Michał Marciak

Idumea and the Idumeans

An Oriental Ethnos at the Crossroads of Levantine Cultures in Hellenistic and Roman Times

V&R

Idumea and the Idumeans

Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus / Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments

In cooperation with the "Bibel und Orient" Foundation,
University of Fribourg (*Switzerland*),
edited by Martin Ebner (*Bonn*), Peter Lampe (*Heidelberg*),
Heidrun E. Mader (*Heidelberg*), Stefan Schreiber (*Augsburg*)
and Jürgen Zangenberg (*Leiden*)

Advisory Board

Helen K. Bond (*Edinburgh*), Raimo Hakola (*Helsinki*),
Thomas Schumacher (*Fribourg*), John Barclay (*Durham*),
Armand Puig i Tàrrech (*La Selva del Camp*), Ronny Reich (*Haifa*),
Edmondo F. Lupieri (*Chicago*), Stefan Münger (*Bern*)

VOLUME 138

Idumea and the Idumeans

An Oriental Ethnos at the Crossroads of Levantine Cultures in Hellenistic and Roman Times

By

Michał Marciak

VANDENHOECK & RUPRECHT

ISSN 1420-4592
ISSN 2197-5124 (digital)
ISBN 978-3-525-50287-7
ISBN 978-3-647-50287-8 (PDF)
ISBN 978-3-666-50287-3 (eLibrary)
DOI https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666502873

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at https://dnb.dnb.de.

© 2027 Brill Deutschland GmbH, Robert-Bosch-Breite 10, 37079 Göttingen, Germany

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher. Text and datamining for commercial purposes requires the publisher's permission.

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht and Brill Deutschland GmbH are part of De Gruyter Brill.
www.degruyterbrill.com

Questions about General Product Safety Regulation: productsafety@degruyterbrill.com

Printing: CPI books GmbH, Leck



...
Do kraju tego, gdzie kruszynę chleba
Podnoszą z ziemi przez uszanowanie
Dla darów Nieba ...
Tęskno mi, Panie ...
...
Do bez-tęsknoty i do bez-myślenia,
Do tych, co mają tak za tak – nie za nie,
Bez światło-cienia ...
Tęskno mi, Panie ...
...
C.K. Norwid, Moja Piosnka II

Pamięci moich umiłowanych Dziadków,
Michała i Marysi Sobolewskich,
Piaski 10 (*Gmina Radymno*),
16 marca 2026

...
For that land where a scrap of bread is picked up
From the ground out of reverence
For Heaven's gifts ...
I am homesick, Lord! ...
...
For worrying-not and thinking-not,
For those whose yes means yes and no means no
Without shades of grey ...
I am homesick, Lord!

C.K. Norwid, My Song II (*trans. by W. Whipple*)

To the memory of my beloved grandparents,
Michał and Marysia Sobolewscy,
Piaski 10 (*Radymno Municipality*),
March 16, 2026

Contents

Acknowledgements IX
Abbreviations and Preliminary Remarks XIII
List of Figures and Tables XV

Introduction 1

1 Jewish Identity in the Second Temple Period 8
1.1 Models of Jewish Identity 8
1.2 How to Recognise a Judean? 12

2 From Edom to Idumea 24
2.1 Edom and the Edomites 24
2.2 Edomites in the Negev 37

3 Idumeans in the Persian Period 46
3.1 Historical Geography 46
3.2 Idumea's Regional Context: The Phoenicians 58
3.3 Regional Context: Gaza 66
3.4 Borders and Settlement of Idumea 73
3.5 Ethnic Makeup and Cultural Interactions 98

4 Idumea and Idumeans in the Hellenistic Period 105
4.1 Historical Geography 105
4.1.1 Early Hellenistic Period 105
4.1.2 The Ptolemaic and Seleucid Periods 112
4.1.3 The Hasmonean Period 124
4.2 Idumean Identity in Maresha and Beyond 127
4.3 Economy 161
4.4 Maccabean-Idumean Conflict 179
4.5 Conversion and Idumean Identity 198
4.6 Idumean Diaspora 210

5 Idumea and Idumeans in the Early Roman Period 216
5.1 Historical Geography 216
5.2 Herodian Period 231
5.3 The Jewish-Roman War of 66–73/74 CE 238
5.3.1 Roman Military Activity in Idumea 240

Michał Marciak: Idumea and the Idumeans

5.3.2 Jewish Internal Context 244
5.3.3 Idumeans and Jewish Identity 251
5.4 Material Culture 256
5.4.1 Maresha and Beth Guvrin 256
5.4.2 The Hebron Hills 259

Summary and Conclusions 270

Bibliography 279
Index of Principal Sources 332
Index of Personal Names 343
Index of Geographic and Ethnic Names 346

Acknowledgements

This book arose as the result of my research project entitled "Idumea and the Idumeans in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Early Roman Periods: An Oriental Ethnos at the Crossroads of Semitic Cultures", which was financed by the National Science Centre in Poland (project no. 2014/15/D/HS3/01303) and conducted at the University of Rzeszów from 2015 to 2019.[1] I want to express my deep gratitude to all who have contributed to this project over the years at every possible stage, from the conception of the idea through the application process to the final emergence of this book.

It was a very long time ago. On a sunny day in the spring of 2008, I was having lunch at a cafeteria on Mount Scopus (known as Atlas in the Frank Sinatra building) in Jerusalem with Prof. Israel Ephʿal, who brought the topic of the Idumean ostraca to my attention. Although I should have been familiar with the term, having graduated with a degree in history (majoring in Jewish studies and ancient history), it was both unfamiliar and extremely intriguing to me. At that time, I was spending the spring term at the Rothberg School of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Prof. Ephʿal was kind enough to agree to become my tutor during this stay. I was at the beginning of my PhD studies and had to abandon my initial PhD topic on the Wadi Daliyeh Samaria Papyri due to the recent publication of a monumental study concerning this subject. Needless to say, I was in despair. Although I did not choose anything related to Idumea as my PhD topic in the end, the memory of this talk remained at the back of my mind for the next several years and in 2014 I finally decided to tackle the subject. At this point in time, I was in a situation known to all postdocs who do not receive a position after completing their PhD and are completely dependent on external research grants. Luckily for me, a new and professional research agency had been created in Poland in 2011, the National Science Centre (hereinafter NCN), and it would go on to save my academic career with an Idumea grant – not for the first or last time.

Thus, I express my gratitude to Prof. Israel Ephʿal not only for bringing Idumea to my attention, but also for all the time he devoted to our meetings

1 Over the course of the research, several papers devoted to different groups of ancient written sources mentioning Idumea or the Idumeans were published within the framework of this project. See Marciak 2017a; Marciak 2017b; Marciak 2017–2018; Marciak 2018a; Marciak 2018b; Marciak 2019; Marciak 2020a; Marciak 2020b; Marciak 2021. Some of them have been partially integrated into this book as revised versions. The integration of these papers is always indicated in the footnotes.

in the spring 2008 term in Jerusalem, which truly inspired me and which I cherish to this day.

I also wish to thank several Israeli colleagues for meeting me, discussing my research during my trips to Israel on various occasions and providing diverse forms of priceless support. I am indebted to Prof. Orit Peleg-Barkat (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) for inviting me for a guest lecture at the Institute of Archaeology at the HUJI on 25 November 2019 and sharing many publications and her own research on Idumea with me (as well as supporting some of my later projects). I am also grateful to Prof. Yigal Levin (Bar-Ilan University), whose excellent publications on Idumea gave me a valuable head start. Prof. Levin also shared his views on the Idumeans with me during our meeting on 4 June 2019, which, I gratefully acknowledge, shaped my own views and also provided me with much-needed publications for the revision of the present book. I also want to thank Prof. Adi Erlich (University of Haifa) for sharing several images of figures published in this book. Finally, special thanks must go to Dr Ian Stern (University of Haifa / Hebrew Union College) not only for our meeting in Jerusalem in 2019, but also for sharing his publications about Idumea with me (including his unpublished doctoral dissertation), as well as many images of figures published in this book.

I would additionally like to thank Dr. Roi Sabar (Boston University) for inviting me to the seminar series "From Rebels to Rulers: The Hasmoneans and Their Kingdom" held at Boston University in 2024–2025. In the meeting entitled "Idumea and the Hasmoneans: Archaeological Perspectives", held on 31 January 2024, I attended two excellent lectures by Dr. Ian Stern and Dr. Debora Sandhaus (Ben Gurion University of the Negev) that summarised the most recent archaeological research on Idumea. In particular, the lecture of Dr Sandhaus filled gaps in my knowledge about the most recent archaeological missions to various sites in the territory of Hellenistic and Early Roman Idumea.

Concerning my trips to Israel, I would also like to thank Rev. Dr. Piotr Żelazko (Salesian Pontifical University) for his generous help in Be'er-Sheva in 2017, which allowed me to visit many Idumean sites, especially in the Negev.

Over the course of my Idumean project (as well as on other occasions), I was able to visit the University of Münster for library research and consultations. I wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Peter Funke for these opportunities, which always gave me excellent working conditions in this beautiful city. I likewise extend my thanks to other colleagues in Münster who aided me in various ways during my stays, especially Prof. Achim Lichtenberger, Prof. Hans Beck, Prof. Michael Blömer and Dr. Torben Schreiber. It is unlikely that I would ever have set a foot in Münster without the help of Prof. Marek

Olbrycht (University of Rzeszów), whose German connections brought me to Münster for the first time in 2014 and many times afterwards, and I remain grateful to him for his support.

Throughout the project, I presented the preliminary results of my research at two conferences: the 2017 International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, held at Humboldt Universität in Berlin on 7–11 August 2017, and the Broadening Horizons 6 Conference hosted at the Freie Universität Berlin on 24–28 June 2019. For the former, I wish to thank Prof. Philippe Guillaume (University of Berne) and Prof. Emanuel Pfoh (Catholic University of Argentina-CONICET; University of Helsinki) for our talks. For the latter, I am grateful to its organisers (Dr Costanza Coppini in particular) for making it possible, and to Prof. Caroline Waerzeggers (Leiden University) for her feedback and help.

Turning now to my Polish academic environment, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Michał Galas from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. In the autumn of 2016, I received a surprise call from Prof. Galas, Head of the Institute of Jewish Studies at that time, who invited me to give a monographic lecture at the institute during the 2017–2018 winter term. I chose "Idumea and the Idumeans" as a topic for MA students in the final semester of their studies (which is usually devoted to modern history). I must admit that I still feel sorry for them becoming the "guinea pigs" of my Idumean research. In this context, I must also thank Dr. Marek Tuszewicki, Deputy Director for Teaching at the Institute of Jewish Studies, for his patience and goodwill. My thematically exotic lecture began our collaboration, which ultimately led to me receiving a tenure-track position at the Department of Jewish Studies of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków on 1 October 2018, for which I naturally remain incredibly grateful.

I also want to thank Ms Ewa Przybyszewska from the University of Rzeszów for taking excellent care of the project in administrative terms.

I would also like to take the opportunity here to express my gratitude to Ms. Lauren Moseley for her meticulous proofreading of my texts and publications over the years.

I am additionally grateful to my good friend, Prof. Bartłomiej Szypuła (University of Silesia in Katowice), for consulting with me about the book's maps.

The history of publishing this manuscript was much longer than one would probably guess. In fact, it rather resembled ancient maritime travel. In this context, I would like to thank my colleagues in Ancient Near Eastern Studies (University of Melbourne), especially Abby Robinson, for their attention to my manuscript and valuable comments. When at a certain point my manuscript began to resemble a boat (possibly an ancient Idumean boat!) stranded at sea

(which would have been the Dead Sea, of course!), it found its wonderful rescuers in the persons of PD Dr Izaak de Hulster (Acquisitions Editor, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), Prof. Jürgen Zangenberg (Leiden University) and the editors of the Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus Series. In particular, Izaak de Hulster made every effort to make this editorial process both the most professional and fastest I have ever experienced, and I am extremely grateful for this. In turn, history has come full circle with my great *Doktorvater*, Jürgen Zangenberg, helping me with the two books that marked the two most fundamental stages of my academic career (my PhD and, hopefully, my professorship), and I simply cannot thank him enough for this.

I also wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers of this book, who provided me with constructive and very helpful feedback. Of course, the manuscript is my sole responsibility, and any possible deficiencies are not the fault of anyone else.

I dedicate this book to the memory of my beloved grandparents, Michał and Marysia Sobolewscy. It was at their homestead in Piaski (near Radymno), a small village close to the modern Ukrainian border, where I spent all my summer holidays until 1998. Words fail me to adequately describe how much these memories still mean to me. It was there that I first began reading the Bible with passion, as well as other books about ancient times. It was also there that I first fell in love with the surrounding nature in the Polish countryside, which, at that time in the 1980s and early 1990s, was still untouched by modern developments. Above all, it was there that I witnessed the life of my mother's parents – their simple way of living, deeply held values and strict moral conduct. In this way, Piaski has forever become my own Shire.

Kraków, 16 March 2026

Abbreviations and Preliminary Remarks

As a rule, the abbreviations follow the *SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999) or the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4th Edition, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Some abbreviations used in this book (including those that do not appear in the *SBL Handbook* or the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*) are reproduced below for ease of reference.

Sources

Arr. *Anab*.	Arrian, *Anabasis*
Curt.	Q. Curtius Rufus
Dio Cass.	Dio Cassius
Diod. Sic.	Diodorus Siculus
FGrH	F. Jacoby, *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*
Hdt.	Herodotus
Ant.	Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae*
Bell.	Josephus, *De Bello Judaico*
C. Ap.	Josephus, *Contra Apionem*
Vita	Josephus, *Vita*
Plin. *HN*	Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*
Polyb.	Polybius
Ptol. *Geog*.	Ptolemaeus, *Geographia*
Strabo	Strabo, *Geographica*
Tac. *Hist*.	Tacitus, *Historiae*

Reference Works

ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, Rheie II: *Principat*, edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase, Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1970-.
BGU	*Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Koniglichen Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden. Vol. 1–15*, Berlin: Weidmann, 1895–1937.
CIIP	*Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palestinae: A Multi-Lingual Corpus of the Inscriptions from Alexander to Muhammad*, edited by H. M. Cotton et al., *Vol.* 1–5, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018–2023.

Michał Marciak: Idumea and the Idumeans

EncIr	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*
FGrH	*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. edited by F. Jacoby. Leiden: Brill, 1954–1964.
NEAEHL	*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, edited by E. Stern, Vol. 1–5, Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta, 1993–2008.
OGIS	Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae, edited by W. Dittenberger. Vol. 1–2, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1903–1905.
RE	*Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
SB	*Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten*. edited by F. Preisigke et al. Vol. 1–21. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1915–2002.
SCI	*Scripta Classica Israelica*

General Abbreviations

BCE	Before the Common Era
CE	Common Era

Figures and Tables

Figures

0.1 Landscape (by M. Marciak) v
1.1 Jewish and Idumean Diaspora Settlement in the Mediterranean World and the Near East in Hellenistic and Roman-Parthian Times (by M. Marciak) 13
2.1 Edom and the Southern Levant (by M. Marciak) 25
2.2 Edomite "Expansion" in the Negev (by M. Marciak after Beit-Arieh 1996) 38
2.3 Examples of Edomite Pottery, by M. Marciak. Exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem 40
2.4 ʿEn Ḥazeva seen from northeast (by M. Marciak) 41
2.5 Sculpture from Ḥorvat Qitmit Interpreted as the Head of a Goddess, Collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority, Photo © The Israel Museum, by Meidad Suchowolski 41
3.1 The Achaemenid Levant and Arabia (by M. Marciak) 49
3.2 Greater Phoenicia in the Achaemenid Period (by M. Marciak after Grainger 1991, Map 1) 59
3.3 Persian-Period Satellite Settlements in the Southern Sharon Plain According to Size (by M. Marciak after Roll and Tal 1999, p. 206, Fig. 4.63) 63
3.4 Phoenician Amulets and Seals from Megiddo and Dor, 9–6th c. BCE, by M. Marciak. Exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem 64
3.5 Southern Palestine and Eastern Egypt in the Persian Period (by M. Marciak) 67
3.6 Tel Beersheba seen from northwest (by M. Marciak) 71
3.7 Tel Arad (fortress) seen from southwest (from the lower city), (by M. Marciak) 71
3.8 Yehud Stamp Impression, Type 13c (by M. Marciak after Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2014, p. 53, Fig. 4.2) 77
3.9 Yehud Coin (Wyssmann 2014, p. 246, Fig. 18) 79
3.10 Borders of Yehud (and Idumea) according to M. Stern (by M. Marciak after E. Stern 1982: 247, Map 379) 84
3.11 Two Stages of Development (Persian Period and Before 160 BCE) of the Border Between Yehud and Idumea according to I. Finkelstein (by M. Marciak after Lipschits and Tal 2007: 37, Fig. 1 with modifications) 86

Michał Marciak: Idumea and the Idumeans

3.12 Borders and Major Settlements of Idumea in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Period (by M. Marciak) 88
3.13 Early Hellenistic Shephelah along the Elah Valley (by M. Marciak) 89
3.14 Terracotta Figurine of Horse and Rider (Drawing), Tel ʿErani (Cornelius 2014, p. 72, Fig. 3) 91
3.15 Terracotta Figurine of Woman with Child on Her Left Shoulder (Drawing), Tel Ḥalif (Cornelius 2014, p. 73, Fig. 6) 92
3.16 Terracotta Figurine of Woman with Child on Her Left Shoulder, Tel Ḥalif (photographed by Paul Jacobs, courtesy of Adi Erlich and the Israel Antiquities Authority) 93
3.17 Tel Lachish seen from south (by M. Marciak) 94
3.18 Tel Maresha seen from south (by M. Marciak) 94
4.1 Historical Geography of Hellenistic Idumea (by M. Marciak) 107
4.2 View of Maʿale ʿAqrabbim with an approximate line marking the ancient ascent (by M. Marciak) 123
4.3 General plan of Maresha and its subterranean complex (I. Stern 2021, Fig. 2). Courtesy of I. Stern 128
4.4 Google Earth Image of Maresha (with modifications by M. Marciak) 129
4.5 Residential house in Maresha (by M. Marciak) 130
4.6 Plan of the upper city of Maresha (Bliss and Macalister 1902: Plate 16). Public domain 132
4.7 Execration Figurines from Maresha (Bliss/Macalister 1902: Plate 85). Public Domain 134
4.8 Divination texts from Maresha. Courtesy of I. Stern 138
4.9 The main chamber of the Sidonian Tomb in Maresha (by M. Marciak) 144
4.10 Relief from the Tomb of the Musicians (by M. Marciak) 146
4.11 Heliodorus Stela, by M. Marciak. Exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem 148
4.12 Phalli from Maresha. Courtesy of I. Stern 151
4.13 Water installation in Maresha (I. Stern 2013: 38). Courtesy of I. Stern 152
4.14 Perforated Vessels from Maresha (Stern and Noam 2015: Fig. 3). Courtesy of I. Stern 153
4.15 Aniconic Sculpture from Maresha (I. Stern 2013: 39). Courtesy of I. Stern 154
4.16 *Kernoi* from Maresha (Ambar-Armon 2019: 137, Fig. 10.4). Courtesy of I. Stern 155
4.17 Terracotta Figurine of a Bearded Man with a Bow and Arrow (Drawing), (Cornelius 2014, p. 73, Fig. 5) 160

4.18 Economy and Trade in Hellenistic Idumea (by M. Marciak after Kloner 2015) 162
4.19 Oil presses in Maresha (by M. Marciak) 164
4.20 Columbarium in Maresha known as the Columbarium Cave or "es-Suk" (by M. Marciak) 165
4.21 Cisterns in Maresha known as "The Bell Caves" (by M. Marciak) 167
4.22 Maresha's Fine Tableware, from Pergamon and local (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2019, p. 66, Fig. 3.10). Courtesy of I. Stern 169
4.23 En Gedi and its Modern Plantations of Palm Trees (by M. Marciak) 176
4.24 The Dead Sea Seashore at En Gedi (seen from west) (by M. Marciak) 178
4.25 Maccabean and Hasmonean Conquests (by M. Marciak) 180
5.1 Historical Geography of Early Roman Idumea (by M. Marciak) 217
5.2 Herodium: Upper Herodium in the Background and Lower Herodium in the Foreground (by M. Marciak) 227
5.3 Sarcophagus of Herod the Great from Herodium, by M. Marciak. Exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem 228
5.4 Topography (ArcScene) of Idumea (by M. Marciak) 228
5.5 Jewish–Roman War in the Context of Idumea (by M. Marciak) 239
5.6 Topography of Jerusalem according to the Holyland Model of Jerusalem with the Lower and Upper City of Jerusalem in the Foreground (by M. Marciak) 244
5.7 Ramat al-Khalil (by M. Marciak) 261
5.8 Haram el-Khalil (by M. Marciak) 267

Tables

3.1 Settlement Patterns in Idumea. After I. Stern 2005: 256 95
3.2 Ethnic breakdown of Idumean Ostraca. After I. Stern 2007, p. 213 (Table 2.1) 100
3.3 Intergenerational ties by ethnic groups (percentages). After I. Stern 2007, p. 225 (Table 2.7) 102

Introduction

In recent decades, there has been a considerable growth of scholarly interest in the ethnic and cultural diversity of ancient Palestine.[1] Hellenistic and Early Roman Palestine included not one, but many ethnic-cultural groups (*ethne*), especially Itureans, Galileans, Samaritans, Judeans, Idumeans, Nabateans and various populations on the Mediterranean seacoast (post-Philistine and Phoenician settlements), as well as many Hellenistic cities, especially located in Transjordan.[2] It is necessary to stress that some of these groups were closely related to each other, either ethnically or culturally. This applies in particular to, broadly speaking, the Jewish world (sometimes labelled "Judaism"[3]), which, at one point or another, included several distinct groups: especially the Judeans and the Galileans, the Samaritans (to some extent) and, through conversion and assimilation, the Itureans and the Idumeans. Furthermore, many Judeans lived outside Palestine at that time, especially in Rome, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and the Parthian kingdom.[4] In this sense, the present study about the Idumeans belongs to the notorious and complex debate concerning the Jewish Identity in (what is labelled as) the Second Temple Period, which aims to understand what characterised this identity at large and what may have been regionally specific.[5] The study of the Idumeans may offer a very good study case in this regard.

Recent scholarship has produced many significant publications, including monographic studies, on some of the aforementioned groups, especially on Itureans, Galileans, Samaritans, and Nabateans.[6] In fact, research on some of these groups, though still frequently conducted under the label of "Jewish" or "Biblical" studies, has grown so much in popularity nowadays that one may see some of it as contributing to distinctive sub-branches of *Altertumswissenschaft*

1 See Marciak 2017a, pp. 171–172; Marciak 2018a, p. 877; Marciak 2018b, p. 164; Marciak 2019, p. 236.

2 For an overview, see Schürer 1979, pp. 1–52; Grabbe 2008, pp. 173–181.

3 On the problematic aspect of the use of this category in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, see Mason 2007 and S. Schwartz 2011.

4 For an overview of the Mediterranean diaspora, see Barclay 1996 and Smallwood 1999; for an overview of the Parthian diaspora, see Neusner 1969, Goodblatt 2006 and Goodblatt 2012.

5 For an overview, see Miller 2010 and Miller 2014.

6 Itureans: E. A. Myers 2010. Galileans: *e.g.*, Freyne 1980; R. A. Horsley 1995; R. A. Horsley 1996; Meyers 1999; Chancey 2002; Freyne 2002. Samaritans: *e.g.*, Coggins 1975; Pummer 1987; Crown *et al.* 1993; Crown 1989; Hjelm 2000; Zsengellér 2011. Nabateans: *e.g.*, Wenning 1978; Lindner 1997; Healey 2001; Hackl *et al.* 2003; Erickson-Gini 2006; Erickson-Gini 2010.

© 2027 BRILL DEUTSCHLAND GMBH, GÖTTINGEN | HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.13109/9783666502873.1

(*e.g.*, "Samaritan studies" or "Historical Jesus/Galilee" studies).[7] In contrast, despite the recent growth in popularity of research on Idumeans (see below), there has been no monograph on the history and culture of this ancient *ethnos*. What is more, it is difficult to point to more general recent publications that offer an updated overview of the history of the Idumeans (or, even more so, of their cultural characteristics) or a list of basic sources and literature. In this context, a research project, financed by the National Science Center in Poland, was launched in 2015 with the aim of filling this gap in recent scholarship. Within this research project, several detailed studies on literary sources mentioning Idumea or Idumeans have been published,[8] and the present monograph has been prepared as the first-ever full-scale monograph on Idumea and Idumeans.

As far as the state of research is concerned, four kinds of publications that may play an introductory role for the history and culture of the Idumeans should be mentioned: encyclopaedia entries, Arieh Kasher's book about the relations between the Jews and their Arab neighbours, Nikos Kokkinos' book about the Herodian dynasty, and finally and most recently, several recent papers by Yigal Levin.

First, regarding encyclopaedia entries, both the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and the *Encyclopedia Judaica* provide examples of short entries about Edom.[9] In accordance with their titles, the focus of both publications is on the Iron Age kingdom of Edom and its people. The question of the Idumeans (usually implied to be the descendants of the Edomites[10]) is treated marginally even for encyclopaedia entries, which are naturally already characterised by brevity in scope.

---

7 A renewed interest in *ethne* living in Hellenistic and Roman Palestine is also paralleled by a similar phenomenon in research on Iron Age ethnic diversity in the southern Levant. For instance, see the recent large-scale publications about Philistines (Noort 1994; Dothan and Dothan 1995: Ehrlich 1996; Niesiołowski-Spano 2016), Phoenicians (Grainger 1991; Elayi 2018), Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites (Sawyer 1983; Bartlett 1989; Hübner 1992; Bienkowski 1992; MacDonald 1994; MacDonald and Younker 1999; MacDonald 2000; Routledge 2004).

8 See Marciak 2017a; Marciak 2017b; Marciak 2017–2018; Marciak 2018a; Marciak 2018b; Marciak 2019; Marciak 2020a; Marciak 2020b; Marciak 2021.

9 Seligsohn 1904; Avishur et al. 2007.

10 Basic continuity between the Edomites and the Idumeans is almost universally accepted by scholars. Remarkably, the most prolific writer about Edom and the Edomites, J. Bartlett, casts doubt on it. However, his remarks (see Bartlett 1999) appear to be undermined by the recent onomastic data from the Idumean ostraca, which confirm a linguistic continuity of Edomite names in Persian and Hellenistic Idumea (see below). As far as the Edomites are concerned, the literature on the topic is extensive; see the three magisterial publications Bartlett 1989, Bienkowski 1995, and Lipiński 2006, pp. 361–422.

Second, A. Kasher's important book is written from the Judean perspective, in that it is the Judeans and their relations with Arab neighbours (including the Idumeans[11]) which are Kasher's focus.[12] Only one appendix (written by Israel Ronen) is devoted more directly to the Idumeans, but, in fact, this valuable paper presents the Idumeans in terms of only three major episodes of the Early Roman period: the Kostobar episode, Varus's War and the Great Revolt against Rome. There is virtually no attempt to use archaeological data to reconstruct Idumea's cultural environment in Kasher's book or Ronen's appendix.

Third, the most extensive treatment of the Idumeans' history and culture can be found in Kokkinos's famous book about the Herodian dynasty.[13] This book includes three chapters devoted to (mainly Hellenistic) Idumea which aim to sketch the political and cultural background of Herod the Great and his ancestors. However classic and useful the book is, it is not focused on Idumea and, having been prepared in the early and mid-1990s, does not include more recent epigraphical and archaeological discoveries in Israel: especially the Idumean Ostraca and the Israel Antiquity Authority excavations in southern Israel (see below).[14]

Fourth, Yigal Levin recently published several important papers which have provided a very useful overview of the history and culture of Idumeans, especially in the Persian period.[15] These papers definitely stand out among other publications devoted to ancient Idumea as taking advantage of the recent state of research and aiming at a more comprehensive picture. As such, they may be seen as small-scale attempts at the kind of synthesis which is attempted by the present study on a much larger scale.

Furthermore, Idumea and the Idumeans are usually mentioned in scholarship only in passing or as an aside to other topics,[16] especially the origins of Herod the Great, the beginnings of the *Limes Palaestinae*, the territorial expan-

11 The firm view that the Edomites/Idumeans were an Arab tribe was championed by several scholars, including Kasher 1988 and (more recently) Shahid 2009. However, this conviction has been called into question by other scholars on the grounds that the Edomite dialect was Northwest Semitic from the Canaanite linguistic group (Lipiński 2000, p. 61; Vanderhooft 1995).

12 Kasher 1988, esp. pp. 214–239.

13 Kokkinos 1998, esp. pp. 36–139.

14 See Kokkinos 1998, pp. 49–50.

15 Y. Levin 2007; Y. Levin 2012; Y. Levin 2015; Y. Levin 2020; Y. Levin 2022. Likewise, see Hensel 2022b.

16 An exception to this rule is the presence of an Idumean diaspora in Egypt, which was treated as a subject of its own by Rappaport 1969 and Thompson Crawford 1984. For ethnic minorities in Hellenistic Egypt (including references to the Idumeans), see Lau-

sion of the Hasmonean state or the question of the Jewish identity in the Second Temple Period.

Scholars who write about the life and achievements of Herod the Great sometimes refer to the cultural environment of his upbringing, but such references (except in the case of Kokkinos) are rare and usually lack detail.[17] In the case of the *Limes Palaestinae*, it is debated whether the Roman line of frontier fortifications originated in the aftermath of the Great Jewish revolt. For instance, according to M. Gichon, a number of components of what would become the Roman *Limes Palaestinae*, were first created by Herod the Great. But it was later the arrangement of Idumea as a special military zone, between 73 CE (the capture of Judea) and 106 CE (the annexation of the Nabatean kingdom), that paved the way for the installation of the Roman *limes*.[18] As far as the Hasmonean conquest of Idumea is concerned, scholars pose questions as to whether the subsequent acceptance of Jewish customs by the Idumeans was voluntary or compulsory (including the problem of circumcision of the Idumeans[19]) and what goal the Hasmoneans had in mind when they incorporated the Idumeans and other neighbouring *ethne* into the political and cultural commonwealth of their state.[20] Likewise, scholars who write about "Jewish identity" back up their statements by giving various examples, among others, that refer to what is known about the Idumeans to support their own understanding of the matter.[21] However, it should be noted that it is much more common to refer to other groups, especially the Galileans, as case studies in the Jewish identity discussion. It appears that this situation results from the

---

ney 1950, pp. 974–979, 1072–1077; Fraser 1972a, pp. 280–281; Fraser 1972b, pp. 438–440; Honigman 2003, pp. 66–69; Fisher-Bovet 2014, pp. 124, 287–290.

17 Schalit 2001, esp. pp. 4–5, 201, 257–258 n. 382, 173 n. 94, 709–710; Grant 1971, pp. 20–23; Richardson 1996, 252–272; Günther 2005, pp. 99–112; Kasher 2007, pp. 27–29, 415–416; Rocca 2008, pp. 69, 74, 86, 127, 135, 137–141, 145, 147, 149; Baltrusch 2012, pp. 31–35; Shatzman 2013.

18 Gichon 1967; Gichon 1971; Avi-Yonah 1974, 98–99, 114–115; Gichon 1980, 843–846; Shatzman 1983; Applebaum 1989; Gichon 1991.

19 For instance: Kasher 1988, pp. 46–78; Grabbe 1992, pp. 329–331; Feldman 1993, pp. 324–325; Richardson 1996, pp. 55–56; Steiner 1999; Pasto 2002, p. 195; R. A. Horsley 2002, 151–152; Feldman 2006, 237–238; Donaldson 2007, pp. 435–437; Lipiński 2009, p. 351; Eckhardt 2012, pp. 100–103; Stern and Noam 2015.

20 For instance: Schürer 1973, p. 207; Kasher 1988, pp. 46–68; Mendels 1992, 82–99; S. Cohen 1999, 110–118; Weitzman 1999; Chancey 2002, pp. 44–45; Dąbrowa 2010a, 74–77; Dąbrowa 2010b, 9–11; E. Regev 2013, pp. 273–284.

21 R. A. Horsley 1995, pp. 43–45; M. Smith 1999, pp. 205–206, 218–219, 233, 248; S. Cohen 1999, pp. 73, 114, 116–118; Esler 2003, p. 67; Miller 2010, pp. 118–122; D. Schwartz 2011, pp. 348–352; S. Schwartz 2011, p. 233; Miller 2014, pp. 240–241, 249.

lack of a large-scale study which would make the topic of the history and material culture of the Idumeans more accessible to scholars.

It is mainly during the last three decades that significant changes have taken place in the state of our knowledge about Idumea and the Idumeans. Next to several hundred Aramaic ostraca unearthed at archaeological sites (especially Maresha, Tel Arad and Tel Beersheba[22]), approximately 2,000 more have come to light from unprovenanced sources since 1991.[23] These ostraca clearly originated in the territory of ancient Idumea and were accordingly labelled the "Idumean Ostraca." In chronological terms, these Aramaic ostraca span a long period between the fifth and second centuries, but the majority come from the fourth century BCE.[24] Only about 1,380 ostraca can be considered legible, and most of those were published in editions by I. Ephʿal and J. Naveh, A. Lemaire, and B. Porten and A. Yardeni.[25] The onomastic data they contained were discussed by the editors, as well as by several other scholars,[26] and were most recently and exhaustively examined by I. Stern.[27] This aspect of the history and culture of Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Idumea appears to have been relatively well explored, especially compared to other research questions. In fact, the Idumean Ostraca have been less utilised when it comes to other issues, especially administrative and economic questions.[28]

Next to the discovery of the Idumean Ostraca, there have been a number of important archaeological excavations in modern Israel which shed new light on ancient Idumea. The major breakthrough took place through the excava-

22 See, *e.g.*, Geraty 1972; Naveh 1973; Naveh 1979; Y. Aharoni 1981; Naveh 1981; Eshel *et al.* 2007; Eshel 2010; Eshel 2014; Vainstub and Fabian 2015; Eshel and Stern 2017; Eshel and Langlois 2019; Eshel *et al.* 2022.

23 For a recent overview, see Edelman 2022a, pp. 277–279.

24 Porten and Yardeni 2004; Porten and Yardeni 2014, p. xix.

25 Ephʿal and Naveh 1996; Lemaire 1996; Lozachmeur and Lemaire 1996; Lemaire 1999a; Lemaire 2002; Lemaire 2006; Lemaire 2007; Lemaire 2012; Porten and Yardeni 2014; Porten and Yardeni 2016; Porten and Yardeni 2018; Porten and Yardeni 2020; Porten and Yardeni 2023. Smaller editions include Aḥituv 1999; Aḥituv and Yardeni 2004; Tsukimoto and Yamayoshi 2011; Langlois 2012.

26 Zadok 1998; Porten and Yardeni 2003; Porten and Yardeni 2004; Porten 2005; Porten and Yardeni 2006; Porten and Yardeni 2007a; Porten and Yardeni 2007b; Eshel 2007; Kloner and Stern 2007; Porten and Yardeni 2008; Porten and Yardeni 2009; Eshel and Langlois 2019.

27 I. Stern 2007, whose paper is based on his unpublished doctoral dissertation (2005). The manuscript of Stern's dissertation is available in the National Library of Israel (on Givat Ram).

28 But see Ephʿal 2003; Lemaire 1994; Lemaire 1999b; Lemaire 2000; Sapin 2004; Y. Levin 2007; Ecker and Eckhardt 2018; and especially Lemaire 2017.

tions in Maresha, the site of the capital of Hellenistic (but not Hasmonean or Roman) Idumea. Namely, the IAA excavations led by A. Kloner in 1989–2000, and by I. Stern and B. Alpert from 2000 revealed an extraordinary wealth of data in Maresha's underground city and necropolis.[29] These excavations gave us tangible insights into many aspects of everyday Idumean life, including its economy and culture; previously, we could only speculate, mainly on the basis of literary sources and to a very limited extent.

What is more, the picture of Idumea's material culture gained from the Maresha excavations can be compared to and supplemented by both older and more recent excavation data from other sites located within the territory of ancient Idumea. In the hill country and the Dead Sea, these include En Gedi, the Hebron region, Khirbet el-Qom, Adora and Tel Ḥalif; in the Negev, they include the Beersheba region, Tel Arad, Tel ʿIra, Ḥorvat ʿUza, Tel Jemmeh, Tel Seraʿ and Tel Haror; in the Shephelah and the coastal plain, they include Lachish, Tel el-Ḥesi, Tel el-Farʿah South, Tel Ẓafit (eṣ-Ṣafi), Tel Ẓippor, Tel Judeideh, Tel Miqne, Tel ʿErani, Ḥorvat Midras and many sites along the Elah Valley.[30]

29 The following archaeological reports have been published so far: Kloner 2003a; Erlich and Kloner 2008; Kloner *et al.* 2010; I. Stern 2014; Stern *et al.* 2015; I. Stern 2019a. For good overviews, see Kloner and Stern 2007; I. Stern 2007; Kloner 2011a; I. Stern 2012; I. Stern 2013; Kloner 2015; I. Stern 2018.

30 See the following basic references (the list is not, by any means, exhaustive): for Adora (Dura), see Abel 1938, p. 239; for Arad, see M. Aharoni 1993; Y. Aharoni 1970; for Beersheba, see Herzog 1993, as well as Derfler 1981 and Michael 2022; for Tel el-Farʿah South, see Yisraeli 1993 and Lehmann and Schneider 1999; for Tel Ḥalif, see Seger 1993, and Cole and Seger 2009; for Hebron, see Ofer 1993; Mader 1957a, Mader 1957b; for Tel el-Ḥesi, see Fargo 1993; for Tel ʿIra, see Beit-Arieh 1993a and Beit-Arieh 1999; for Tel Jemmeh, see van Beek 1993 and Naveh 1992; for Lachish, see Ussishkin 1993, Fantalkin and Tal 2004, Ussishkin 2004a, Fantalkin and Tal 2006; for Khirbet el-Qom, see Dever 1993, pp. 1233–1235 and Dorsey 1980; for Tel esh-Shariah (Tel Seraʿ), see Oren 1993a; for Ḥorvat ʿUza, see Beit-Arieh 1993b, pp. 1495–1497 and Na'aman 2012; for Tel Judeideh, see Broshi 1993; for Tel eṣ-Ṣafi (Tel Ẓafit), see Avissar *et al.* 2007 and Maeir 2012; for Tel Ẓippor, see Negbi 1966; Biran and Negbi 1966; Biran and Negbi 1967; Biran 1993; for Tel Miqne, see Dothan and Gitin 1993; for Tel ʿErani, see Yeivin and Kempinski 1993; for Tel Haror, Oren 1993b; for Ḥorvat Midras, see Peleg-Barkat 2017; Peleg-Barkat and Chernin 2018; Rogovski *et al.* 2018; Peleg-Barkat and Klein 2019; for En Gedi, see Mazar *et al.* 1966, Barag 1993; E. Stern 2007a, Hirschfeld 2007. Special attention should be paid to the latest excavations and surveys in the Hebron region and the Shephelah. For the Hebron region, see Magen 1993 and Magen 2003 (Ramat al-Khalil); Baruch 2009 (Susya and Ruyum el Hamiri); Eisenberg and Ben-Shlomo 2017 and Ben-Shlomo 2017 (Tel Rumeidah). For the Shephelah, see Sandhaus 2018 and Sandhaus 2020 (sites along the Elah Valley); Haber *et al.* 2022 (Kh. Amuda); Faust and Erlich 2011 (Kh. er-Rasm).

To sum up, it should be kept in mind that, despite the recent growth of interest, there has never been a monograph published about ancient Idumea and Idumeans. This volume aims to fill this gap in international research. In scientific terms, the main challenge of such a comprehensive treatment is to reconstruct the history and culture of Idumea and Idumeans by careful use of both the literary and documentary evidence and the latest archaeological data. It seems that, so far, publications have mainly relied on materials under their authors' own expertise (ancient history being represented especially by A. Kasher and N. Kokkinos and archaeology by A. Kloner and I. Stern), and an in-depth attempt at a large-scale synthesis is still warranted.[31] To achieve this aim, the present study is divided into five chapters. The first two chapters (chapters 1 and 2) will, to a great extent, set the stage for the next three, main chapters (chapters 3–5) which deal with specific periods of Idumean history in the Second Temple Period. In chapter 1 ("Jewish Identity in the Second Temple Period"), the main themes of discussion on the diversity of regional ethnicity and Jewish identity in Hellenistic and Roman Palestine will be presented. Assuming the basic continuity of the Edomites and Idumeans, chapter 2 ("From Edom to Idumea") will provide a basic reconstruction of the Iron Age history of Edom and Edomites. In such a way, we will provide a background for both the question of the origin of the Idumean *ethnos* in the Persian period and the biblical viewpoint of Judean-Idumean relationships in the Second Temple period. Finally, chapters 3–5 will be devoted to the history of Idumea and Idumeans in the Persian (chapter 3), Hellenistic (chapter 4) and Early Roman (chapter 5) periods. Each of these main chapters will first deal with historical geography. The results of our inquiry into historical geography are important as they may predetermine the choice of territory where the material remains could be considered representative of Idumean culture. Having discussed the historical geography for each period, the study will tackle several topics (based on either historical episodes or archaeological data) which are of relevance to our enquiry. The choice of topics will be dictated by the existence (or lack) of source material. At the conclusion of the entire study ("Summary and conclusions"), we will summarise the history and culture of Idumea and Idumeans and look back on them in the broader context of current debates on regional ethnicity and Jewish identity in the Second Temple Period.

31 To mirror a similar attempt at synthesis of Edomite history by J. R. Bartlett. See Bartlett 1989, p. 8.