of Seleucid domination masked an anti-Hellenistic, orthodox agenda which was for the moment relegated to the hidden transcript but was able to venture forth more openly during periods of imperial weakness.²³² This process was pursued more openly under Hyrcanus and Jannaeus. *Mutatis mutandis*, this conclusion should cast some doubt on the interpretations of scholars such as Rajak and Gruen who advocate for the extensive Hellenization of the Hasmonean dynasty. Rajak asserted that ‘Hellenism and Hebraism’ were largely compatible, despite some tensions, but the artful behaviour of the Hasmoneans, as well as their open rejection of the official transcript of Seleucid and Hellenistic domination when the opportunity arose, suggests a different conclusion.²³³ Gruen, likewise, emphasised the ‘reciprocal relations’ between the Hasmoneans and the Seleucids; but the model outlined here indicates that the notion of a genuine rapprochement between the two forces should be contested.²³⁴

Finally, Scott’s model suggests a resolution to the ‘perpetual paradox’. It is very difficult to construct a case for the Hellenization of the Hasmoneans without acknowledging the considerable body of evidence which attests to their continued orthodoxy. On the other hand, it would be fallacious to suggest that the dynasty never emulated Hellenistic

²³² Scott 1990: passim

²³³ Rajak 1990: passim

²³⁴ Gruen 1998: 40

models. If, however, one concedes that the early Hasmoneans participated in a 'theatre of domination' which outwardly affirmed the hegemony of the Seleucid elite, while at the same time obscuring a 'hidden transcript' which sought to undermine that position, then the paradox becomes intelligible.²³⁵ It is this which can explain why contemporary scholars such as Dabrowa, Atkinson and Regev have been able to so frequently detect evidence of Hasmonean orthodoxy as well as evidence of their imitation of Hellenistic mores, and it is also this which should lead us to acknowledge the importance of their work in challenging the scholarly trope of the 'extensive Hellenization of the Hasmoneans'.

To conclude, then, Gruen's contention that the Hasmoneans 'still operated within a Hellenistic world to which they had adapted rather than one which they had rejected' seems only partially convincing in the light of Scott's model. Rather, the evidence suggests that the Hasmoneans adjusted to the political and cultural milieu of the Hellenistic world *in order to reject it*.²³⁶ Their 'Hellenization' should be viewed as artful rather than substantive; pragmatic rather than sincere. When the 'dramaturgy of domination' in which Jonathan and Simon had perforce participated was no longer necessary, or no longer served their purposes, John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus unfurled the flag of the hidden transcript to reveal an agenda steeped in the orthodox cause.

²³⁵ Scott 1990: 192-196

²³⁶ Gruen 1998: 27-28

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