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Triangular Epistolary Diplomacy with Rome from Judas Maccabee to Aristobulos I*

Altay COŞKUN

Abstract

Scholarly opinions tend to converge towards accepting that Roman commitment to Judaea was very limited: sources attesting treaties of friendship and alliance are either seen as fabricated or not reflecting the real intentions of the Romans. Their inactivity is thus mostly blamed for the discontinuation of friendship by the end of the 2nd century BC. The present study questions these views, not least by demonstrating how highly *amicitia populi Romani* was appreciated both by the Author (140 BC) and Continuator (128 BC) of *IMacc*. The methodological novelty is to accept the historicity of the diplomatic documents in *IMacc* and Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, and to systematically correct their narratives on this basis. Accordingly, Judas' ambassadors made the first alliance (161 BC), which was renewed under Simon (142 BC) and again under John Hyrkanos I (128 BC). Another mission to Rome under John Hyrkanos was headed by Straton (107 BC). The alliance was also renewed under Aristobulos (104 BC) and Alexander Jannaïos (by 100 BC). The evidence allows us to describe the mechanism of Judaeans diplomacy: ambassadors were sent from Jerusalem to the Senate, put forward their concerns, expected and normally received official letters that told third parties, especially Seleukid kings, what to do. This kind of 'triangular diplomacy' was particularly successful under Simon and John Hyrkanos. Gradually, however, the large-scale changes in the eastern Mediterranean World diminished Roman interest and influence in the Near East, also ending the high tide of Roman epistolary diplomacy.

1. *Introduction: a New Approach to the Study of Judaeans-Roman Diplomacy under the Maccabees*

Given the complexity of the sources on the one hand, and their relevance for Roman, Hellenistic and Judaeans politics on the other, the letters documenting Judaeans-Roman relations from Judas Maccabee (166–161 BC) to Hyrkanos II

* I am grateful to Germain Payen, Jess Russell and Andreas Zack for their feedback on an earlier draft. I here present for the first time a synthesis of my research on Judaeans-Roman relations in the 2nd century BC. I shall discuss the ancient sources and scholarly positions in much more detail in my book on the genesis and the chronological problems of *IMacc* (COŞKUN, in prep.). For an in-depth study on the embassy under Judas, see COŞKUN (2018c); for an investigation into the rule of Simon, see COŞKUN (2018a).

(76–30 BC) have been studied intensively for centuries by Classical and Biblical scholars. And yet, no consensus is in sight: the historicity, dates and legal-political relevance of these texts remain highly contested. This controversy notwithstanding, scholarly opinions tend to converge towards accepting that Roman commitment was very limited, whether the sources (which tell us otherwise) have been fabricated or the Romans never had the intentions to get involved closely (despite granting treaties of friendship and alliance). Roman inactivity is thus often blamed for the discontinuation of this interstate friendship later under John Hyrkanos I (135–105/104 BC) or Aristobulos I (105/104–104/3 BC). Alternatively, scholars explain that the Judaeans lost Roman favour due to their growing aggressiveness and expansionism around the same time.

The present study is going to question these views in various ways. An important starting point will be the fact that at least the Author (ca. 140 BC) and Continuator (ca. 128 BC) of the *First Book of Maccabees* (*IMacc*) highly appreciated *amicitia populi Romani*, and represent it as one of the pillars on which the power and legitimacy of the Maccabaeen (or Hasmonaeen) dynasty rested. This should limit the scope for a negative historical assessment of Roman interstate friendship. Next, the diplomatic history is in need of a thorough revision. An innovative methodology promises much more reliable results than previous studies achieved. Those were depending too much either on the problematic narratives of our main sources, *IMacc* and Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, or instead on preconceived ideas on Roman or Judaeen politics. A novel approach that focuses on the rich documentary evidence dispersed in *IMacc* and Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* permits us to reconstruct a coherent account, solidly grounded in the ancient sources and consistently designed without special pleading.

On this basis, I have reasserted elsewhere *IMacc* 8 as a reliable report of the first Judaeen embassy to Rome. The mission of Eupolemos and Jason in 161 BC is further attested by the letter of the Consul Fannius, asking the Koans to assist the ambassadors on their way home. Next, the embassy to Rome and Sparta under Jonathan will be evinced as an erroneous construct. The dispersed traces of Simon's diplomacy can be configured to one Roman mission of Numenius and Antipatros in 142 BC. The documentary evidence is twofold: it is mentioned in the *Constitutional Document* of 140 BC, and further attested by the letter of the Consul Lucius (Caecilius Metellus Calvinus) to King Ptolemy (VIII Euergetes Physkon). Later on, John Hyrkanos I sent an embassy to renew friendship with the Romans in ca. 128 BC; the *Decree of the Praetor Lucius Valerius* lists Alexander, the son of Jason, Numenius, the son of Antiochos, and Alexander, the son of Dorotheos, as the envoys. A second delegation of the same ruler left Jerusalem in 107 BC; for this, Straton, the son of Theodotos, Apollonios, the son of Alexander, Aineias, the son of Antipatros, Aristobulos, the son of Amyntas, and Sosipatros, the son of Philippos are named in the

Pergamon Decree. As far as I see, I am the only one who proposes to read the *Fannius Decree* as evidence for a renewal of Judaeen-Roman friendship under Aristobulos I in 104 BC. Finally, I have interpreted a dedicatory inscription attested by Strabon as revealing a continuation of this practice under Alexander Jannaios around 100 BC.¹

We are now well prepared to survey the historical interpretations of Judaeen-Roman friendship diplomacy in modern scholarship (2) and confront the prevailing views with the problems that they cause (3). Next, I shall reconstruct Simon's dealings with Rome, on which basis the mechanisms of 'triangular epistolary diplomacy' can be illustrated (4). Thereafter, I shall demonstrate that the same strategies were in place under Judas and John Hyrkanos I (5). The final section rehearses the evidence for the later rule of John Hyrkanos, Aristobulos I and Alexander Jannaios. It will be shown that friendship diplomacy continued for a longer time than scholars have previously admitted, but, at the same time, symptoms of the decline of epistolary diplomacy will be highlighted and contextualized within the broader geopolitical changes in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern World (6).

2. *A Survey of Scholarly Positions on Judaeen-Roman Diplomacy*

Modern reconstructions of Judaeen-Roman diplomacy vary widely, and this relates to nearly every single aspect of the embassies themselves, their political context and their outcomes. The degree of controversy becomes most obvious when one tries to establish only a tentative timeline. At all events, most scholars accept an early Roman initiative in ca. 164 BC, followed by the first Judaeen embassy to Rome under Judas in 161 BC, while others deny a treaty, if not the dispatch of envoys, prior to Simon, John Hyrkanos I or even Aristobulos I. At any rate, a mission to the Senate under Jonathan is mostly dated to ca. 144/43 BC, and under Simon to 142 or/and again to 140/38 BC. John Hyrkanos I is believed to have dispatched his first ambassadors around 134/33 or 129/25 BC. Irrespective of such discrepancies, nearly all scholars at least agree on the view that friendship and alliance was not renewed under Aristobulos I, Alexander Jannaios and Salome Alexandra. Accordingly, diplomacy with Rome is considered to have ceased about half a century before the arrival of Pompey in Syria in 63 BC.²

¹ See sections 4–6 for sources and arguments.

² The sources are unfolded below, esp. in sections 4 and 5. There is no need to discuss the speculation of ZOLLSCHAN (2004) and (2017), p. 206 on the beginning of diplomacy in 174 BC (though accepted by ROCCA 2014, p. 265), since nothing of this kind is implied in *2Macc* 4.11b. I further consider the Roman letter addressing the Judaeans in 164 BC as a forgery, together with WILLRICH (1924), p. 50–58; GAUGER (1977), p. 264f.; MITTAG

When it comes to legal interpretations of Judaeo-Roman relations under the Maccabees, we can identify largely three trends in modern scholarship:

1) Hugo Willrich launched the most radical ‘attack’ on the historicity of the treaties of friendship and alliance. According to him, John Hyrkanos I began a loose kind of friendship diplomacy with Rome around 129/28 BC, and finally concluded a treaty of alliance around 110/108 BC.³ Likewise, Adrian Sherwin White rejects the idea that Judas, Jonathan or Simon ever sent embassies to Rome; if the Romans had taken interest in affairs beyond the Taurus, they would have sent envoys themselves; a change is admitted only for John Hyrkanos I, although he received nothing but ‘ineffective’ letters.⁴

2) Ludwig Mendelsson, Benedikt Niese and many others accept the missions to Rome as factual, but downplay their outcome, claiming that they yielded no more than informal and non-obliging declarations of friendship. Jörg-Dieter Gauger, for instance, suggests for 161 BC: ‘Rom reagiert – wie auch in anderen Fällen – zunächst nur mit einer rechtlich nichtssagenden, politisch nicht allzu wirkungsvollen, aber für Rom selbst propagandistisch effektiven

(2006), p. 276f. See COŞKUN (in prep.) for further discussion. At the other end of the time spectrum, I mention ROCCA (2014), p. 272–293 as a noteworthy exception arguing for a continuity of friendship diplomacy: while the time was too short for Aristobulos to renew friendship, Alexander Jannaios did so to legitimize his conquests; Salome Alexandra might have done so, because Tigranes was a common enemy of Rome and Judaea; and Aristobulos II renewal of friendship seems to be implied in his reaching out to Pompey. The argument is difficult to follow and suffers from an overdose of speculation, e.g., p. 282f.: ‘the fact that King Alexander Jannaeus fought against two powers, whose ‘neutrality’ favored Mithradates more than it did Rome, can be interpreted as being a pro-Roman stand.’

³ WILLRICH (1900), p. 70–76. In a highly speculative argument, WILLRICH further ascribes the treaty of *IMacc* 8.23–30 to (Judas) Aristobulos I, and the letter of the Consul Lucius on behalf of Simon to the brother of Aristobulos, (Simon) Antigonos; cf. the criticism by TÄUBLER (1913), p. 251 n. 1. Neither the assumption of a regular dyarchy since the days of Jonathan/Simon nor the onomastic premises hold ground. The Hebrew name of Antigonos has not been transmitted. ILAN I (2002), p. 263 Antigonos no. 1 leaves it open, whereas the Hebrew name of King Antigonos (40–37 BC) is known to have been Matthathias (no. 2). In my opinion, this is also the most likely choice for the brother of Aristobulos I, see COŞKUN (ca. 2018b). Also see WILLRICH (1895), p. 71–74; (1924), p. 44–50 for the beginning of Judaeo-Roman diplomacy in the second phase of Demetrios II (129/25 BC), based partly on JUST. 36.3.9, partly on the conviction that the treaty with Rome postdated the conquest of Joppa under Simon, as seems to be implied in JOS., *Ant. Jud.* 14.10.6 (205). This argument is followed by GRAETZ (1906), p. 660; GAUGER (1977), p. 337–339; ZACK (2018b), p. 1043; for a rejection, see COŞKUN (ca. 2018d) and (in prep).

⁴ SHERWIN-WHITE (1984), p. 77–79, admitting the first Judaeo embassies to Rome in ca. 133 BC.

Freiheitserklärung auf die Judas-Gesandtschaft.⁵ Most recently, Linda Zollschan has even gone further, concluding that Roman *amicitia* brought no guarantees on the one hand, but ultimate subjection to the superpower on the other.⁶

3) The first major attempt to defend the literary tradition of formal treaty relations can be assigned to Eugen Täubler; Erich Gruen and Ernst Baltrusch are more recent representatives of this trend. While there continues to be disagreement regarding the ceremonial formalities (was the treaty ratified by oath on either side, or simply endorsed by a *senatus consultum*?), the three aforementioned scholars concur (with many others)⁷ that Rome's intentions of backing Judaeans interests against the Seleukids were limited from the outset. Nearly all of them point to a 'back-door stipulation', the so-called 'escape clause' or '*kairos* clause', which some read as making military support dependent on mere convenience.⁸

As far as the political purpose of Judaeans-Roman friendship diplomacy is concerned, a majority of scholars would now regard it as leverage against

⁵ MENDELSSON (1875a), p. 99f.; NIESE (1906), p. 824–829; GRAETZ (1906), p. 659f.; GAUGER (1977), p. 263–269; 337 (quotation on p. 273); ZOLLSCHAN (2017), p. 209–212; cf. GOLDSTEIN (1976/79), p. 364f. (inability of the Judaeans to make a treaty).

⁶ ZOLLSCHAN (2017), e.g., p. 1; 7; 204; friendship with Rome was a 'one-sided agreement to supply military aid'. Note, however, that her book is marred with inconsistencies; see AMELING (2018); ZACK (2018b); COŞKUN (ca. 2018c). Similar to ZOLLSCHAN, however, DORAN (1996), 107 infers 'de facto an acknowledgment of Roman suzerainty'. And ROCCA (2014), p. 267 follows various of Zollschan's main arguments expressed in previous publications.

⁷ Cf., e.g., DANCY (1959), p. 128: 'He may of course have believed the sort of propaganda that appears in 8.12 (cp. 14.40), and himself also been temporizing in his negotiations with Nicanor (7.27 n.) until help arrived. If so, he died disillusioned. More probably he was shrewd enough to expect nothing more than he got, namely a letter from Rome to Antioch; but that might well have been sufficient to stay the hand of a weaker king than Demetrios.'

⁸ Thus, e.g., TÄUBLER (1913), p. 253 and 254, followed by SORDI (1952), p. 509, though with a much more idealistic view of Roman interventionism for 'i piccoli popoli in lotta contro il dispotismo delle monarchie ellenistiche' (p. 518). Also see GAUGER (1977), p. 208–210: *kairos* clause implies support 'nach Möglichkeit'; GRUEN (1984), p. 42: 'That document [...] has even induced some to brand it as fictitious. The surprise, however, depends on an erroneous assumption: that the treaty's terms were to be taken seriously or interpreted literally. They were not.' Also p. 44: 'The customary loophole also reappears: implementation of the terms will take effect only if circumstances permit'; DORAN (1996), p. 107: the Romans could use the 'loophole'; the treaty gave them options without binding them; GERA (1998), p. 312f.: 'escape clause'; BALTRUSCH (2002), p. 95: 'Einschränkungsklausel'; p. 153: 'Denn mehr als diplomatische Beziehungen waren die Verträge und ihre Erneuerungen nicht.' *Contra* ZOLLSCHAN (2017), p. 155f. and 203; COŞKUN (2018c). – Yet differently, FISCHER (1980), p. 104–116 first argues for the historicity of the treaty text, but then claims that it did not come into effect, because it was not ratified by the Judaeans.

domestic opponents of the Maccabees.⁹ After all, the new priestly dynasty was in need of bolstering its legitimacy. In respect of its strategic impact, however, opinions now tend to converge towards the assumption that the Maccabees got increasingly frustrated with their Roman partners: either John Hyrkanos I or his successors are said to have understood that the very high costs for entertaining their friendship relation no longer paid off.¹⁰

Particularly telling are the positions of those who are, in principle, ready to admit dense interactions between the Maccabees and Romans, and are further willing to assess Roman favour for the Judaeans as relatively high. One of them is Dov Gera, who acknowledges that Judas achieved a treaty of alliance, but points to various limitations, most of all that Rome was shunning military campaigns in the East, and that Hellenistic monarchs reckoned with this reluctance:

‘Thus it is possible that Demetrius was unaware of the Jews’ powerful ally, but in any event, it is unlikely that knowledge of the Jewish-Roman alliance would have prevented him from sending an army against the Jews. The Roman policy in 161 was intended to break up the Seleucid kingdom and deny Demetrius his throne. While Rome did not recognize Demetrius as king, the Republic did award such status to Timarchus, and concluded an alliance with the (former) Seleucid subjects, the Jews. Demetrius’ only recourse was to establish his rule by force of arms, and to present the

⁹ See, e.g., FISCHER (1980), p. 120: ‘das gute Verhältnis zur westlichen Großmacht [bildet] einen Eckstein der Hasmonäerherrschaft überhaupt!'; GRUEN (1984), p. 45: ‘some international recognition might be a valuable element in their struggle’; SEEMAN (2013), p. 125f.: even the embassy under Judas was less concerned with its freedom from the Seleukids than with gaining a political edge over those Judaeans favouring the controversial High Priest Alkimos; p. 130; 133. Cf. WILKER (2011), p. 244; SHATZMAN (2012), p. 69: ‘they may have had more symbolic than practical character, but it would be wrong to infer that for the Romans they were devoid of any significance’; ZOLLSCHAN (2017), p. 217. Most problematic is the explanation of BERNHARDT (2017), p. 370f.: ‘Vor dem Hintergrund von Judas’ Bündnis schluß lassen sich die Ziele Jonathans bei der Bündniserneuerung ziemlich präzise bestimmen. Denn zum einen muß 144 v.Chr. jedem klar gewesen sein, daß sich die Seleukiden durch ein Bündnis mit Rom in ihrem Vorgehen in Judäa nicht einschränken ließen; zum anderen wußte nun auch Jonathan, daß Rom nicht aktiv in die Auseinandersetzungen eingreifen würde. Die Erneuerung des Bündnisses kann somit nur auf die Situation in Judäa abgezielt / haben’. Also see pp. 373f. on the alleged ‘Putsch’ of Simon against Jonathan, which leads to the curious assumption that the embassy dispatched by Simon intended to avoid Roman intervention in favour of Jonathan.

¹⁰ GRUEN (1984), p. 750: ‘The contents of the letter to Ptolemy are, to be sure, suspect, as are some of the places to which it was addressed. Whatever one makes of the document, however, this “renewal” had no more tangible consequences than the previous negotiations’; p. 751: ‘The pattern of Roman affirmations on the one hand and lack of implementation on the other has a remarkable regularity. The senate sent *pro forma* messages – and let the recipients work matters out for themselves.’ ROCCA (2014), p. 267 echoes this wording (also p. 271), but contradicts himself on p. 268 by conceding much influence to Roman diplomatic letters. More positions are quoted below.

Republic with irreversible facts, and that is what he eventually did. ... Even if Judas Maccabaeus and other adversaries of the Seleucid kingdom deluded themselves that Rome would extend military assistance, they were bound to realize that on the short term at least, Roman military help would not be effective. Because of the distance and the time involved, Roman responses, both political/and military, to the affairs of the eastern Mediterranean could not but lag behind actual events.¹¹

Although Gera favours an interventionist attitude of the Romans in general, he regards their actions as defined by the interests of various aristocratic factions. His view does ultimately not differ much from Erich Gruen's picture of Roman 'indifference' towards the East,¹² Mendelsson's explanation that the Senate only showed diplomatic courtesy without taking on any legal obligations, or the even more blunt expressions of Roman utilitarianism, according to which Judas' insurrection was coming in handy when Demetrios I needed to be pressured into obedience to Rome.

Chris Seeman and Edward Dąbrowa surmise a somewhat higher expectation of Roman support among the Judaeans. Seeman, for instance, emphasizes the readiness of the Romans to 'endorse the idea of Judaeian territorial integrity', and their interest in being seen as a 'benevolent superpower'. At the same time, however, he admits not only the lack of sanctions, but also the 'shelving' of the first request by the Judaeans that the Romans might 'put legates on the ground'.¹³ And Dąbrowa rightly cautions us not to make much of the failure to assist Judas, since his ambassadors returned too late to the Levant to prevent his defeat at Elaza.¹⁴ And he further points to the repeated effort of the Maccabees

¹¹ GERA (1998), p. 312 and 313f. Also see his analysis of Roman foreign policy towards the Seleukids, resulting in the acceptance of the *fait accompli*, if 'friendly' diplomacy could not trigger the expected results (pp. 314–318).

¹² Cf. ECKSTEIN (2000), p. 165 (in his review of GERA 1998, also referencing GRUEN 1984): 'From this perspective, the famous treaty of alliance ... was only a gesture (perhaps merely a polite response to the unexpected arrival of a Hasmonean embassy in Rome). The Romans in fact never helped the Maccabees [...] Gera wishes in general to see the Senate engaged in a far more interventionist diplomacy in the Greek East than the frequent passivity underlined by Erich Gruen [...]; but in practical terms Gera's conclusions are often quite similar to Gruen's (see p. 320). Certainly Rome had no intention of going to war against the Seleukid empire even the suddenly weakened Seleukid empire after 163 on behalf of so unimportant a people as the Jews.' Also see DANCY (1959), p. 130: 'If the Senate actually sent the letter (sc. to Demetrios I – A.C.), we must suppose that Demetrios did not receive it until too late, i.e. spring 160. For later in that year he at last won their recognition, if not their love.'

¹³ SEEMAN (2013), esp. p. 201 on John Hyrkanos I. Also see p. 135: the Romans intended 'to prod Demetrios into demonstrating his goodwill to the Republic' (which he then did with his embassy of 160/159 BCE). It is, at any rate, unconvincing to claim that the letter to Demetrios (*IMacc* 8.31f.) implies the recognition of Seleukid sovereignty over Judaea (p. 119).

¹⁴ DĄBROWA (2010), p. 41: 'Judah's decision to seek support in Rome could conceivably be of great impact. In case his plan succeeded, the friendship and support of

to seek Roman support, which underlines its high appreciation on the one hand; on the other hand, he thinks that Roman commitment could be seen as lacking over time regardless:

‘This demonstrates the Jewish leaders’ profound faith in the Roman senators’ ability to exert any kind of pressure on the Seleukid court. However, although the Senate openly took the side of the Jews represented by Judas and his successors, active support, striking as it may have been at times, only went as far as verbal declarations with limited effect. Furthermore, we do not have persuasive evidence that the letters sent by the Senate throughout the Eastern Mediterranean on behalf of the Jews (*IMacc* 15.22–24) had any tangible result. Such diplomatic support would leave the strongest impression on the leaders of Judaea that were potentially opposing the Maccabees.’¹⁵

Dąbrowa further undermines the potentially strong impact of Roman intervention by questioning the effect that *senatus consulta* may or may not have had on Seleukid kings, as long as, e.g., Demetrios II and Antiochos VII regarded at least formal sovereignty over the Judaeans as existential for their own rule.¹⁶ Dąbrowa then addresses the ambivalence of the Maccabees’ experience with Rome more explicitly for John Hyrkanos I:

‘Each of these missions resulted in declarations on the part of the Roman Senate that met John Hyrkanos’ expectations, but none of them translated into concrete actions. Neither Rome nor its allies made the slightest effort to make the Seleukids respect the

Rome, an unfriendly power vis-à-vis the Seleucids, might have become a weighty factor in persuading the Syrian rulers to modify their stance toward Judah. However, the initiative came too late to have real impact on the course of events. Nor can we be too sure if Judah indeed believed Rome to be ready to engage actively in defending the rebellion.’ Also cf. SORDI (1952), p. 510; DANCY (1959), p. 130, quoted above, n. 12. Differently, EHLING (2008), p. 143f. understands that Demetrios simply refused to pay attention to the Roman threat. Surprisingly, GRAINGER (2012), p. 48 denies ‘even any diplomatic assistance. Rome was not about to become involved in a war in the eastern end of the Mediterranean on behalf of rebels’. Likewise, ECKSTEIN (2000), p. 165: ‘The Romans in fact never helped the Maccabees – not even diplomatically – during their long struggle for independence.’

¹⁵ DĄBROWA in this volume.

¹⁶ DĄBROWA (2010), p. 59: ‘According to *1Macc*, Demetrios’ stance was influenced by news of Simon’s recognition by the Romans as a friend and an ally, a dubious claim since Demetrios’ behavior shows not the least suggestion of his fears of Simon’s powerful political partner. Ever since Jason first received appointment as high priest of the Jerusalem temple, from Antiochos IV Epiphanes, Syrian kings treated the right to name successive high priests as an important political act naturally derived from their dominion over Judea. In this context, Demetrios II confirming the legality of Simon’s high priesthood (which he had been given by his assembled subjects), as well as the honors the king granted him, do not seem a sign of weakness or fear. Rather, they were clearly political gestures to remind the Judean that he was still a vassal of the Seleucids.’ Cf. p. 59 for a similar interpretation of the perception of Antiochos VII (although there is a contradiction, when his letter is said to have sought no more than ‘neutrality’).

Senate's decree in favour of Judaea. Rome's passive stance was no doubt a source of disappointment for John Hyrkanos.¹⁷

Dąbrowa finally concludes that it was the same John Hyrkanos I, who, after (allegedly) three embassies to the Senate, was induced both by Roman inactivity and Seleukid weakness, 'to take matters into his own hands'.¹⁸ While this may sound compelling at a first glance, my concern is that no Maccabee beginning with Matthatias and Judas had ever hesitated 'to take matters into their own hands'. They were never slow to respond with force to challenges to their cult or fellow Judaeans, or even to seize opportunities for expansion. Diplomacy with Rome often followed such actions, in a hope to consolidate or further improve what had already been achieved. It is therefore likewise difficult to agree with the analysis of Israel Shatzman. He assumes that John Hyrkanos embraced the model of Judas and maintained both a more positive and a more realistic attitude towards the Roman superpower:

The lesson is sharp and clear: given Rome's overwhelming power and supremacy, a player in the international arena should co-operate with her and consistently keep her friendship in order to succeed politically. That such a lesson indeed guided Hyrcanus can be inferred from his attempts to get Rome's reconfirmation of the Judaeans-Roman friendship alliance, as well as backing for his political and military goals and ventures.¹⁹

Shatzman specifies his view by admitting that John Hyrkanos' first embassy for help against Antiochos IX Kyzikenos did not meet with success,²⁰ and that he was experienced enough to wait until the interests of the Romans, who are said to have favoured Antiochos VIII Grypos during the dynastic conflict, aligned with his own. In the end, he concludes:

The Romans were indeed far away geographically, ... but from the point of view of John Hyrcanus no major decision or action concerning foreign policy could be taken without first getting the blessing of Rome.²¹

Such a subservient attitude reminds me of the policy of Attalos II. But his kingdom was a special target of Roman anger after his brother Eumenes II had been lacking in loyalty during the Third Macedonian War (171–168 BC).²² This kind of submissiveness was otherwise not typical of a 2nd-century ruler in Asia

¹⁷ DĄBROWA in this volume.

¹⁸ DĄBROWA in this volume.

¹⁹ SHATZMAN (2012), p. 56, also referring to the message of the *laus Romanorum* (*IMacc* 8.13): 'those whom they wish to help and to make kings, they let be kings, and those whom they wish – they remove'.

²⁰ Following *JOS. Ant. Jud.* 13.9.2 (p. 259–266), SHATZMAN identifies the *Fannius Decree* as the result of the first Roman embassy dispatched by John Hyrkanos I. But this document is better ascribed to the diplomacy of Aristobulos I, see below, section 6.

²¹ SHATZMAN (2012), p. 67–70.

²² See *OGIS* 315 VI = Welles, *RC* 61 = Sherk, *RGEDA* 29; cf. PAYEN (in prep.).

Minor,²³ let alone of the Levant. May it be sufficient to say that Shatzman's chronological reconstructions are most questionable, since he persistently reverses the order of military achievement and mission to Rome. Military action came first, and only after some important success had been achieved, envoys were dispatched to Rome. This is at least the pattern emerging from our literary tradition for Judas, Simon and John Hyrkanos, and I see no reason to doubt it.²⁴

At any rate, Rome was no more called upon for help when Demetrios III and the Pharisees fought Alexander Jannaios, or during the unexpected Judaeen campaign of Antiochos XII prior to his attack of the Nabataeans. Dąbrowa thus describes the end of Judaeen-Roman friendship as growing indifference between the two peoples, following a long history of insufficient commitment of the Romans to their allies.²⁵ In contrast to such a silent end of friendship, an increasing incompatibility of Roman and Judaeen foreign policy has often been put forward. Some have pointed to the aggressions of the Maccabees against their neighbours, others against their domestic rivals. Yet others find that the Judaeans' involvement with piracy or the enforced circumcision of conquered peoples in Idumaea and Ituraea were unacceptable to the Romans and thus led to an alienation of the two peoples. But the evidence for such dramatic scenarios is simply not there, as Dąbrowa has pointed out convincingly.²⁶ In a similar vein, Seeman concludes:

²³ See PAYEN (2016).

²⁴ It is, by the way, also the assumption of the Continuator of *IMacc* regarding the embassy under Jonathan; and it is likewise compatible with the cases of Aristobulos I and Alexander Jannaios, whose kingships began with nearly immediate military conquests; these probably preceded those kings' embassies to Rome, on which see below, section 6.

²⁵ DĄBROWA in this volume. Cf. GOLDSTEIN (1976/79), p. 64: 'Josephus missed a later instance, probably of 113–112, because he wrongly supposed the document dealt with Hyrcanus II, not with John Hyrcanus I. Thereafter, however, there is no trace of benevolent intervention by Rome. John Hyrcanus and his heir might well be grateful for the support he received from the superpower, but after three decades of no Roman action whatever, what Hasmonaean propagandist would have praised Rome so highly?' DĄBROWA and GOLDSTEIN thus extend the period of no communication also to the War of Scepters (ca. 107–101 BC), for which, however, I have identified three Judaeen embassies to Rome; see below, sections 5–6. – ZOLLSCHAN (2017), p. 3; 10; 155f.; 215 interprets the lack of military support as proof against the existence of a treaty of alliance.

²⁶ BALTRUSCH (2002), p. 153: 'Die zunehmende Hellenisierung des Hasmonäerstaates insbesondere in der Außenpolitik unter Aristobul, Alexander Jannaios und Salome Alexandra machte Rom dann allerdings nicht mehr mit, jedenfalls nicht mit vertraglicher Unterstützung.' One wonders why BALTRUSCH does not mention John Hyrkanos I. SEEMAN (2013), p. 9f. explains that the Hasmonaeans were afraid of rival embassies that would counteract their claim of being liberators, such as happened in 63 BC according to DIOD. SIC. 40.2 (on this episode, also see COŞKUN ca. 2018d). BAR-KOCHVA (1989), p. 164: 'the Hasmonaean state no longer had need of any patronage and diplomatic help. There are also indications of Jannaeus' anti-Roman policy; at any rate, in contrast to his

it is precisely at this juncture – the transition from ethnarchy to kingship – that evidence of Judean relations with Rome ceases. Confronted by dangerous dissidents who regarded their rule as nothing less than slavery, the later Hasmoneans may have preferred to steer clear of a diplomatic tradition steeped in the language of liberation.²⁷

3. *Fundamental Criticism*

The amount of previous scholarship on Maccabaeen-Roman relations is enormous, and it would be presumptuous to deny that several pertinent observations have been made. This notwithstanding, I have not found a single approach that is fully consistent and conclusive. A first indicator that something is wrong with most views is the fact that *IMacc* is the most expressive among all of our ancient sources on the value of Roman *amicitia*. Scholars tend to date the composition of the work to either the final years of John Hyrkanos I or to Alexander Jannaios – thus to a time when, according to common opinion, Judaeen-Roman friendship was yielding to either cool indifference or hostility.²⁸

predecessors, he did not renew the pact with Rome, nor did the interests of the great power now coincide with his aims.’ Cf. RAPPAPORT (1968); ROCCA (2014), p. 271 (though rejecting involvement in piracy on p. 291); ZOLLSCHAN (2017), p. 258–268 (with further references), who suggests that the Judaeen-Roman relations disintegrated when Alexander Jannaios got closer to the Parthians and collaborated with the pirates; the latter engagement she views as the reason for the Romans not to involve the Judaeans into their anti-piracy alliance, which I find counterintuitive. – DĄBROWA in this volume cautions against the notion that the Judaeans under the Hasmonaeans had allied with the Parthians or engaged in piracy: ‘We may thus conclude the following: either nothing that threatened Roman interests had taken place under them, or Pompey had no knowledge of any such threats. Whichever of these we deem more likely, it is at least safe to assume that the Romans did not perceive Alexander Jannaios and Alexandra Salome’s lack of interest in renewing diplomatic relations as indicating a hostile attitude.’ Also see SEEMAN (2013), p. 229f., who does not regard Alexander Jannaios involved into piracy, but explains that he deliberately withheld from joining the collaborative effort to curb piracy under Roman (and Rhodian) leadership. Further see below, n. 71, on piracy.

²⁷ SEEMAN (2013), p. 372f.; cf. 241–243. Also see SEEMAN’s conclusion on the politics of John Hyrkanos I (pp. 200–202), whom he regards as responsible for the change after his confrontation with the Pharisees later in his life. Surprisingly, however, SEEMAN dates this as preceding the siege of Samaria, which conflicts with the narrative of Josephus.

²⁸ The positive view of the Romans is also emphasized by SORDI (1952), p. 515f. (also with reference to the *Constitutional Document* and the *laus Romanorum*, as below) and ROCCA (2014), p. 269f., although the latter undermines his point by the assumption of indirect criticism: there is no mention of ‘the Roman law system or ... Roman justice ... and *Pax Romana*’. But to expect them to be mentioned is quite anachronistic for a date under John Hyrkanos I, which Rocca suggests. For a date under John Hyrkanos I, see, e.g., BICKERMANN (1937), p. 146 (middle); SCHUNCK (1980), p. 292 (ca. 120 BC); SHATZMAN (2007), p. 238f. (late); SCOLNIC (2010), p. 230f. and REGEV (2010), p. 26 (early); WILKER (2011), p. 223; SHATZMAN (2012), p. 56; HONIGMAN (2014), p. 6;

In contrast, I suggest that the Hebrew *Urversion* dates to 140 BC. As such it was contemporary to the *Constitutional Assembly*, in which ‘friendship’ and ‘brotherhood’ with the Romans are said to have induced Demetrios II to acknowledge Simon as high priest and leader of the Judaeans (*IMacc* 14.40). Even more remarkable is the conviction of the Continuator, who wrote the *laus Romanorum* (*IMacc* 8.1–16), together with all other passages relating to Judaeen diplomacy with Rome, in 129/28 BC. He praised the loyalty of the Romans towards their friends, and also their power to protect them. Moreover, he represented the friendly reception of the ambassadors dispatched by Judas, Jonathan and Simon as pinnacles of their careers. Josephus (or his source) may have slimmed down those reports, but he, too, can be called upon as a witness for the high reputation that Roman diplomacy meant for the first three Maccabees; besides, he adds further evidence for John Hyrkanos I.

A major difficulty is that even the most scrupulous investigations have so far fallen short of presenting a compelling reconstruction of the events. The tensions, contradictions and at times carelessness of our ancient sources, most of all *IMacc* and Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*, result in a real dilemma for their readers. By sticking closely to the literary traditions, one runs the risk of reproducing inconsistent accounts that at best harmonize or gloss over the many contradictions. At the other end of the spectrum are those who feel obliged to make radical choices; their problem is that they are inclined to admit only those pieces of the evidence that fit into their preconceived images of Roman Imperialism or assumed Judaeen needs. In other words, they are prone to fall prey to circularity.

But a systematic scrutiny into our sources of Maccabaeen history allows for a more precise reconstruction of Judaeen diplomatic history. My methodology is founded on the conviction that, while the Continuator of *IMacc* is at times appallingly ignorant of extra-Judaeen matters and also Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* (or his sources) are full of serious misunderstandings, they do show the utmost respect for Roman documents. It seems that they believed not only in the authenticity of all pieces they quote, but also that these could be checked on inscriptions or in archives. As a result, they were most scrupulous in citing them exactly as they encountered them, and thus provide us with independent historical evidence, allowing us in part to complement, in part to correct the

BERTHELOT (2017), p. 67–69; D. SCHWARTZ (2017) (middle). For a date under Jannaïos, see, e.g., SCHÜRER *et al.* III.1, (1986), p. 181 (‘writing some two generations after the events connected with the Maccabee brothers’, first decades of 1st century BC); GOLDSTEIN (1976/79), p. 62–64; NICKELSBURG (1981), p. 117; DORAN (1996), p. 22. For a date towards the end of the 2nd century BC, see MITTMANN-RICHERT (2000), p. 23; MILLAR (2006), p. 52, 57; KAMPEN (2007), p. 19; BORCHARDT (2014), p. 185. SEEMAN (2013), p. 217f. dates the incorporation of Roman materials to after the death of John Hyrkanos I.

narratives. In the present paper, I cannot unfold the theoretical background in too much detail, since this task is reserved for a book project. I thus foresee that some readers will be skeptical of my premises, especially those who have convinced themselves that *IMacc* was written by a single author or those who believe that the documents quoted in *IMacc* and *Judaeae Antiquities* were largely composed or at least adapted for those very works. May these readers consider my approach an experiment: while I am asking much as regards the assumed incompetence of the writers or editors who inserted the documentary evidence into our narrative sources, my approach will abstain from claiming textual corruption or gross misunderstandings by those who wrote the documents, even in the edited and shortened versions that have come down to us. I further hope that the consistency of my historical reconstruction and the plausibility of its interpretation will further be to the credit of my approach.²⁹

In the introduction to this paper, I have given a concise outline of Judaeae-Roman friendship diplomacy from Judas to Alexander Jannaios.³⁰ If this reconstruction is accepted, there will be some immediate conclusions to draw. A first point has been made by many others before, but deserves to be repeated: the tight chronology of the embassy of Eupolemos and Jason in 161 BC barely leaves room for Demetrios I to know about the treaty of friendship and alliance between the Romans and the Judaeaeans. The ambassadors returned to the Levant after Judas had been killed, and with him resistance to Seleukid rule had largely

²⁹ My methodology owes much to the literary critics of *IMacc*, especially to those who have used Roman diplomatic passages as a key to identifying different hands in the genesis of the book: LAQUEUR (1927), who rightly points out (against WILLRICH 1924) that ‘interpolations’ (i.e. later insertions of certain text passages) do not automatically qualify those additions as unauthentic; MARTOLA (1984), the pioneer of the systematic analysis of *IMacc* through the study of narrative strategy; WILLIAMS (1999), who has identified most of the Simon narrative as a later extension of *IMacc* by considering the change of ideological messages; BORCHARDT (2014), who has further refined the narrative analysis. Despite certain disagreements, especially when it comes to historical or chronological conclusions, the monograph I am currently preparing (COŞKUN, in prep.) is highly indebted to their methodology. Analogously, I have learnt a lot from how PUCCI BEN ZEEV (1998) and EILERS (2003) and (2008) have approached the documentary evidence in Josephus. They rightly claim the use of documentary sources, whereas most others believed (e.g. MOMMSEN 1875; MENDELSSON 1875a; 1875b; WILLRICH 1924) and continue believing (e.g., RAJAK 2007; SEEMAN 2013; TILLY 2015; ZOLLSCHAN 2017) that those letters were arbitrarily created or manipulated. Note, however, that I go much further with my claim that there was no systematic adaptation of the documentary evidence for their narrative contexts. I add a reference to the useful studies of PARKER (2007) and (2013), which not only reveal much of the incompetence reflected in *IMacc*, but also allow for a contrast with some fabricated letters in *2Macc*. I have, as I hope, successfully drawn on similar methodology to elucidate aspects of Maccabean literary, dynastic and diplomatic history: COŞKUN (2018a); (ca. 2018c); (ca. 2018d).

³⁰ See above, with n. 1.

collapsed.³¹ We should thus concede that the value of the alliance, besides the Roman letter urging Demetrios to leave the Judaeans in peace, should not be judged as worthless due to the untimeliness of the mission. I add that the Senate had not been asked for immediate military aid. Either way, we cannot say how they might have responded, but it is historically questionable to surmise Roman indifference based on the later recognition of Demetrios in 160/59 BC. This was at a time when the Judaeans represented by Eupolemos and Jason had ceased to exist as a political entity. Domestic power had returned to the High Priest Alkimos, who was loyal to King Demetrios, and therefore not at all interested in autonomous (and thus treacherous) diplomacy with Rome.³²

This is not to deny that different historical judgments may be formed regarding Roman imperial policy. But they should take into account that the Author of the *Urversion* and the Continuator of *IMacc*, both devout courtiers of the young priestly dynasty of Jerusalem,³³ did not feel at all that the Romans had fallen short of their duty. And precisely this understanding is implied in the fact that Simon made an ambitious attempt to reconnect with Rome in 142 BC, this time with a very expensive gift, a golden shield worth 1,000 mines (*IMacc* 15.18). It was costly enough to demonstrate that Simon was not an ephemeral leader, as Judas had been, but could be reckoned with in the future as a state leader, worthy of Roman friendship.

My reconstruction of the continuation of friendship diplomacy both under Aristobulos I and Alexander Jannaios has some further implications. Since the evidence seems quite firm to me, the discussion of the motivation that turned John Hyrkanos or Aristobulos away from the Romans appears obsolete. We should rather ask ourselves what those rulers continued to appreciate in their friendship with Rome, only admitting a gradual change in the course of the rule of Alexander Jannaios.

³¹ See above, n. 14.

³² *IMacc* 7.5–25 presents Alkimos as appointed by Demetrios I, thus late in 162 BC, but this was probably a reappointment since he had first been appointed by Antiochos V (*2Macc* 14.3–13) and then probably deposed. See SCOLNIC (2005), p. 143–147; cf. EHLING (2008), p. 116. For his machinations, also see *2Macc* 14.15–15.30.

³³ The pro-Maccabean or pro-Simonid ideology of *IMacc* is largely admitted (in contrast to *2Macc*), see BICKERMANN (1937), p. 145; GOLDSTEIN (1976/1979), p. 64: ‘First Maccabees is pro-Hasmonaean propaganda and the work of Jason an anti-Hasmonaean reply’; SCHÜRER *et al.* III.1, (1986), p. 180f.; NICKELSBURG (1981), p. 114; STONE (1984), p. 172–174; S. SCHWARTZ (1991), p. 91; KAMPEN (2007), p. 14–16; SCOLNIC (2007), p. 149–154; (2010), p. 9; 98; 223f.; REGEV (2010), e.g., p. 103; SHATZMAN (2012), p. 56; MENDELS (2013), p. 31–55; 65–77; BERTHELOT (2017), p. 77; 109–118; D. SCHWARTZ (2017) and forthcoming. And yet, slight or even strong criticism of Simon or his successors seems to be implied in various verses of *IMacc* to, e.g., LAQUEUR (1927), p. 246f.; DORAN (1996), p. 22; MENDELS (2013), p. 88; 127f.; 143; SEEMAN (2013), p. 212. *Contra*, e.g., REGEV (2010), p. 102; COŞKUN (in prep.).

This leads us to a final question: what actually was it that the Judaeans expected from Rome? While political support against Seleukid oppressors is explicit in our sources starting with *IMacc* 8, we have to acknowledge that a request of military aid is nowhere attested. This, too, has some bearing on the scholarly discourse, since the lack of armed support has repeatedly been the basis for negative modern judgments.³⁴ At the same time, however, we should hesitate to accept the view that the treaty was largely seen as having only symbolic meaning, designed to aggrandize the prestige and legitimacy of the Maccabean rulers in the face of inner-Judaeans opposition. I would counter that treaties of alliance might serve such a political function only as long as they were seen as effective tools to achieve certain foreign-policy goals. And this required the belief that those treaties were backed up by a true commitment; at least in the worst case, this would potentially result in military assistance. In other words: had the ancients shared the belief that *senatus consulta* and *foedera* were ultimately no more than courteous or honorific statements, these would have failed to have their desired effect both on foreign relations and domestic politics.

Instead, our sources convey the impression that at least most Judaeans embassies in the 2nd century BC were successful. Typically, the ambassadors approached the Senate with two requests: first, to conclude or renew (or remember the pre-existing) friendship and alliance, and second to issue letters advising or even threatening Seleukid opponents, sometimes also addressing other parties on behalf of the Judaeans. This kind of ‘epistolary diplomacy’ can best be illustrated with the case of Simon.³⁵

4. *Triangular Epistolary Diplomacy under Simon (142 BC)*

The embassy under Simon is, on the one hand, the most complicated, since the Continuator of *IMacc* was incapable of piecing together the various news he had about it. He spreads out the evidence over four different sections of the book, getting it wrong in three of them. On the other hand, this failure does have an advantage, namely that we can acquit the Continuator of any suspicion of having

³⁴ ZOLLSCHAN (2017), p. 3; 10; 155f.; 215 regards the lack of Roman assistance for Judas as proof for the non-existence of a treaty. Others (see above, n. 14) do not deny the treaty, but understand Roman inactivity as symptomatic for the lack of commitment.

³⁵ Differently, ZOLLSCHAN (2017), p. 206 suggests that the wording of the speech of the ambassadors in *IMacc* 8.20 can be ascribed to them rather than the narrator of *IMacc*. Also see p. 217: ‘The senate did not need to give the Jews a letter, as their diplomatic relations were based on declarations and not a formal treaty text. Therefore, a record of the senatorial declarations was made, as is the conclusion reached here, by the envoys themselves.’ Similarly, ZOLLSCHAN (2005), p. 124–145, as followed by SEEMAN (2013), p. 117 with ns. 19f. (p. 425).

fabricated documentation. He was rather at pains to integrate into the pre-existing narrative whatever additional piece of diplomatic information he had found. Fortunately, the *Urversion* provides a largely reliable account of the rule of Simon. Together with the dispersed documentary evidence, we are in a strong position to deduce a firm and coherent sequence of events, which will then form the basis of our historical interpretation.

Our investigation begins with the embassy that Jonathan is said to have sent to Sparta and Rome. The narrative context dates the dispatch of Numenios and Antipatros to ca. 143 BC, a time when Jonathan had successfully fought against Demetrios II, shortly before his ally Diodotos Tryphon betrayed him. The documentary evidence that induced the Continuator to believe in the mission appears to be a letter written in the name of the High Priest Jonathan and the Judaeen people, addressing their Spartan ‘brothers’ (*IMacc* 12.6).³⁶ Among other things, the two envoys are said to have been charged with renewing friendship and alliance with Rome, besides refreshing their friendship with the Spartans underway (*IMacc* 12.16f.).³⁷ A first problem is that the alleged historical context of the embassy is most improbable, because Jonathan was officially the *strategos* of Antiochos V, and as such he controlled an area that went far beyond the confines of Judaea. Embarking on treacherous diplomacy with Rome would have been political nonsense, unless he might have been suspicious that Tryphon was trying to eliminate him. But precisely this was not the case: Jonathan was completely taken by surprise by his capture later in 143 BC (*IMacc* 14.39–53). As of then, however, he had no means to communicate with Jerusalem, let alone Rome.

There is no other documentary evidence for the arrival of Jonathan’s ambassadors in Rome or Sparta. Apart from some dubious allegations in the narrative claiming the success of the embassy (*IMacc* 12.2–4; cf. 14.16–19), the document quoted next is a letter of the Spartans addressing the High Priest Simon and the Judaeen people (*IMacc* 14.20).³⁸ Further suspicious is that the same Numenios and Antipatros are named as the Judaeen ambassadors of Simon (*IMacc* 14.22). The most plausible conclusion is that Simon had sent out these envoys to Rome and Sparta, but in the name of his brother Jonathan, while this one was held captive by Tryphon in winter 143/42 BC. It further seems that the ambassadors learnt about the death of Jonathan soon after their departure, so that

³⁶ *IMacc* 12: (6) Ἰωνάθαν ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ ἡ γερουσία τοῦ ἔθνους καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ ὁ λοιπὸς δῆμος τῶν Ἰουδαίων Σπαρτιάταις τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς χαίρειν.

³⁷ *IMacc* 12: (16) ἐπελέξαμεν οὖν Νουμήνιον Ἀντιόχου καὶ Ἀντίπατρον Ἰάσωνος καὶ ἀπεστάλακαμεν πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἀνανεώσασθαι τὴν πρὸς αὐτοὺς φιλίαν καὶ συμμαχίαν τὴν προτέραν. (17) ἐνετείλαμεθα οὖν αὐτοῖς καὶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς πορευθῆναι καὶ ἀσπᾶσασθαι ὑμᾶς καὶ ἀποδοῦναι ὑμῖν τὰς παρ’ ἡμῶν ἐπιστολάς περὶ τῆς ἀνανεώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀδελφότητος ἡμῶν.

³⁸ *IMacc* 14.20: Σπαρτιατῶν ἄρχοντες καὶ ἡ πόλις Σίμωνι ἱερεῖ μεγάλῳ καὶ τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις καὶ τοῖς ἱερεῦσι καὶ τῷ λοιπῷ δήμῳ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀδελφοῖς χαίρειν.

they then conducted negotiations in the name of Simon, who had been the effective authority behind their mission anyway. This suggestion may appear quite speculative at the present stage, but will soon gain shape. As we shall see, Simon's embassy travelled to and back from Rome in 142 BC, which supports the view that Jonathan had still been alive when they had been dispatched.³⁹

The mission of Numenius as Simon's ambassador to Rome is narrated only in the middle course of 140 BC, after the departure of Demetrios II on his Parthian campaign (*IMacc* 14.1–3), and before the *Constitutional Assembly* that took place in Jerusalem in September 140 BC (*IMacc* 14.25–49). Strangely, this embassy is said to have been solicited by the Spartans and Romans when hearing of Jonathan's death (*IMacc* 14.16–19). Why should they have waited over two years after his murder to react as they are then said to have done? At any rate, there is an apparent reason why the Continuator tells us about the embassy of Numenius (and Antipatros) immediately before the *Constitutional Assembly*: Simon's connections with Rome and Demetrios enhanced the legitimacy of his monarchical role.⁴⁰ The relevant passage reads as follows (*IMacc* 14.38–42):

(38) *King Demetrios also confirmed him in the high priesthood according to those things, (39) and made him one of his friends, and honoured him with great honour. (40) For he had heard that the Romans had called the Jews their friends and confederates and brethren, and that they had entertained the ambassadors of Simon honourably; (41) also that the Jews and priests were well pleased that Simon should be their governor and high priest for ever, until there should arise a faithful prophet; (42) moreover that he should be their captain [...].*⁴¹

The reference to Demetrios does not mean that the king had formed part of the ceremony in Jerusalem, not least because the departure on his eastern campaign preceded the assembly. The *Constitutional Document* rather seems to be quoting from the letter which Demetrios had issued previously. In this, he was apparently responding to the request that Simon be acknowledged as high priest (of the

³⁹ For 142 BC, also see BROUGHTON, *MRR* I p. 476 n. 1; GRUEN (1984), p. 749f.: 'The most economic solution is here preferable: to refer both accounts to the same event'; DORAN (1996), p. 160; 169; DABROWA (2010), p. 58 n. 5. Also see GIOVANNINI/MÜLLER (1971), p. 160–165: although they reject the letter of the Consul Lucius as forgery, they still date the embassy to 142 BC.

⁴⁰ Note that the first causal connection between diplomatic success and consolidation of Simon's rule is made in *IMacc* 14.25: 'Ὡς δὲ ἤκουσεν ὁ δῆμος τῶν λόγων τούτων, εἶπαν· τίνα χάριν ἀποδώσομεν Σίμωνι καὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς αὐτοῦ;

⁴¹ *IMacc* 14.38–42: (38) καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Δημήτριος ἔστησεν αὐτῷ τὴν ἀρχιερωσύνην κατὰ ταῦτα (39) καὶ ἐποίησεν αὐτὸν τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐδόξασεν αὐτὸν δόξῃ μεγάλῃ. (40) ἤκουσε γὰρ ὅτι προσηγόρευνται οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων φίλοι καὶ σύμμαχοι καὶ ἀδελφοί, καὶ ὅτι ἀπήντησαν τοῖς πρεσβευταῖς Σίμωνος ἐνδόξως. (41) καὶ ὅτι οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς εὐδόκησαν τοῦ εἶναι αὐτῶν Σίμωνα ἡγούμενον καὶ ἀρχιερέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἕως τοῦ ἀναστῆναι προφήτην πιστὸν (42) καὶ τοῦ εἶναι ἐπ' αὐτῶν στρατηγόν [...].

Temple of Jerusalem) and also as the (political and military) leader⁴² of the Judaeans. This reconciliation of the Maccabees with Demetrios II has been narrated in an earlier chapter of the book and dated precisely to year 170 of the Seleukid Era (*IMacc* 13.41). Assuming the Judaeans-Babylonian style, the year began in late March (Nisan) 142 and ended in late March (Adar) 141 BC. Simon sought contact with Demetrios only after his brother had been killed early in 142 BC (*IMacc* 13.23–26). He further built or, more likely, started building monuments for his deceased brothers and father at Modein (*IMacc* 13.27–30), and also began intensifying fortifications in Judaea (*IMacc* 13.33). These were his preparations before he sent out ambassadors to the Seleukid court (*IMacc* 13.34). This sequence of events suggests that the negotiations took place later in 142 BC, or perhaps extended into early 141 BC. Admittedly, the letter of Demetrios that is quoted in the narrative (*IMacc* 13.35–40) does not mention the Romans, whereas it does speak out the recognition of Simon's new position as a semi-autonomous vassal of the king.⁴³

There is more. Chapter 15 begins with the rise to power of Antiochos VII Sidetes. He thus responded to the capture of his brother Demetrios II early in 138 BC, as mentioned above (*IMacc* 14.3). Before landing in the Levant, he granted even fuller autonomy to the Judaeans, confirming the high priesthood to Simon and also bestowing the new title of ethnarch on him (*IMacc* 15.1–10).⁴⁴ The plot continues with Antiochos chasing down Tryphon and besieging him in Dora in 137 BC (*IMacc* 15.10–15). During this time, we are told that Numenios came back from Rome, delivering important letters to Simon (*IMacc* 15.15–24):

(15) In the mean season came Numenios and his company from Rome, having letters to the kings and countries, wherein were written these things: (16) Lucius, Consul of the Romans, to King Ptolemy, greeting. (17) The Judaeans' ambassadors, our friends and allies, came to us to renew the old friendship and alliance, being sent from the High Priest Simon, and from the people of the Judaeans. (18) And they brought a shield of gold of a thousand pound. (19) We thought it good therefore to write to the kings and countries, that they should do them no harm, nor fight against them, their cities, or countries, nor yet aid their enemies against them. (20) It seemed also good to us to receive the shield of them. (21) If thus there be any pestilent fellows that have fled from their country to you, deliver them to the High Priest Simon, so that he may punish them according to their own law. (22) The same things he likewise wrote to Demetrios the King, and Attalos, to Ariarathes, and Arsakes, (23) and to all the countries and to Sampsames, and the Lacedemonians, and to Delos, and Myndos, and Sikyon, and Karia, and Samos, and Pamphylia, and Lykia, and Halikarnassos, and

⁴² The title ethnarch of the Judaeans would only be coined in 138 BC: *IMacc* 15.1f., on which see COŞKUN (2018a) (*pace* SHARON 2010).

⁴³ There is no reason to surmise that the cited letter is complete.

⁴⁴ See above, n. 42, for references.

*Rhodes, and Phaselis, and Kos, and Side, and Arados, and Gortyn, and Knidos, and Cyprus, and Kyrene. (24) And the copy hereof they wrote to Simon the High Priest.*⁴⁵

If we could trust the chronology of the narrative, we should assume that Numenius arrived in later spring or summer 137 BC, which is about three years after his (misdated) departure, as we have been told in chapter 14. Such a duration would be quite exceptional and dysfunctional, so that most scholars have tried to reduce the timeframe to 140–138 BC, if not to ca. 139 BC.⁴⁶ But such approaches are based on an outdated Seleukid chronology, according to which Demetrios II was captured and Antiochos VII usurped power in 139 BC.⁴⁷ Choosing 139 BC means rejecting the documentary and narrative evidence of *IMacc*, whereas the years 140–138 BC imply an overly long travel time, something that the uninformed Continuator of *IMacc* does not seem to be aware of. There is at least no mention of Numenius having been delayed in Rome or underway, or having been missed back in Jerusalem. The Continuator once more reveals his lack of familiarity with interstate diplomacy, or, say, extra-Judaean matters at large. But he did show respect for the documentation that he found. Otherwise, if he had been willing and capable of fabricating a Roman letter (which he is often accused of), would he not rather have drafted an epistle addressing Simon himself, or at least one of the Seleukid kings? Instead, he

⁴⁵ *IMacc* 15: (15) Καὶ ἦλθε Νουμήνιος καὶ οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐκ Ρώμης ἔχοντες ἐπιστολὰς τοῖς βασιλεῦσι καὶ ταῖς χώραις, ἐν αἷς ἐγγράπτο τάδε· (16) “Λεύκιος ὑπάτος Ρωμαίων Πτολεμαίῳ βασιλεῖ χαίρειν. (17) οἱ πρεσβευταὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἦλθον πρὸς ἡμᾶς, φίλοι ἡμῶν καὶ σύμμαχοι, ἀνανεούμενοι τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς φιλίαν καὶ συμμαχίαν, ἀπεσταλμένοι ἀπὸ Σίμωνος τοῦ ἀρχιερέως καὶ τοῦ δήμου τῶν Ἰουδαίων· (18) ἦνεγκαν δὲ ἀσπίδα χρυσοῦν ἀπὸ μνῶν χιλίων. (19) ἤρρεσεν οὖν ἡμῖν γράψαι τοῖς βασιλεῦσι καὶ ταῖς χώραις ὅπως μὴ ἐκζητήσωσιν αὐτοῖς κακὰ καὶ μὴ πολεμήσωσιν αὐτοὺς καὶ τὰς πόλεις αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν καὶ ἵνα μὴ συμμαχήσωσι τοῖς πολεμοῦσιν αὐτοῦς. (20) ἔδοξε δὲ ἡμῖν δέξασθαι τὴν ἀσπίδα παρ' αὐτῶν. (21) εἰ τινες οὖν λοιμοὶ διαπεφεύγασιν ἐκ τῆς χώρας αὐτῶν πρὸς ἡμᾶς, παράδοτε αὐτοὺς Σίμωνι τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ, ὅπως ἐκδικήσῃ ἐν αὐτοῖς κατὰ τὸν νόμον αὐτῶν.” (22) Καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ ἔγραψε Δημητρίῳ τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ Ἀττάλῳ, Ἀριαράθῃ καὶ Ἀρσάκῃ (23) καὶ εἰς πάσας τὰς χώρας καὶ Σαμψάμῃ καὶ Σπαρτιάταις καὶ εἰς Δῆλον καὶ Μύνδον καὶ Σικυῶνα καὶ εἰς τὴν Καρίαν καὶ εἰς Σάμον καὶ εἰς τὴν Παμφυλίαν καὶ εἰς τὴν Λυκίαν καὶ εἰς Ἀλικαρνασσὸν καὶ εἰς Ρόδον καὶ εἰς Φασηλίδα καὶ εἰς Κῶν καὶ εἰς Σίδῃν καὶ εἰς Ἄραδον καὶ εἰς Γόρτυναν καὶ Κνίδον καὶ Κύπρον καὶ Κυρήνην. (24) τὸ δὲ ἀντίγραφον αὐτῶν ἔγραψαν Σίμωνι τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ.

⁴⁶ E.g., MENDELSSON (1875b), p. 419 and RITSCHL (1875), p. 428 (139 BC); SCHÜRER *et al.* I (1973), p. 194–197 (proposing identity with L. Valerius Flaccus cos. 131 BC); BERNHARDT (2017), p. 371. With different arguments, others reduce the time of the embassy even further to ca. 139 BC: REINACH (1899), p. 169; GRAETZ (1906), p. 658; 660f.; ETTELSON (1925), p. 283–285; D. SCHWARTZ (1993); CANALI DE ROSSI (1997), no. 600, p. 551–554 (ca. 140 BC); NODET (2005), p. 160; 239 (ca. 140 BC); EILERS (2008), p. 212, with n. 9. Yet others assume two embassies under Simon, one in ca. 142 BC, the other ca. 140/138 BC: TIMPE (1974), p. 146f.; 149; DĄBROWA in this volume.

⁴⁷ DĄBROWA (1999), p. 13–17; EHLING (2008), p. 182–190; also ENGELS (2010); cf. BICKERMANN (1937), p. 175.

quotes the copy of the letter to Ptolemy (VIII), because this is what he found, and what was his only proof for the success of Simon's ambassadors.⁴⁸

But the chronological problem can be overcome, because the name of the Consul Lucius seems to be a clear (while unintended and unacknowledged) reference to L. Caecilius Metellus Calvus, consul of 142 BC, the last with the praenomen Lucius for several years to come. There is an additional hint in the list of letters. The only Seleukid king named there is Demetrios, and not Antiochos, although the latter had been ruling (with the assent of the Judaeans) for over a year. The list has often been rejected as fabricated, although it cannot be explained plausibly as a fiction springing from the mind of the Continuator.⁴⁹ The naming of Demetrios does not follow the logic of the (composite) narrative as we have it, because the dispatch of Numenios is told only after the departure of Demetrios on his eastern campaign (in fact, only after his capture). Even without knowing the disastrous outcome, it would have been pointless to ask the Romans for a letter addressing Demetrios as of spring 140 BC. The epistle for this king must have been solicited before that time. This is further implied in the above-quoted *Constitutional Document*, especially if combined with the (Author's) narrative that reports Simon's recognition by Demetrios in 142/41 BC.

Surveying the full evidence, we can be confident that there was only a single embassy to the Senate under Simon, conducted by Numenios (probably together with Antipatros), beginning in spring 142 BC and ending in fall or early winter 142/41 BC. Possibly the same Judaeans envoys next attended the court of Demetrios II. They were 'armed' with a letter composed by the Roman consul, urging the king to make peace with 'their friends, allies and brothers', the Judaeans under the High Priest Simon. Thanks to the fragment of the letter that Demetrios wrote in response and was later quoted in the *Constitutional Document*, we get a clear picture not only of how triangular epistolary diplomacy was supposed to work in the orbit of the Roman Empire, but also of the fact that it did work. The success of Simon's ambassadors to Rome had impressed both Demetrios and the Judaeans, and the ensuing correspondence fostered the legitimacy of Simon's rule from within and outside Judaea. As such, it was noted pertinently by the composer of the *Constitutional Document*, which the Author of *IMacc* quoted as the pinnacle of his book. It found much further emphasis (rather than a historically correct treatment) by the subsequent dynastic historian, the Continuator of *IMacc*.

⁴⁸ There is endless debate as to whether we should identify the Consul Lucius with the Praetor Lucius Valerius, and thus also regard the present letter as either a forgery inspired by the *Valerius Decree* or a largely original document that was composed in the same context as the *Valerius Decree*. Either is inadmissible speculation, since the details of the letters are too different. See below, with n. 57.

⁴⁹ Or of the Author, as unitarians might prefer to say.

At any rate, we may call the mission of Numenios (and Antipatros) of 142 (or 142/41) BC the ideal type of ‘triangular epistolary diplomacy’: initiated at the high priestly court in Jerusalem, ambassadors travelled to the Roman Senate and solicited political support for their concern; this resulted in a *senatus consultum*, which gave shape to the authoritative letters composed by a consul or another official empowered to do so. One of the letters would normally address an opponent of the Maccabees, most likely a Seleukid king, who would be encouraged, if not urged or even threatened, to behave as the Senate had conceded to the Judaeans envoys. Whenever there was need to hurry, the ambassadors would probably go straight to Antioch or Damaskos, before returning to Jerusalem. Ideally, they would bring with them not only a Roman letter addressing the high priest directly, and copies of further letters that the Romans had written on his behalf, but possibly also another document issued by the third party, here, King Demetrios II, addressing the High Priest Simon (*IMacc* 13.36–40).

In fact, the case of Simon goes beyond this one remarkable case of triangular diplomacy. Consul Lucius is said to have composed no less than 25 letters in support of Simon and the Judaeans. The historicity of the list is once more controversial, but I am inclined not only to accept that the Continuator found it, but also that it was largely authentic, although modern commentators have not been able to fully explain the purpose of every single addressee.⁵⁰ Be this as it may, this correspondence seems to be the most energetic diplomatic response that a minor community had been able to solicit from an imperial power in antiquity. For such a number, it is hard to say if the envoys would try to deliver them all on their way back to Jerusalem, and only keep copies for the high priestly archive, or if only the most pressing letter(s) would be taken to its/their destination first. We should allow for a high degree of pragmatism, so that addressees in Greece, Western and Southern Asia Minor and Syria could largely be attended before reaching Jerusalem, whereas Alexandria and Kyrene (as well as Samsama, if identical with Amisos,⁵¹ Kappadokia and Parthia) may have been left to other delegates.⁵²

Be this as it may, every single case would be another example of triangular epistolary diplomacy: the high priest of Jerusalem was trying to induce a certain behaviour by drawing on the authority of their Roman ‘friends’. Ideally, the

⁵⁰ See the commentaries on the list by DANCY (1954), p. 190; GOLDSTEIN (1976), p. 496–500; DORAN (1996), p. 170; BALTRUSCH (2002), p. 99–105, who accept its historicity; it is rejected by SEEMAN (2013), p. 169f. and TILLY (2015), p. 292–294. GRAINGER (2012), p. 69 remains uncertain, emphasizing that the Roman intervention remained without effect anyway.

⁵¹ See GOLDSTEIN 1976, 498–500, followed by DORAN 1996, 170.

⁵² We cannot even be sure that all letters were copied. Alternative possibilities are that only summaries or lists existed. I am hesitant to draw a conclusion from the fact that the Continuator only had a copy of the letter to King Ptolemy to draw on.

magistrate would produce specific letters for each destination that the Judaeans were about to go to. The abovementioned Spartan decree in honour of Simon, which the Continuator has placed into the narrative of 140 BC (*IMacc* 14.20–23), seems to belong to same epistolary context, although it does not mention the Judaeans' contact with Rome. Since it is free from Hebraisms,⁵³ we have good reason to assume its authenticity. Given that the Lacedaemonians are listed among the recipients of the letters by Consul Lucius (*IMacc* 15.23), it is quite possible that Sparta, too, had been encouraged to give at least moral support to Simon. Interestingly, the letter calls the addressees *Spartiatatai*, whereas the letter list names them *Lakedaimonioi* in a classicizing fashion. This supports the view that the Continuator was drawing on heterogeneous materials, which he was unable to integrate into a coherent account. He would have been even less capable of forging such correspondence, had he wished to do so.

5. More Epistolary Diplomacy between Rome and Judaea

While the embassy of Numenios (and Antipatros) yielded the most impressive result in terms of ‘triangular epistolary diplomacy’, similar patterns can be observed for most other Judaeans' embassies. The mission of Eupolemos and Jason not only yielded one or more hearings in the Senate and the formal conclusion of friendship and alliance, but also one letter summarizing the *senatus consultum* that defined the conditions of the treaty (*IMacc* 8.23–30), another letter warning Demetrios I to leave the Judaeans in peace, or else face the full military force of the Romans (*IMacc* 8.31f.), and at least one further letter requesting the inhabitants of Kos to assist the ambassadors on their way home. Only the last epistle is known to have been authored by the Consul Fannius (*Jos., Ant. Jud.* 14.10.15 [233]), but it is probable that he also composed the other two, if not additional letters drafted to facilitate the envoys' travel.⁵⁴

⁵³ At least, none is identified by TILLY 2015, 278f.

⁵⁴ Most scholars accept the letter of the Consul Fannius to prove the historicity of the embassy of Eupolemos and Jason, see NIESE (1906), p. 818–823; TÄUBLER (1913), p. 249; BROUGHTON, *MRR* I p. 443 (but differently below); DANCY (1959), p. 129; GIOVANNINI/MÜLLER (1971), p. 167f.; TIMPE (1974), p. 143f.; GOLDSTEIN (1976/1979), p. 346; 366; FISCHER (1980), p. 112f.; GRUEN (1984), p. 43 n. 161; DORAN (1996), p. 102; CANALI DE ROSSI (1997), p. 526; EILERS (2003), p. 194 n. 22; SØRENSEN (2015), p. 26; AMELING (2018). Attempts at maintaining a Caesarian date (as the flawed narrative of Josephus seems to require) do not convince: WILLRICH (1924), p. 46f.; BROUGHTON, *MRR* II p. 222; 262; 272; 365; 565 (but differently above); SHERWIN-WHITE (1984), p. 73f.; SEEMAN (2013), p. 334–337; ZOLLSCHAN (2017), p. 31; 33; 133–135 (cf. ZOLLSCHAN 2007); BERNHARDT (2017), p. 366 n. 195; ZACK (2018a). PUCCI BEN ZEEV (1998), p. 22 is undecided. For a full discussion, see COŞKUN (in prep.).

The strong wording of the letter to Demetrios deserves to be emphasized: the willingness of the Romans to interfere forcefully should not be doubted. That the king never received the epistle was fatal for Judas, but it does not diminish the commitment that the Romans were expressing in 161 BC. Many have suspected this letter to be a forgery, partly because of the Hebraisms, partly because the threat goes beyond the expectation of many scholars. Neither argument is compelling:⁵⁵ the first is sufficiently explained with shortening and editing, and the harshness should not surprise us, given that Demetrios had fled from Rome against the explicit ruling of the Senate, and then killed the legitimate King Antiochos V. More importantly, the assumption of a forgery to raise the prestige of Judas would be most counterintuitive due to the (unintended) tension that the insertion of chapter 8 caused: the embassy plays no role in the ensuing chapter 9 dedicated to the final battle and heroic death of Judas. The addition of chapter 8 to the pre-existing plot is therefore best explained by the Continuator's intention to document what he believed had really happened, irrespective of any literary or ideological designs.⁵⁶

In contrast to most other scholars, I suggest that we regard the letter of the Praetor Lucius Valerius (also called the *Valerius Decree*) as the shortened version of the official documentation resulting from the first Roman embassy under John Hyrkanos I (Jos. *Ant. Jud.* 14.8.5 [143/145–148]). The chronological indications point to 128 BC, which is soon after the death of Antiochos VII. This is also the time for which Josephus reports a Judaeian mission to Rome, but for which he quotes a wrong document, a letter by the Praetor Fannius, son of Marcus (the so-called *Fannius Decree*: Jos. *Ant. Jud.* 13.9.2 [259–266], to be distinguished from the letter of the Consul Fannius of 161 BC).⁵⁷ At any rate,

⁵⁵ See COŞKUN (ca. 2018c), drawing, among others, on LAQUEUR (1927). For different positions, see, e.g., SEEMAN (2013); TILLY (2015); ZOLLSCHAN (2017); also see the references above in section 2. Cf. TIMPE (1974), p. 141f., who accepts that the Romans wrote a letter to Demetrios, but considers the transmitted version as 'literarische Stilisierung, keine authentische Wiedergabe'.

⁵⁶ Cf. BERNHARDT (2017), p. 367: 'Da Judas' Kontakt mit Rom im 130/129 v.Chr. abgefaßten ersten Makkabäerbuch trotz Parteinahme für Simon als Erfolg gefeiert wird, hätte man in der Tat kaum ein wirkungsloses Bündnis erfunden und dann ausgerechnet vor dem Tod des Judas plaziert.' Also see p. 368: 'so sinnlos der Zeitpunkt des Bündnisses unter fiktiven Bedingungen ist, so bezeichnend ist er unter historischen'. And p. 364, where he views the Judaeian approach of the Romans within the tradition of seeking the support from other imperial powers.

⁵⁷ Most scholars date the beginning of John Hyrkanos I's diplomacy with Rome to ca. 134/133 BC, for which they normally adduce the *Valerius Decree*: e.g., BROUGHTON, *MRR* I p. 491f.; SCHÜRER *et al.* I (1973), p. 204; GIOVANNINI / MÜLLER (1971), p. 160–163; GOLDSTEIN (1976/1979), p. 64, 469; RAJAK (1981), p. 72–81; SHERWIN-WHITE (1984), p. 76; BARTLETT (1998), p. 88; 93f.; ROCCA (2014), p. 269 (132 BC); BERNHARDT (2017), p. 372 with n. 227. Others argue for a beginning after the death of Antiochos VII, for which they normally draw on the *Fannius Decree*: GRAETZ (1906), p. 661f. (after 128

the Praetor Lucius Valerius records the Senate meeting in which the Romans received a precious gift from John Hyrkanos I, renewed the pre-existing bond of friendship and also ‘bestow[ed] on them whatsoever they stood in need of’ (§ 148). This grant must relate to their desire ‘that letters might be given them, directed both to the free cities and to the kings, that their country and their harbours might be at peace, and that no one among them might receive any injury’ (§ 147).⁵⁸ The ambassadors of John Hyrkanos, among whom we find Numenius once more, seem to have been similarly successful in Rome as under Simon, and we should not doubt that they made an effort to quickly disseminate the favourable messages of the Roman Senate.

The next Judaeian embassy to Rome is attested in the so-called *Pergamon Decree* (Jos., *Ant. Jud.* 14.10.22 [247–255]), a civic decree which has adopted much of the Roman letter that the Senator Lucius Pettius had composed (§ 251). One can deduce that the invasion of Antiochos IX Kyzikenos into Judaea had caused the according mission to Rome, and a date of 107 BC seems to be the best fit for all the given chronological indications.⁵⁹ A crucial part of the text reads as follows (§§ 249f.):

BC); TIMPE (1974), p. 148 (before 125 BC); CANALI DE ROSSI (1997), no. 612, p. 561–563 (ca. 125 BC); cf. GRAINGER (2015), p. 132; 215 n. 32; ZOLLSCHAN (2017), p. 242–247 (129 BC). Yet others claim embassies at both times: SHATZMAN (2012), p. 57–65 (135/134 and 128/125 BC); SEEMAN (2013), p. 184–194; 200 (134/132 [Valerius Decree + Lucius letter without extradition clause] and 128/125 BC); DĄBROWA in this volume. Previously, a date in the 50s or in 47 BC had been supported (e.g., MOMMSEN 1875; TÄUBLER 1913, 164; WILLRICH 1924, 61f.; *contra* MENDELSSON 1875b, 424; RITSCHL 1875; SCHÜRER *et al.* I 1973, 196). 47 BC has been favoured again in some recent publications: PUCCI BEN ZEEV (1998), p. 31–53; ZOLLSCHAN (2017), p. 247–250; ZACK (ca. 2018a). For my interpretation of the *Fannius Decree*, see below, section 6.

⁵⁸ Jos., *Ant. Jud.* 14.8.5 (143–148), esp. 146–148: (146) *περὶ ὧν Ἀλέξανδρος Ἰάσονος καὶ Νουμήνιος Ἀντιόχου καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος Δωροθέου Ἰουδαίων πρεσβευταί, ἄνδρες ἀγαθοὶ καὶ σύμμαχοι διελέχθησαν ἀνανεοῦμενοι τὰς προϋπηργμένας πρὸς Ῥωμαίους χάριτας καὶ τὴν φιλίαν, (147) καὶ ἀσπίδα χρυσῆν σύμβολον τῆς συμμαχίας γενομένην ἀνήνεγκαν {ἀπὸ χρυσῶν} μυριάδων πέντε, καὶ γράμματ' αὐτοῖς ἠξίωσαν δοθῆναι πρὸς τε τὰς αὐτονομουμένας πόλεις καὶ πρὸς βασιλεῖς ὑπὲρ τοῦ τὴν χάραν αὐτῶν καὶ τοὺς λιμένας ἀδείας τυγχάνειν καὶ μηδὲν ἀδικεῖσθαι (148) ἔδοξεν συνθέσθαι φιλίαν καὶ χάριτας πρὸς αὐτούς, καὶ ὅσων ἐδεήθησαν τυχεῖν ταῦτ' αὐτοῖς παρασχεῖν καὶ τὴν κομισθεῖσαν ἀσπίδα προσδέξασθαι.* ταῦτα ἐγένετο ἐπὶ Ὑρκανοῦ ἀρχιερέως καὶ ἐθνάρχου ἔτους ἐνάτου μηνὸς Πανέμου.

⁵⁹ The chronology is highly controversial. For an early date (134/125 BC), the transmitted text must be changed, to allow for an identification of Antiochos, son of Antiochos, with Antiochos VII, who was, however, the son of Demetrios I. This correction is accepted by, e.g., SCHÜRER *et al.* I (1973), p. 204–206, with reference to MENDELSSON (1875a); BROUGHTON, *MRR* III p. 156; RAJAK (1981), p. 78f. For Antiochos IX Kyzikenos, see REINACH (1899), p. 164–168 (105 or 104 BC); GRAETZ (1906), p. 661f. (113/110 BC); GIOVANNINI / MÜLLER (1971), p. 157–160 (107 BC); cf. SHERWIN-WHITE 1984, p. 76); TIMPE (1974), p. 148 (114/104 BC); GOLDSTEIN (1976/1979), p. 64 (113–112); GRUEN (1984), p. 750f. (107/104 BC); CANALI DE ROSSI

*The Senate thereupon made a decree about what they had desired of them, that King Antiochos, son of Antiochos, should do no injury to the Judaeans, the allies of the Romans; that the fortresses, and the harbours, and the country, and whatsoever else he had taken from them, should be restored to them; and that it be illegal for them (sc. the king and his men) to export any goods out of the harbours; (250) and that no king nor people have the right to export any goods, either out of the country of Judaea, or out of their harbours, without paying customs ...*⁶⁰

Since the Roman letter is conflated with the civic decree, it is unclear whether it had addressed John Hyrkanos and the Judaeans, or rather the Pergamenes on behalf of the Judaeans. There is further uncertainty about the way of communication, because the sloppy editing of the civic decree has occasionally maintained the first person plural for the Romans, instead of the third person.⁶¹ Otherwise, the first person is reserved to the Pergamenes, whereas John Hyrkanos and the Judaeans appear in the third person. My suspicion is that the original Roman letter addressed John Hyrkanos and the Judaeans, because Pergamon is specified nowhere as the direct correspondent of Lucius Pettilius. In addition, neither the report of the Senate's meeting nor the summary of the actions of Pettilius mention the composition of letters. At any rate, we further learn the names of the three Judaeian ambassadors to Rome, but they are not identical with the otherwise unknown Theodoros, who approached the Pergamene council and assembly 'with an epistle' and 'the decree of the Senate' (252).⁶² I suggest that the *senatus consultum* is identical with the letter

(1997), no. 616, p. 565–567 (105 BC); SHATZMAN (2007), p. 267–269 and (1999), p. 66 (ca. 113 BC); EILERS (2008), p. 214f. (106/105 BC); EHLING (2008), p. 217–227 (ca. 107/106 BC); SEEMAN (2013), p. 194–200; 241 (113/112 BC). ROCCA (2014) ignores a second embassy to Rome under John Hyrkanos I, but admits on p. 269 that Rome would have looked favourably on his conquests due to her hostile relation with the Seleukids (which is quite problematic).

⁶⁰ The full text is as follows: JOS., *Ant. Jud.* 14.10.22 (247–255), esp. 249f.: (249) καὶ περὶ τῶν κατὰ μέρη ἐμφανισάντων, ἐδογμάτισεν ἢ σύγκλητος περὶ ὧν ἐποιήσαντο τοὺς λόγους, ὅπως μηδὲν ἀδικῆ Ἀντίοχος ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀντιόχου υἱὸς Ἰουδαίουσιν συμμάχουσι Ῥωμαίων, ὅπως τε φρουρία καὶ λιμένας καὶ χώραν καὶ, εἴ τι ἄλλο ἀφείλετο αὐτῶν, ἀποδοθῆ καὶ ἐξῆ αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν λιμένων μηδ' ἐξαγαγεῖν, (250) ἵνα τε μηδεὶς ἀτελής ἦ ἐκ τῆς Ἰουδαίων χώρας ἢ τῶν λιμένων αὐτῶν ἐξάγων βασιλεὺς ἢ δῆμος [...].

⁶¹ This is particularly the case in § 250: ἢ μόνος Πτολεμαῖος ὁ Ἀλεξανδρέων βασιλεὺς διὰ τὸ εἶναι σύμμαχος ἡμέτερος καὶ φίλος, καὶ τὴν ἐν Ἰόππῃ φρουρὰν ἐκβαλεῖν, καθὼς ἐδεήθησαν τῆς βουλῆς ἡμῶν. Cf. SEEMAN (2013), p. 196, although he goes too far when claiming that the whole *senatus consultum* has been incorporated 'verbatim'. Differently, the editor Niese reads καθὼς ἐδεήθησαν: (251) τῆς βουλῆς ἡμῶν Λούκιος Πέττιος ἀνὴρ καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς προσέταξεν ... This is not only stylistically problematic, but would also render Lucius Pettilius a councillor of Pergamon, rather than a Roman Senator. For a full discussion, see COŞKUN (in prep.).

⁶² SEEMAN (2013), p. 197f. may be right that this was a Judaeian ambassador, although he suggests that the Roman and *Pergamene Decrees* got merged only by confusion, and that the latter probably dates to the times of Hyrkanos II (also see pp. 338–340). I disagree. See below for my interpretation of how the two texts relate to each other; and

addressing John Hyrkanos and the Judaeans (or perhaps a copy thereof), and the additional epistle may well have been written by the same Judaeans to the Pergamenes. This reconstruction, while uncertain, is further recommended by the reference to friendship between the Judaeans and Pergamenes going back to the ‘days of Abraham’ (255). Such an allegation was more likely to be found in a letter authored by the Jerusalemite court than by a Roman Senator.

We thus see an interesting modification of ‘triangular epistolary diplomacy’: a Roman letter documenting the grant of honours or beneficial rulings of all kinds could be taken to any other political player, here an important Greek city, to solicit support for a Judaeans cause. The *Pergamon Decree* itself does not actually specify the action that Theodoros wanted to induce in Asia Minor. Honours for John Hyrkanos were certainly welcome (252–255), but they were probably not the main goal of the embassy. Nor was military aid being asked for, although the conflict with Antiochos Kyzikenos was ongoing. What matters most is implied in the quotation of the Senate’s decree, which bans the king’s illegal pillaging of Judaea. Most likely, Pergamon, as one of the trade hubs in Western Anatolia, promised not to buy any goods either looted by Antiochos or his soldiers, or produced in areas of Judaea that the Seleukid held occupied, but which the Romans had agreed should belong to John Hyrkanos.

6. *The End of Epistolary Diplomacy between Rome and Judaea*

There is controversial, but admissible evidence for the renewal of Judaeans-Roman friendship under Alexander Jannaios, although this tells us little about the actual communication.⁶³ The last attestation of epistolary diplomacy leads us to the time of Aristobulos I (105/4 BC). It is the abovementioned *Fannius Decree*, which Josephus misinterpreted as the document issued for the first embassy dispatched to Rome by John Hyrkanos I (Jos., *Ant. Jud.* 13.9.2 [259–266]). While many scholars have maintained it in its narrative context (ca. 129/25 BC), or even dated it still to the lifetime of Antiochos VII (ca. 134/33 BC),⁶⁴ the historical indications clearly speak against such early dates. The

see COŞKUN (in prep.) for the suggestion that the ambassador was perhaps <Dionysios, son of> Theodoros, the Athenian citizen who proposed the *Athenian Decree* in honour of John Hyrkanos I (see below, with n. 65 on this document).

⁶³ Strabon in Jos., *Ant. Jud.* 14.3.1 (34–36), which is normally related to Aristobulos II alone. Thus, e.g., SCHÜRER *et al.* I (1973), p. 236f.; WHISTON / MAIER (1999), p. 458 n. 1; CANALI DE ROSSI (1997), p. 566f.; *contra* COŞKUN (in prep.). Without this piece of evidence, ROCCA (2014), p. 272–283 also argues for the renewal of friendship under Alexander Jannaios, but see my comments above, n. 2.

⁶⁴ See above, n. 57.

document definitely postdates the *senatus consultum* enshrined in the abovementioned *Pergamon Decree*. In fact, it even seems to be younger than the *Athenian Decree* in honour of John Hyrkanos I. Josephus has also misplaced this, adducing it among the documents supposedly written for Hyrkanos II under Julius Caesar (Jos., *Ant. Jud.* 14.8.5 [149–155]); but most scholars now accept it as dating to 105 BC, based on the Athenian *archon* Agathokles.⁶⁵

Shortly after this, the Praetor Fannius led a Senate meeting that dealt once more with Judaeian matters. It becomes clear that the partial occupation of Judaea by troops of Antiochos (IX) was ongoing (§ 261–263). That we should consider Aristobulos I as the authority behind the Judaeian embassy is revealed by the fact that the mission resulted in yet another renewal of friendship and alliance (§ 264). This cannot have been the case under John Hyrkanos I. Aristobulos is a more likely candidate than his brother Alexander Jannaios, because the military problem seems to have been solved shortly before the latter acceded to the throne in 104/3 BC (Jos., *Ant. Jud.* 13.12.2 [324]). The *Fannius Decree* stands out among the evidence of Judaeian-Roman friendship under the Maccabees in that it documents the only case in which the Senate denied the requested letters of support:

*(265) But as to the letters desired, their answer was that the Senate would consult about that matter when their own affairs would give them leave; and that they would endeavour, for the time to come, that no like injury should be done to them; and that their Praetor Fannius should give them money out of the public treasury to bear their expenses home. (266) And thus did Fannius dismiss the Judaeian ambassadors, and gave them money out of the public treasury; and gave the decree of the Senate to those that were to conduct them, and to take care that they should return home in safety.*⁶⁶

This episode does not yet represent a breakdown of Judaeian-Roman friendship, given that the same decree mentions its very renewal (§ 264). In addition, the ambassadors were treated with all formal diligence. The fact that Alexander Jannaios would continue the tradition of friendship diplomacy with Rome not much later further discourages a dramatization of the Roman response to Aristobulos' request. There is thus no need to explain procrastination as resulting from discomfort with Judaeian expansionism or disdain for enforced

⁶⁵ See ECKHARDT (2013), p. 189 n. 151; EILERS (2003), p. 194 and (2008), p. 214f.; SHARON (2010), p. 475. The *Athenian Decree* is not accounted for by SCHÜRER *et al.* I (1973); GIOVANNINI/MÜLLER (1971), p. 163; CANALI DE ROSSI (1997); PUCCI BEN ZEEV (1998); SEEMAN (2013); ZOLLSCHAN (2017); ZACK (2018a) and (2018b).

⁶⁶ JOS., *Ant. Jud.* 13.9.2 (259–266), esp. 265f.: (265) περί μέντοι γραμμάτων ἀπεκρίναντο βουλευέσθαι, ὅταν ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων ἢ συγκλήτος εὐσκολήσῃ, σπουδάσειν τε τοῦ λοιποῦ μηδὲν εἰς αὐτοὺς ἀδίκημα τοιοῦτο γενέσθαι, δοῦναι τε αὐτοῖς τὸν στρατηγὸν Φάννιον χρήματα ἐκ τοῦ δημοσίου, ὅπως ἂν εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν ἐπανάλθοιεν. (266) Φάννιος μὲν οὖν οὕτως ἀπέμπει τοὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων πρέσβεις χρήματά τε δούς αὐτοῖς ἐκ τοῦ δημοσίου καὶ δόγμα συγκλήτου πρὸς τοὺς διαπέμνοντας καὶ ἀσφαλῆ παρεξομένους τὴν οἶκαδε παρουσίαν.

circumcision.⁶⁷ If this were the case, one should rather expect to find more direct expressions of dislike, if not action taken against Judaea. I would even question that the Romans were well informed about the realities on the ground. It is hard to see that Idumaeans or Ituraeans turned to the Senate for help against Jerusalem.⁶⁸ But even if the Romans should have had detailed intelligence from whichever source, are we really to suppose that they were more sympathetic with the notorious cruelties of the latest Seleukids than with Maccabean politics?

All of this notwithstanding, one may still ask whether the denial of 104 BC was only coincidental, or perhaps symptomatic for a friendship in slow decline. Instead of postponing the Judaeans' concern to another meeting, say, some weeks later, or to look for an alternative but pragmatic solution, the envoys were simply sent home. This surely must have been disappointing to them, if not rude. And we have already concluded from the *Pergamon Decree* that the Judaeans' embassy to Rome in 107 BC yielded only a single letter. Although its content was according to wishes, the entirety of the correspondence may be reflective of a reduced Roman engagement. More importantly, the *Fannius Decree* demonstrates that the previous ruling of the Senate had not brought about the desired results by 104 BC: Joppa, Gezer and Pagai were still occupied by Antiochos Kyzikenos (§ 261).

On the verge of the centuries, Seleukid Kings existed only by name, having effectively become reckless warlords. The smaller their remaining territories, the more in numbers they were, fighting for survival from a day-to-day basis. They had learnt before all others that they could expect no help from the Senate. At the same time, they had unlearned to be afraid of Roman intervention.⁶⁹ Regardless of the king's disobedience, the Romans even refused new letters to the ambassadors of Aristobulos. Apparently, one can observe a decline of the commitment on the side of the Romans. At the same time, Aristobulos and Alexander Jannaios were showing no hesitation not to embark on bold endeavours without Roman support.

One possible explanation might be that the days in which Roman epistolary diplomacy had been influential and functional in the Near East were gradually over. Piracy along the Kilikian and Levantine coasts had been proliferating after the destruction of the Seleukid fleet by the Roman ambassador Cn. Octavius in 163/62 BC.⁷⁰ A last concerted political move of the Romans in the East before the close of the 2nd century BC was a combined military and diplomatic operation under the command of M. Antonius (102–100 BC): he sacked a few harbours along the coast of southern Asia Minor, and his governorship was followed by a Roman anti-pirate law that tried to bind in many of her eastern

⁶⁷ See above, n. 26 for references.

⁶⁸ Similarly, SEEMAN (2013), p. 202.

⁶⁹ On latest Seleukid History, see EHLING (2008); DUMITRU (2016).

⁷⁰ See EHLING (2008), p. 120f.; COŞKUN (in prep.).

allies. On closer inspection, however, Antonius' mission was limited in scale and highly under-resourced; Rome quickly withdrew by entrusting the continuation of the war to her eastern allies.⁷¹

Much more relevant for the Romans was the immediate threat that the Cimbri, Teutones and Ambrones were posing to them once more after their great victory at Arausio in 105 BC. Roman politics through the years 104–101 BC was largely concerned with the rebuilding and remodelling of the legions, the so-called 'Marian Reforms', which deeply impacted Roman society. At the same time, tensions within the Roman Senate, the citizenry and Italian society at large were on the rise, phenomena which ultimately led into the Social War (90–87 BC). We are therefore not bound to explain a decreasing efficiency and commitment on the Roman side with either cynical imperialism in general or disregard for the Judaeans in particular. Hand in hand with this concentration on Roman-Italian matters went the fact that the major initiatives in the Near East were left to the Arsakids of Parthia, Tigranes of Armenia, the Orontids of Kommagene and the Mithradatids of Pontos. For one or two generations, those were the rising powers in the region. At least to a lesser degree, Rhodes and Athens were also players of some distinction, and Judaea and Nabataea can be added for a brief period.⁷²

In the unipolar order of the Mediterranean world of the mid-2nd century, Rome had enjoyed the status of a superpower. She could effectively rely on epistolary diplomacy, as long as she showed her willingness and capacity to take action, if needed. Whether her dwindling determination caused the rise of a multipolar world in the Near East or was only its symptom remains open to discussion. But, ironically, when Rome was returning as the major player in the area during the First Mithradatic War (89–85 BC), this action was intertwined with a series of domestic and interstate wars. These affected the whole Mediterranean, and thus limited the scope for peaceful diplomacy. One might think that Roman political authority finally returned in the Augustan principate. But despite all the glamour and achievements of Rome's first emperor, his nearly 'divine' power was ultimately based on the many garrisons all around the Mediterranean. At the high tide of the Republican Senate, the Romans had been able to steer cities, tribes and kings through 'legions' of ambassadors 'armed' only with letters.

⁷¹ See, e.g., EHLING (2008), p. 228–230 and DE SOUZA (2012), p. 59–61; also BROUGHTON, *MRR* I p. 568, 572, 576; II p. 87, 90f., 94, 101f., 146 on M. Antonius, *praetor* 102 BC and *proconsul* 101–100 BC; and CRAWFORD *et al.*, *RS* I no. 12 (p. 231–270) = SHERK, *RGEDA* no. 55 on the *lex de piratis persequendis*. On piracy under Alexander Jannaios, also see J. ENGELS (2011), p. 190, and see above, n. 26.

⁷² For solid treatments of Roman foreign policy in the later 2nd and 1st centuries, see, e.g., SHERWIN-WHITE (1984); KALLET-MARX (1996); PAYEN (2016).

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