

On the Autonomy of Judaea in the Fourth and Third Centuries B. C. E.

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This paper has two concerns. The first is a simple matter of setting the record straight. It is generally acknowledged that under the Achaemenids Judah enjoyed a large measure of autonomy. The Judahites mainly governed themselves in accordance with their own laws—which at least in the fourth century were somehow related to those of the Pentateuch—as interpreted by the high priest and his entourage.¹ Alexander the Great may have ratified this right in 332 B.C.E.—at any rate Josephus says he did (*Ant.* 11 §338–9); and in 200 B.C.E., as E. J. Bickerman argued in a celebrated article, Antiochus III once again granted the Judaeans the right to govern themselves according to their own laws.²

But what happened in the intervening period, especially between 301 and 200, that obscure century when Palestine was ruled by the Ptolemies? Did the kings confirm Judaeian autonomy, and if so how is this to be reconciled with their strong centralizing tendency? Here consensus breaks down. Some historians suppose that in Judaea the Ptolemies continued the policies of their predecessors—a position ostensibly bolstered by the so-called Tobiad Romance (Josephus, *Ant.* 12 §154–236), which assumes that in the third century Judaea continued to be governed by the high priests of the Jerusalem temple.³ By contrast, historians of Ptolemaic administration, most importantly Tcherikover and Bagnall, depending mostly on the Zenon archives, write about third-century Palestine without ever mentioning autonomous *ethne*.⁴ Yet Tcherikover himself, when writing Jewish history, took Judaeian autonomy in the third century for granted.⁵

In my view, the question may be settled on the basis of material evidence—coins, seals, jar-stamps, bullae—most of which has been discovered in the last thirty years. This evidence confirms the consensual view that Judaea was autonomous under the Achaemenids and Seleucids, and suggests too that the district remained partly autonomous under Alexander and his successors, including Ptolemy I (died 283/2). After Ptolemy's time, material traces of administrative autonomy disappear: Judaea, along with the rest of Palestine, was integrated into the Ptolemaic system. The authority of the temple, priesthood and Law was no longer protected by imperial guarantee.

¹ See for example S. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Library of Early Christianity 7; Philadelphia, 1987), 104–8.

² See E. J. Bickerman, 'La charte séleucide de Jerusalem', *REJ* 100 (1935), 4–35.

³ Josephus sets the story after the Seleucid conquest of Palestine, but this is obviously mistaken; see V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1959), 128–30.

⁴ V. Tcherikover, 'Palestine under the Ptolemies', *Mizraim* 4/5 (1937), 9–90; R. Bagnall, *The Administration of the Ptolemaic Possessions Outside Egypt* (Leiden, 1976).

⁵ See *Hellenistic Civilization*, 132–3.

The second concern of this paper is to suggest—and I do intend here to be suggestive and programmatic, not comprehensive—that changes in patterns of imperial administration, from the weak central control typical of the Achaemenids and the empire of Alexander to the strong central control of the Ptolemies, had significant and traceable consequences.⁶ The Ptolemies, instead of dealing mainly with the traditional leadership of the autonomous *ethne*, subdivided areas under their control into small units and entrusted each to a tax-farmer—usually a wealthy native—who mediated between the subjects and the government without working through the traditional native hierarchy. Thus, the political structure of the native districts was transformed—the pyramid flattened. I suggest that this development was important not only politically, but also economically and religiously, and that traces of this significance can be detected, if only one looks for them in the right places.

The issues I discuss in this paper are not exclusively Jewish, for Judaea was not the only traditionally autonomous ethnic district in Syria-Palestine. The precise composition of the list is uncertain, but would surely include at various times Samaria (plus Galilee?), Idumaea, Ammanitis, Moabitis, and even Ashdod and Gaza. These districts are worthy of study in their own right, and in some cases—e.g. Samaria and Idumaea—evidence is not completely lacking.⁷ But only for Judaea is there sufficient, and sufficiently varied, evidence not only to discuss administrative changes in the district, but also to trace their consequences. In what follows, then, I will concentrate on Judaea and mention the other autonomous districts of Syria-Palestine mainly for purposes of comparison.

⁶ Recent scholarship has modified the classic view of M. I. Rostovtzeff that Ptolemaic rule was characterized by royal ownership of almost all land, absolute royal control over all aspects of production, and so on (see Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Religious History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford, 1941); C. Préaux, *Le Monde Hellenistique* (Paris, 1978); J. Bingen, *Le Papyrus "Revenue Laws": Tradition Grecque et Adaptation Hellénistique* (Opladen, 1978); and E. G. Turner in *Cambridge Ancient History*, second edition, vol. 7 (1985)). Yet there is no question that the Ptolemaic Empire of the third century B.C.E.—whether its policies were motivated by an ideology of royal control or by a 'rational' desire to maximize revenues—was by the standards of ancient kingdoms unusually interventionist and centralizing.

⁷ I have discussed the history of Samaria in detail in 'John Hyrcanus I's Destruction of the Gerizim Temple and Judaeo-Samaritan Relations', *Jewish History* 7 (1993), 9–25. On the *ethne* of southern Palestine—Judaeans, Idumaeans, Gazaeans and Azotaeans—see Strabo, *Geographica* 16.2.2. Strabo may depend on a source which reflected conditions of the second century B.C.E.; see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (three volumes; Jerusalem 1974–84), 1.262–3 and 287, and J. Goldstein, *I Maccabees* (Anchor Bible 41; Garden City, 1976), 195. On the problematic ethnic composition of Achaemenid Idumaea, see J. Naveh, in Y. Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions* (Jerusalem, 1975), 166–204; idem, in Aharoni, *Beer-Sheva I: Excavations at Tel Beer-Sheva* (Tel-Aviv, 1973), 79–82; idem, 'The Aramaic Ostraca from Tel Beer-Sheva (1971–6)', *Tel-Aviv* 6 (1979), 182–95; idem, 'Published and Unpublished Aramaic Ostraca', *Atiqot* (English Series) 17 (1985), 114–21. See also A. Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans and Ancient Arabs* (Tübingen, 1988), 1–6. The ethnic character of the district seems more complex than Naveh supposes. On the Idumaeans in the early second century, see 1 Macc. 4:61, 5:3, 5:63–8; 2 Macc. 10:14–15, 12:32–7; perhaps also Sir. 50:26, if the Hebrew text is here to be preferred to the Greek. About the other districts our information consists almost entirely of scattered references in the Zenon papyri, which may be found by consulting P. Pestman, *A Guide to the Zenon Archive* (2 volumes; Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava 21; Leiden, 1981).

Judaea under the Achaemenids

As I suggested above, the changes in Judaea's status may be argued briefly because the evidence, though scattered and not without problematic details, is easily systematized. For the period of Achaemenid rule, the common view, derived mainly from the biblical books of Ezra-Nehemiah, that Yehud was an autonomous province in the satrapy of Abar-Nahara, governed usually by a native Judahite who may sometimes have served also as high priest of the Jerusalem temple, is strikingly confirmed by material evidence.⁸ Yehud had a provincial silver coinage—the symbol *par excellence* of autonomy—, at least in the fourth century. Most of these coins are tiny, ranging in weight from .10 to .70 grams, i.e. from *tetartemoria* (=quarter-obols) to obols by a rough approximation of the Attic standard,⁹ though the most famous fourth-century Judaeian coin is a drachma. The iconography of the coins is mainly Greek, especially Attic: Athena and the owl are common but there are other types as well which, though clearly 'Greek' in appearance, are often difficult to interpret. Most of the coins bear the name of the province, יהד, in archaic Aramaic script, though one type includes a coin, apparently misread by Mildenberg, inscribed in Paleo-Hebrew letters יהנן הכהן—i.e. (in Hebrew) Yohanan the (high) priest—who obviously performed some officially recognized function in the administration of the province; most likely he was governor.¹⁰

Corresponding to these coins are a large number of bullae, seals, and stamped jar handles. The bullae and seals, found near Jerusalem, may come from an earlier period than the coins, though few have followed Avigad in dating them to the sixth century.¹¹ The script is Aramaic, but the language of the inscriptions, to the extent that their brevity permits decision, is for the most part Hebrew. Four of the bullae and one of the seals contain the name

⁸ For a detailed survey of the evidence for Judaeian autonomy under the Achaemenids (even before Nehemiah, against A. Alt's now generally discredited theory), see A. Lemaire, 'Populations et territoires de la Palestine à l'époque perse', *Transeuphratène* 3 (1990), esp. 33–45.

⁹ For a general survey of the coins, see L. Mildenberg, 'Yehud: A Preliminary Study of the Provincial Coinage of Judaea', *Greek Numismatics and Archaeology: Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson* (eds. O. Mørkholm and N. A. Waggoner; Wetteren, 1979), 183–96 (now updated in Mildenberg *apud* H. Weippert, *Palästina in Vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Handbuch der Archäologie: Vorderasien II bd. 1; Munich, 1988), 721–8; see also E. Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 538–332 B.C.* (Warminster, 1982), 224–7). Few of these coins have been found in controlled excavation; they simply 'appear' on the antiquities market. Information about provenance in such cases is naturally sketchy.

I am not convinced by J. Betlyon's revision of the the chronology of the Yehud coins suggested by Mildenberg ('The Provincial Government of Persian Period Judaea and the Yehud Coins', *JBL* 105 (1986), 633–42): it presupposes an excessively specific political history of Judah in the fourth century.

¹⁰ On this coin type, its interpretation and the identity of Yohanan, see D. Barag, 'A Silver Coin of Yohanan the High Priest and the Coinage of Judaea in the Fourth Century B.C.E.', *Israel Numismatic Journal* 9 (1986–7), 4–21. Other coins of the same type bear the name of יהנן הכהן (= 'governor'); if all coins of this type were minted at one time, then Yohanan was not governor and Yehizkiyah was not high priest; but it is impossible to tell. Mildenberg *apud* Weippert, 724–5, doubts that *hakohen* is equivalent to *hakohen hagadol*.

¹¹ See N. Avigad, *Bullae and Seals from a Post-Exilic Judaeian Archive* (Qedem 4; Jerusalem, 1976). The seals were bought from a dealer (pp. 1–2); date: pp. 16–20; contrast E. Stern, *Material Culture*, 206. For a detailed survey of the bullae, seals and stamps, see Stern, 202–13.

of the province,¹² and two of the bullae and perhaps one of the seals bear the names of people identified as officials.¹³ Avigad dated the stamped jar handles, of which some 300 have been found at Jerusalem, Ramat Rahel, Tel en-Nasbe, Tel el-Ful, Husan, Bethany, Motza, Jericho, Gezer, and En Gedi (providing, incidentally, some idea of the boundaries of the province) a bit later than the bullae, to approximately the same period as the coins.¹⁴ These stamps, which Avigad suggested were used to mark stores of taxes-in-kind (p. 21),¹⁵ also use Aramaic script, but their language is indeterminate. Most contain the word יהוד, and they add a few more Judaeian-sounding names to the list of פְּחוּת (‘governors’) of the province.¹⁶

These documents, taken as a group, show that Yehud was a separate province, governed by a native bureaucracy: not a single official mentioned on the coins, bullae, seals or jar stamps has a Persian name, or indeed a name which is not likely to be Judahite.¹⁷ This bureaucracy was headed by governors, some of whom also served as high priests. A noteworthy feature of the documents is their frequent use of the Hebrew language, and occasional use of the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet, this despite the fact that Aramaic was the language normally used for all public business in the Persian empire and probably, by the fourth century, the common language of most Judahites.

¹² Avigad #1–4; #13.

¹³ #5: Elnatan פְּחוּת (or הפְּחוּת); #6: יְרֵמִי הַסֹּפֵר; perhaps #14: אַמְתַּן אֶלְנָתָן פְּחוּת (or שלומית אמת אלנתן פחוא). In any case, Shelomit was almost certainly an official of some sort—an extremely rare case of a woman serving in such a capacity; I can think of only one (imperfect) parallel, Artemisia, of Achaemenid Halicarnassus (Hdt. 7.99; 8.68 ff.). Nevertheless, Meyers’ confident ‘historical’ reconstruction (Shelomit—cf. 1 Chr. 3:19—was daughter of Zerubbabel, whom his successor Elnatan married, etc. etc.) is baseless; see E. Meyers, ‘The Shelomith Seal and the Judaeian Restoration’, *EI* 18 (1985), 33–38 (English section).

¹⁴ p. 24; however, bulla #3 and stamp type #5 seem to mention the same official.

¹⁵ This is, however, uncertain; cf. C. Tuplin, ‘The Administration of the Achaemenid Empire’, I. Carradice (ed.), *Coinage and Administration in the Athenian and Persian Empires* (The Ninth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History; Oxford, 1987), 145; for a general discussion of taxation in kind, see 137–42.

¹⁶ #7: Yeho’ezer; #8: Ahzai (short for Ahazyahu?). I must also mention a group of about fifty paleo-Hebrew jar stamps, reading יהוד and יְרֵשָׁלַם, never found in the same contexts as the Aramaic stamps. Avigad suggests a second-century dating for them, and Stern considers this certain (Avigad, *Bullae and Seals*, 27–8; Stern, *Material Culture*, 205). They thus constitute the sole material evidence (in the absence of coins) for Judaeian autonomy probably in the early years of Seleucid rule, after 200 B.C.E., and also confirm the impression created by some of the documents mentioned in the text that Hebrew was beginning to be a Judaeian national symbol even before the Maccabean revolt.

¹⁷ Persian names are rare also on the ostraca of Arad and Be’er-Sheba, and in the little that has been published so far (thirty years after their discovery!) of the Daliyeh papyri: see F. M. Cross *apud* P. W. and N. L. Lapp, *Discoveries in the Wadi ed-Dalivah* (AASOR 41; Cambridge, MA, 1974), 20; idem, ‘Samaria Papyrus I: An Aramaic Slave Conveyance of 335 B.C.E. Found in the Wadi ed-Daliyeh’, *EI* 18 (1985), 7*–17*. However, one Judaeian governor with a Persian name, בְּגוּדִי פַחַת יְהוּד (presumably identical to Josephus’s Bagoses), is known from the Elephantine papyri (see A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1923), #30 (בְּגוּדִי פַחַת יְהוּד) with comments, pp. 108–11). Two of eleven personal names appearing on the Samaritan coins are Persian; the rest, except for that of Sanballat, are NW Semitic, and four contain the element יהו; see Meshorer and Qedar, *The Coinage of Samaria in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* (Jerusalem, 1991), 13–17.

The status the Persian emperors granted Yehud is explicable in terms of their normal practice of utilizing pre-existing political, administrative and legal structures and ratifying (or even initiating the codification of) native legal systems.¹⁸

Judaea Under the Successors of Alexander

We know that Judaea's northern neighbour Samaria was reduced to subjection in the late fourth century; what became of Judaea? Josephus claims that Alexander the Great himself confirmed the right of the Judaeans to live according to their ancestral laws (*Ant.* 11 §338–9). But he also reports the claim of Agatharchides of Cnidus that (probably in 301 B.C.E.) Ptolemy I took Jerusalem by guile and ruled it harshly, and follows Pseudo-Aristeas in claiming that Ptolemy took many captives in Judaea who remained enslaved in Egypt until freed by his son (*Ant.* 12 §3–7; 11–33). If these reports were true, they would suggest that Judaeian autonomy was confirmed by Alexander and not overturned by his successors Seleucus, Antigonos or Ptolemy until 301, when the latter reduced the Judaeans to subjection. In the final analysis, though, there is no way to evaluate the truth of Josephus's claims: that Alexander, or more likely one of his deputies, permitted the Jews to retain their own laws is plausible, but also conforms closely to the needs of later Jewish apologetic. That Ptolemy I enslaved the Jews, and Ptolemy II freed them and then allowed them to receive their divinely inspired law (this is the continuation of the story in Pseudo-Aristeas), resonates too closely with the biblical Exodus story to inspire confidence. This leaves the report of Agatharchides, whose motivations are unrecoverable. Yet even if his report is approximately true, its political implications are ambiguous: the conquest of Jerusalem might have resulted in suspension of Judaeian autonomy, or simply in the punishment of Ptolemy's Judaeian enemies followed by a restoration of the status quo ante.

Once again, the material evidence provides some clarity. Mildenberg assigned to the Diadochic period a small group of coins, featuring a human head on the obverse and a winged lynx on the reverse and inscribed יהזקיה (with no title).¹⁹ Though his arguments are inconclusive, it is not implausible that minting continued under the successors, and Mildenberg's suggestion has found guarded acceptance.²⁰ In any case, there now seems little doubt that there was a revival (or continuation) of Judaeian provincial coinage under Ptolemy I. Mildenberg identified three types of Ptolemaic Judaeian coins: one with a youthful head on the obverse and on the reverse an eagle and lightning bolt (the symbol of Ptolemy Soter and one of the most common

¹⁸ See Tuplin 109–113; on Achaemenid patronage of native legal systems, see P. Frei, in Frei and K. Koch, *Reichsidee und Reichsorganisation in Perserreich* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 55; Freiburg–Göttingen, 1984).

¹⁹ 'Yehud' 188.

²⁰ See Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage* (2 volumes; New York, 1982), 1.14–17, for a discussion of Mildenberg; Meshorer accepts his schema with minor adjustments and corrections; he professes uncertainty as to whether the יהזקיה coins are diadochic, but is prepared to admit that some of the others may be.

Ptolemaic reverse types), with the inscription יהי; the two other types bear portraits of a king, almost certainly Ptolemy I himself, and are inscribed, in paleo-Hebrew letters, יהיה; one of these types has a portrait of an elderly (?) woman on the reverse, plausibly identified by Mildenberg as Berenike, consort of Ptolemy. According to Mildenberg, this implies a date of issue after 290, when Berenike was proclaimed queen, but given the anomalous character of the YHDH coinage as a whole, the chronological implications of the appearance of Berenike's portrait are unclear.²¹ Meshorer subsequently published two larger silver coins, apparently hemidrachms, both with heads of Ptolemy I on the obverse and the Ptolemaic eagle on the reverse, inscribed, like the small Ptolemaic coins, יהיה, in paleo-Hebrew. Meshorer argued that all the Ptolemaic יהיה coinage was issued under Ptolemy II and Ptolemy III, but his argument depends mostly on extrapolation from Agatharchides's report mentioned above, so Mildenberg and Barag are likely to have been right in rejecting it and dating the coins to the reign of Ptolemy I.²²

In sum, Judaea remained in some sense an autonomous ethnic province under Ptolemy I. The coin types form a continuous series with the Achaemenid Yehud coinage, but there are some noteworthy changes in the Ptolemaic coins. No officials' names have so far appeared on these later coins; the inscriptions are now consistently in paleo-Hebrew lettering instead of a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, and the province's name has its old Hebrew form יהיה instead of the Aramaic יהי. These changes are very likely to reflect administrative and other changes, but it is difficult to say what these might be; would it be unreasonable to suggest that the absence of officials' names implies that Ptolemy I had already taken some steps toward centralization by not appointing a native governor and refraining from recognizing the high priest as ruler of the district? The shift to Hebrew is a rather more complex issue which I cannot discuss in requisite detail here.

In any case, Ptolemy II undertook more thorough reforms. Tcherikover and Bagnall provided detailed accounts of the administration of Palestine

²¹ 'Yehud' 188–9. Yet in this portrait, in contrast to all other coin portraits of the Ptolemaic queens, Berenike is bareheaded and diademless. Might this not imply a pre-290 date? (The best photograph of this coin is in O. Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage from the Accession of Alexander to the Peace of Apamea* (Cambridge, 1991), pl. 7 #131; on coin portraits, see H. Kyrieleis, *Bildnisse der Ptolemäer* (Berlin, 1975), 4–6.)

²² See Meshorer, 'New Types of Judaeian Silver Coins', *INJ* 5 (1981), 4; *Ancient Jewish Coinage*, 1.18–20; Barag, 'Yohanan the High Priest', 7 note 20. Meshorer claims that the Berenike coins must post-date the queen's death (279), since no coins bearing her portrait were issued anywhere in the empire before it. Yet Svoronos records coins from Cos and Rhodes bearing Berenike's portrait alone—diademless, like the Judaeian coins—minted as early as 305 (J. N. Svoronos, *Τὰ Νομίσματα Τοῦ Κράτους Τῶν Πτολεμαίων* (4 volumes; Athens, 1904–8) 2.#89–92, p. 15). Admittedly, Svoronos' identification of the portrait on and/or dating of the coins is now generally rejected. Nevertheless, coins with portraits of Berenike alone (as opposed to the common type showing Ptolemy II and Arsinoe on the obverse and Ptolemy I and Berenike on the reverse) are rare. Furthermore, Meshorer considers a series of Cyrenean coins minted under Ptolemy II, with a portrait of Berenike, with diadem, the model for the Judaeian one, but it is far from clear what the relation between the portraits is. Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage*, 70, accepts for it the early dating of Mildenberg and Barag and considers the Judaeian portrait of Berenike earlier than the Cyrenean—indeed, the earliest known coin portrait of the queen.

in this period, and I have only a few observations to add.²³ The 'Ptolemaic system'—characterized, *in theory*, by centralized control of most aspects of the political and economic life of an empire divided into small districts executed by a bureaucracy controlled from Alexandria—was after all an ideal never reached even in Egypt, let alone in Ptolemaic holdings abroad: though the government did intervene to an unusual extent in the economic and political lives of its subjects, there were practical limits. In Egypt, Ptolemy had to yield some economic autonomy to the Egyptian temples, and to a lesser extent to Greek colonists, and his control even over Egyptian peasants could never be as absolute as he apparently wished: rules were evaded, officials corrupted, established social relations which may have violated the spirit or letter of the reforms winked at, and so on.²⁴ Outside Egypt, government control was necessarily looser still. As Tcherikover observed, the hinterland of Palestine was inhabited and in large measure controlled by a number of small-scale potentates—wealthy country-landlords who in some cases commanded the loyalty of large groups of dependants. Ptolemaic administrators interfered with such men at their own risk: the weaker could presumably be suppressed or ignored, but the stronger and wealthier they could hope only to manipulate. From the Zenon papyri and Josephus we know of two cases of temporarily successful manipulation by central Palestinian grandees. One is the well-known case of Toubias and his descendants. Toubias, who was probably the descendant of Nehemiah's antagonist, Tobiah the Ammonite (Neh. 2:10–20), was, in the early third century B.C.E., a prosperous landowner in Transjordan and a relative of the high priestly dynasty of Jerusalem. He was also the eponymous commander (in the Achaemenid style) of a Ptolemaic military settlement. He and his descendants, then, were successfully incorporated into the administration and army of the empire.²⁵ That Ptolemy II and his descendants entrusted the command of a military unit to a native gives a good idea of the differences between Ptolemaic Egypt—where native Egyptians were barred from military service—and Syria.

The second case—which requires some comment—is that of the high priest Onias II. We know about Onias only from the so-called Tobiad Romance. This is the common designation of Josephus, *Ant.* 12 §154–236, apparently a paraphrase of one or two stories about the adventures of Joseph son of Tobias (presumably identical with the Toubias of the Zenon papyri) and his son Hyrcanus.²⁶ The historical problems with this account are well known,²⁷

²³ See Tcherikover, 'Palestine under the Ptolemies', *Mizraim* 4–5 (1937), 9–90; R. Bagnall, *Administration*, especially 11–24; for a summary of the 'Ptolemaic system' in Egypt, see Bagnall, 3–10.

²⁴ See Bagnall, *Administration*, 19–20: Apollonios himself is unlikely to have adhered to the spirit of his boss's law against the enslavement of natives in Syria; at any rate, much of his business there involved trade in slaves, who are unlikely all to have been 'imported' from outside the province.

²⁵ On Toubias, see Tcherikover, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* 1.115–30, and 'Palestine under the Ptolemies', *passim*; on Joseph and Hyrcanus the Tobiads, see below.

²⁶ See D. Gera, 'On the Credibility of the History of the Tobiads', *Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel* (eds. A. Kasher, U. Rappaport and G. Fuks; Jerusalem, 1990), 21–38.

²⁷ And are discussed by Gera.

though enough of the circumstantial detail—e.g. the historicity of some of the protagonists and the description of the operation of the Ptolemaic fiscal administration—is verifiable to give the story the value of a well-researched historical novel. That is, the narrative should be assumed dependable only inasmuch as it expresses a set of assumptions about the milieu in which the story is set. Within limits, though: the story has been thought to demonstrate that the Ptolemies normally confirmed much of the Judaeian high priest's traditional authority by formally appointing him *prostates tou ethnous* (ruler of the nation), and that therefore the Judaeian nation retained the trappings of autonomy, and its ancestral constitution royal support. But Daniel Schwartz has now shown, conclusively in my view, that Josephus's claims about the high priestly *prostasia* are Josephus's own contribution to the story, part of his larger attempt in *Antiquities* to impose his theory of an ideal constitution on his often recalcitrant sources.²⁸ When this element is abstracted, what remains is the information that the high priests had customarily bought a moderate-sized (20 talents) tax contract from the kings, for all or, more likely, part of the hyparchy of Judaea (12 §158), and the assumption that the high priest could be outbid for this contract by a wealthy commoner. So the story says nothing about Judaeian autonomy or royal support for the Judaeian constitution; it suggests, on the contrary, only that the high priests were wealthy and influential (and so customarily bid on tax contracts) and that the kings normally felt it appropriate to yield to them, along with other wealthy Palestinians, a part in the fiscal administration of the empire. When they ceased being worthy of attention, the kings ignored them.

Taken together, then, the Zenon papyri, Josephus and the numismatic evidence (in which autonomous coinage disappears), suggest that from the accession of Ptolemy II in 283/2 to the Battle of Panion in 200, which marked the end of Ptolemaic rule, the following situation prevailed in Palestine. The Ptolemies did not recognize, and certainly did not take the traditional measures to bolster, the autonomy of the Palestinian *ethne*. Nor, however, did they take open measures to deconstitute them—e.g. to declare the Judaeian priests incompetent to legislate and judge, and the temple forbidden to raise funds. If they had done so, we would have heard about it. Thus, adherence by Judaeians (and Idumaeans, Ammanites *et al.*) to their 'ancestral laws' was now entirely voluntary, and though the old national institutions continued to exist, they did so without the support of the central government. The Ptolemies established instead their own administrative system, which coexisted, sometimes uneasily, often less so, with the old one. The reason this coexistence was sometimes happy is that the kings were never strong enough to fulfil completely their presumable administrative aspirations. They, too, like the Achaemenids before them, sometimes had no choice but to exploit the political status quo, having suitably decked it out in Ptolemaic administrative jargon. From the Zenon papyri, Josephus and 2 Maccabees we can derive a list of Ptolemaic officials scattered about in various Palestinian hyparchies,²⁹ yet the same

²⁸ 'Josephus on the Jewish Constitution and Community', *SCI* 7 (1983/4), 30–52, especially 40 ff.

²⁹ See W. Peremans and E. van't Dack, *Prosopographia Ptolemaica* VI (*Studia Hellenistica* 17;

sources also indicate that the officials were often native landlords in disguise, or were Greeks, but were locked in a clumsy dance of mutual manipulation with the native landlords. The ambiguities embedded in the system must have been especially manifest in the case of tax collection—executed (supposedly) by the *oikonomoi* and their staff, but overseen by the *telonai* (tax farmers), who were wealthy natives with access to cash.³⁰

I will not try here to provide a full account of the social, economic, religious and political consequences of Ptolemaic rule in Palestine, with its complex mix of conservative (in that it incorporated parts of the preexisting power structure) and revolutionary (in that relations between government and subjects were set on an entirely new basis) elements. A few observations will suffice to show that the administrative changes introduced by Ptolemy II were in their effects far from trivial.

From the perspective of the Palestinian *ethne*, Ptolemaic rule was characterized by *decentralization*: the old national institutions and their retainers lost some of their importance, while groups who had had only subordinate or purely local power previously—country landlords or well-to-do traders (who were sometimes identical) with little or no connection to traditional elites—now found themselves in direct contact with the central government. By exploiting this contact, such people could, especially if they had access to cash and so to participation in the fiscal system, greatly enhance their wealth and influence, to the point of challenging the traditional elites. This is the historical reality behind the adventure tale of the Tobiads. This reality has left some physical remains, too: the massive construction at 'Araq el-'Amir (the Tobiad castle), near Amman and Tel Anafa (the manorial complex of an unknown hellenistic grandee), in the Huleh valley, and the Idumaeen town of Marisa,³¹ whose massive growth in the third century was probably a result of the rise in trade sparked in part by local landlords' need for cash.³²

Louvain, 1968), 78–152 passim.

³⁰ See Bagnall, *Administration*, 18–21.

³¹ On Araq el-Amir, see N. L. Lapp (ed.), *The Excavations at Araq el-Emir* (AASOR 47; Cambridge, MA, 1983), especially 133–48. The authors in this collection are united in their unquestioning acceptance of Josephus's tales and so attribute the construction to Hyrcanus. Needless to say, there is no physical evidence for this. On Tel Anafa, see in general S. Weinberg, 'Tel Anafa: The Hellenistic Town', *IEJ* 21 (1971), 86 ff.; for the third-century dating of the earlier Hellenistic stratum and some comments on the importance of trade at Tel Anafa, see S. Herbert, 'Tel Anafa 1978, Preliminary Report', *BASOR* 234 (1979), 67 ff.; and see in general S. Herbert, 'Tel Anafa', *New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 1.58–61, with an appropriate emphasis on the role of trade in the Hellenistic settlement. On Marisa, see now A. Klöner, 'Maresha', *Qadmoniot* 24 (1991), 70–85 (in Hebrew).

³² On the tendency of taxation in silver to stimulate trade and economic growth, see K. Hopkins' introduction to P. Garnsey, K. Hopkins and C. R. Whittaker, *Trade in the Ancient Economy* (Berkeley–Los Angeles, 1983), xix–xxi, and 'Taxes and Trade in the Roman Empire', *JRS* 70 (1980), 101–25. I should point out that in a fiscal system which depends on tax farming (as opposed to direct monetary taxation) this effect will have been modified by the fact that the necessary conversion of agricultural and manufactured goods into cash may have taken place at any point in the tax collecting process—i.e. the peasants may have been compelled to pay in silver, or the village contractors but not the peasants, or only the district contractor. That is, though the *total volume* of trade was not affected by the method of tax-collection (since the province had to produce the same quantity of silver in any case), its social distribution may have been. What

Some of the cultural changes produced by this redistribution of power and wealth in the Palestinian countryside are readily identifiable: the pace of hellenization of material culture—a process which had begun in a serious way as early as the fifth century—now hastened, culminating in the hellenization of architectural style.³³ This was accompanied by an increasing use of the Greek language³⁴—i.e. Ptolemaic policy had created a class of rural élites who sought to behave as they thought their rulers and peers expected them to behave (building big Greek-style houses; developing a taste for Greek-style luxuries, and so on). The author of the Tobiad Romance was careful to stress the importance to his rustic but wealthy Palestinian characters of the sort of wit, rhetorical skill and sympotic behaviour which would be acceptable in Alexandria.

I would like to push this line of speculation just one step further, by suggesting that not only this relatively profound but socially restricted hellenization but also some of the other peculiar phenomena of third-century Judaea should be seen against the background of Ptolemaic policy. The most noteworthy extant literary products of Achaemenid Judaea are all roughly of a type. The

actually occurred Palestine in the third century is unknown, but two points seem relevant. (1) Use of coins was *apparently* widespread in Judaea as early as the fourth century (see survey in Stern, *Material Culture*, 215–28); however, it was apparently not as widespread as in coastal Phoenicia, and it would obviously be unwise to suppose that monetization anywhere in the region was complete (see J. Elayi, *Pénétration grecque en Phénicie sous l'empire perse* (Nancy, 1988), 39–53, and the important surveys by Elayi and E. Lemaire in *Transeuphratène* 1 (1989), 155–64, and 4 (1991), 119–32). Introduction of bronze coinage in the third century may have hastened monetization (see Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage*, 10–11). (2) In the Tobiad Romance, Joseph is represented as exacting taxes mostly from the cities, where coinage was obviously concentrated; note also Stern's observation, *ibid.*, that business transactions recorded in the Elephantine papyri and the little that has been published of the Dalyeh papyri (both Achaemenid) generally used weighed silver, not coins, while such third-century documents as the Kom ostrakon and the Zenon papyri report monetary transactions; on the Kom ostrakon, see A. Skaist, 'A Note on the Bilingual Ostrakon from Khirbet el-Kom', *IEJ* 28 (1978), 106–8.

³³ See E. Stern, *Material Culture*, *passim*, for the fifth and fourth centuries, and the survey in H. P. Kuhnen, *Palästina in Griechisch-Römischer Zeit* (Handbuch der Archäologie: Vorderasien II bd. 2; Munich, 1990), 33–87, for the third.

³⁴ The survey by J. Barr, in *Cambridge History of Judaism* (Cambridge, 1989), 2.98–110, concentrates on the literary remains; for the third century, though, there are also the following items (this list may not be comprehensive). (1) Probably the earliest Greek texts from Palestine are a number of graffiti recently found in a burial cave at Hirbet Zaaquqa, about six kilometers east of Marisa-Bet Guvrin; the inscriptions may be as early as the late fourth century B.C.E. and were probably made by Greek settlers; see A. Kloner, D. Regev and U. Rappaport, 'A Hellenistic Burial Cave in the Judaean Shephelah', *Atiqot* 21 (1992), *27–*50. (2) Toubias's Greek letter to Apollonios (V. Tcherikover, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 1.#4—illustrating at least Toubias's employment of a Greek secretary). (3) The bilingual ostrakon from Khirbet el-Kom, mentioned above. (4) The Greek *dipinti* from the necropolis of Marisa, from the third and second centuries; see J. P. Peters and H. Thiersch, *Painted Tombs in the Necropolis of Marissa* (London, 1905), 37–75; E. Oren and U. Rappaport, 'The Necropolis of Maresah-Beth Govrin', *IEJ* 34 (1984), 114–53. (5) A bilingual (Greek and Aramaic) inscription on an altar from Dan; see A. Biran, 'Chronique Archéologique: Tell Dan', *RB* 84 (1977), 256–63. I exclude the many stamped amphora handles and Ptolemaic coins, as well as the Hefzibah inscription (*IEJ* 1966). Most remarkable, and unexplained, are two *Achaemenid* Samaritan coins with Greek inscriptions, published by Meshorer and Qedar, *Coinage of Samaria*, pp. 13–17. I assume, however, that the letters *AΘE* appearing on a number of imitation Attic Palestinian coins of the fourth century are, culturally speaking, insignificant.

emperors themselves ratified the Pentateuch (or something like it), and such Achaemenid-era products as Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah and (most of the) Psalms are definitely continuous with it—in that they express more or less the same world-view.³⁵ The literary remains of third-century Judaea, though, are not only discontinuous with the Achaemenid material, but also very diverse themselves. There is little in the fifth and fourth centuries that would have led us to expect the sudden appearance in the third of the fully developed mythology of I Enoch 1–36, or the nihilism of Qohelet. Nor is it obvious what Enoch and Qohelet have in common with each other, or with Ben Sira (written just after the Ptolemaic period), which reaffirms the world-view of Deuteronomy. It would obviously be the crudest sort of materialist reductionism to suggest that the Ptolemaic administrative reforms had somehow generated the details of Enoch's baroque fantasies, or Qohelet's existential gloom, or even Ben Sira's polite and untroubled bureaucratic piety (though here a closer connection can be made). But it would be far from ridiculous (if not therefore necessarily correct) to speculate that the decentralization of Judaea was, in part because of its empowerment of a new class, somehow ultimately responsible for the sudden appearance in writing of what may have been the long-held beliefs of some of its members. However, I leave it at that: the topic is obviously too large and complicated to be discussed in a brief note.

Conclusion

I now conclude by briefly summarizing my argument. Judaea was an autonomous district under the Achaemenids, Alexander the Great and his successors. There are some signs of the weakening of Judaeian autonomy under Ptolemy I (ruled in Palestine 301–283/2), but Judaea was still producing silver coins in this period. Ptolemy II, though, seems to have suspended Judaeian autonomy and to have tried to integrate Judaea along with the rest of Palestine in his highly centralized administrative system. This attempt was successful within certain bounds: like the non-centralizing Achaemenids, the Ptolemies sometimes had no choice but to acknowledge the status quo and try to manipulate it to their own ends. Thus the old Jerusalem high priests generally remained important figures in Ptolemaic Judaea, as did powerful country landlords like the Tobiads. Nevertheless, the imposition of the Ptolemaic system on Judaea brought about significant structural changes, for it tended to favour country landlords over the traditional (priestly?) leadership, and produced a new class of mediators between subjects and state. The rise of this new class may provide a partial explanation for some of the most conspicuous cultural phenomena of the third–second centuries: the intensification of the pace of hellenization of material culture, widespread but socially restricted adoption of the Greek language, and perhaps also the emergence

³⁵ On Achaemenid promulgation of the laws of the Judaeians, see for example J. Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1983), 107; on general Achaemenid practice, see P. Briant, 'The Seleucid Kingdom and the Achaemenid Empire', *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom* (ed. P. Bilde; Aarhus, 1990), 53–60.

in Judaeon literature of previously unattested tendencies not directly due to Greek influence.

When in 200 the Seleucids returned to Palestine and restored the status quo ante, they did so in a district which had been utterly transformed, not only culturally, but politically, socially and economically, too. If I am right, then the Seleucid 'charter', granting the Judaeans once again the right to live according to their ancestral laws (Josephus, *Ant.* 12 § 138–144), may have constituted an attempt to turn back the clock which could only end in conflict. Detailed discussion of the social and economic background of the Maccabean revolt, however, will have to await another occasion.