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Die jüdische Revolution: Untersuchungen zu Ursachen, Verlauf und Folgen der hasmonäischen Erhebung. KLIO. Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte. Beihefte, neue Folge, Band 22

Johannes Christian Bernhardt, *Die jüdische Revolution: Untersuchungen zu Ursachen, Verlauf und Folgen der hasmonäischen Erhebung. KLIO. Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte. Beihefte, neue Folge, Band 22*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017. xiii, 726. ISBN 9783050064819 €99,95.

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Contents

This revised dissertation offers two books for the price of one: It deals with what is usually called the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Maccabean Revolt with its aftermath. The book's title is a clue to Bernhardt's interpretation of the events (as explained on p. 34 and 484). The entire process of the causes, course and impact of the Maccabean revolt, together with the discursive development of Judean identity, points to a Judean or, better, a Jewish revolution. Besides a very detailed history of this revolution, the book offers a historiography of the events with detailed surveys of previous scholarship (up to 2015) and appendices about many issues dealt with by previous scholars.

After a brief definition of the problems researched (chapter 1) Bernhard explains in chapter 2 that he combines a cultural studies approach with historical-critical methodologies. His attitude to the primary sources is positivistic and he aims, in line with von Ranke's views, at a reconstruction of how *es eigentlich gewesen ist* (p. 13). A survey of previous research leads to no less than thirteen models of interpretation (*Erklärungsmodelle*) and Bernhardt's criticism of these models evolves into the central questions discussed in the subsequent chapters (listed on p. 33-34). His critical treatment of the sources points out the fictional passages as well as the bias of the

sources, using, among other tools, a comparison with the Book of Daniel as a measuring rod for establishing the plausibility of reports (chapter 3). He does this not only for the causes, but also for the development and impact of the revolt.

Chapter 4 concerns the developments in Judean history preceding the Roman shock therapy for Antiochus IV at the “Day of Eleusis” from both a political and a religious perspective, since Bernhardt argues that religion is an important factor for the interpretation of the relevant events from the late Ptolemaic period onward. He argues that there was no party of Judean “Hellenizers” in this period (e.g., p. 128, 132, 137, 140, 155). Instead, there were priestly factions who were constantly competing for the high priesthood. Important players include Simon the temple administrator from the clan of Bilga and his brother Menelaus, who had an alliance with the Tobiad family of tax farmers. The conflict with Simon (described in 2 Maccabees 3-4) may have triggered Seleucus IV’s appointment of Olympiodorus as Seleucid high priest in Coele-Syria and Phoenicia (178 BCE). The high priest Jason acquired the status of a *polis* for Jerusalem (2 Macc 4:9), a signal of his loyalty to the Seleucid king which hardly affected Judean religion, contrary to the *ex post* presentations in 1 and 2 Maccabees. Bernhardt emphasizes that the Hasmoneans kept the political organization of Jerusalem as a *polis* more or less intact (p. 135). Jason had to pay for the arrangement that allowed for the exemption of the *polis* from cultic obligations towards the king.

An important factor in the Seleucid context preceding the Day of Eleusis (chapter 5) is the need for the usurper Antiochus IV to secure his power through euergetism, the (re-)founding of cities as *poleis* —the transformation of Jerusalem fits this program— and his religious policy, which shouldn’t be downplayed. Antiochus associated himself with Zeus and the claim of divine kingship by the proclamation of himself as a *theos epiphanes* was an important innovation. Porphyrius’ report about Antiochus’ coronation as pharaoh in Memphis is reliable because it is confirmed by Egyptian sources. Antiochus’ forced withdrawal from Egypt in 168 BCE, however, created once again a problem of legitimacy for the king.

Chapter 6 discusses the interconnections of Antiochus’ political and religious policy before Eleusis, the Judean pre-history of the revolt as well as the king’s interventions in Judea after Eleusis. The conflicts between the Oniads, Tobiads, and Bilga clan led to a civil war in Jerusalem and the rumor of Antiochus’ death triggered further conflicts and attempts to revolt (but not in Jerusalem), which forced Antiochus to apply harsh counter-measures. He punished cities, took measures to secure his position and forced the local cults to venerate him as a god (as *synnaos theos*, in Jerusalem next to Zeus) in order to prove their loyalty to him, which, obviously, created a major problem in Jerusalem. So Antiochus interfered in the cult in Jerusalem, but did not organize a systematic persecution and a ban of Judean religion, as 1 and 2 Maccabees imply (p. 238, 256). The reports about such a persecution and the martyrdoms that resulted from them are part of a mainly fictitious foundation myth of the Hasmonean type of Judaism to which all Judeans should adhere.

The beginning of the Maccabean revolt is the topic of chapter 7. The report about Mattathias is fictitious and Judas the Maccabee and his brothers formed one of the competing priestly factions in Jerusalem, which appointed itself to be the saviors of the Judean cult in a situation when most Judeans seemed to have gone along with Antiochus' adaptations. The Seleucids accepted Judas' restoration of the cult after the death of Antiochus IV, but the appointment of Alcimus as high priest was a major blow to the revolt. Chapter 8 continues with the strategies and goals of the Hasmoneans up to Simon, once again from a religious and a political perspective. Jonathan had to withdraw to the country-side, like Judas before him, but the erosion of the Seleucid empire and Jonathan's smart cooperation with the Seleucids offered him the opportunity to return to Jerusalem, receive the high priesthood and secure Seleucid support against opposing Judean groups. Simon got hold of the power through a putsch against his brother Jonathan, who was captured by the Seleucids. Simon may even have provoked Tryphon's execution of his brother. The decree in 1 Macc. 14 in honor of him and his sons shows that he still had enemies from within.

Chapter 9, entitled "Hellenism and Judaism", deals with the continuous societal and religious tensions in the light of the impact of the Hasmonean revolt. The Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes came up during Jonathan's high priesthood as religiously determined "Judeanisms" (*Judäertümer*). Several of the relevant sources reflect the interaction between the Hasmoneans and one or more of these groups; 2 Maccabees, for example, would reflect the Hasmonean interaction with the Pharisees. The religious demarcation of these groups strengthened the Hasmonean "theologization" (*Theologisierung*) of Judean politics, next to the collection of Judean Scriptures and the propagation of pilgrimages to Jerusalem during the major holidays. 2 Maccabees incorporates Greek constructions of identity and formulates under the header of Judaism a Judeanism that foregrounds religious belonging and makes religious conversion explicit. The end of this chapter formulates the main argument of the book: Hellenism is not the trigger of Judean protest but the indicator of a change in the identity constructions of the Judeans that leads to a re-formulation of ethnic identity on the basis of criteria of religious belonging, which itself were a consequence of the religiously correct type of Judeanness in Judea as well as the Diaspora, which can be properly called "Judaism" (p. 465). The new groups are the indicator of this religious mobilization on the part of the ethnic community of the Judeans.

Bernhardt's monograph offers a wealth of information; it covers an enormous amount of primary sources and secondary literature but also offers an articulate fresh contribution to the scholarship on this revolt. He makes many good points, also in the appendices (e.g. 3.4 with a revised chronology), including the right observation that the *polis* organization of Jerusalem was kept intact by the Hasmoneans and the emphasis on the competing Judean groups before Antiochus' interventions, where he seems to use Josephus' discussion of the Tobiads and Oniads as a lens that helps to differentiate between elite and multitude as well as city and countryside. A well-argued point is also his thesis that there was no cultural conflict between Judaism and Hellenism preceding Antiochus' punishment of the Judeans (e.g. p. 457-58). Some more minor points also

offer fresh perspectives, such as the suggestion that the sources present the conflict between Judeans and Seleucids as an inverted repetition of the conflict between Greeks and Persians. At the Akra there was a cult for Dionysus, which may explain the references to swine sacrifices in 1 and 2 Maccabees.

The book's main thesis with its strong emphasis on the religious factor will no doubt spark a debate and it calls for a further clarification of the interaction of religion and politics. Bernhardt is aware of the argument that religion is a problematic category if applied to the ancient world, but he uses religion nevertheless as a separate analytical and descriptive category and even seems to consider it the leading principle of the Hasmoneans. As a consequence he downplays their political and economic role. His thesis with "the Jewish revolution" (*die jüdische Revolution*) as a key phrase also makes Bernhardt's vocabulary referring to Judeans/Jews slippery. He mostly uses the terms "Judean" and "Judeanness" (*Judäer* and *Judäertum*), but the outcome of the revolution implies a shift to Jew and Judaism as the title of the book indicates. Because Bernhardt also argues that religion was a major factor from the Ptolemaic period onward one wonders when precisely this shift may have happened. Despite these issues Bernhardt should be congratulated with this very well-written detailed synthesis of the history of Antiochus IV's interventions in Judea and its pre-history and the impact of the Maccabean rebellion, which presents a well-argued fresh interpretation that is a major contribution to the debate about these events.