Pyrrhus provoked the hostility of the Greeks of Sicily and was therefore behaving like a Hellenistic king ‘who had to consider both Sicily and the Greek city-states not as allies – this would have been the view of an hegemon – but as subjects’ (p. 121; see also pp. 167–76).

Chapter 3, ‘The First Punic War: Greeks and Natives of Sicily among Hellenistic Kingship, Old Masters and New Conquerors’, offers an analysis of the political trajectory of Hiero II, emphasising his negotiations with the Romans. It also answers the question how ‘a single man could seize the control in Syracuse after the two recently failed experiences of Agathocles and Pyrrhus’ (p. 179). According to Z., since Hiero II was supported by the civic troops in Mergane, he was able to increase his power in an official way and to become ‘part of the endorsed political institutions of Syracuse while keeping on a wide control over the community’ (p. 183). His moderatio in imperio allowed him to build a political career without any serious conflict with the oligarchs or his other Syracusan opponents. Hiero II was the strong political and military individual Syracuse needed to face its enemies, but he achieved this position by becoming one of the most important and respected citizens in the polis. In sum, his kingship was a ‘moderate’ one (p. 269).

Finally, Z. highlights the Roman political approach towards the Sicilian city-states. By using mainly epigraphic evidence, he concludes that we should talk about a ‘moderate’ process of Romanisation, given the persistence of local institutions and the progressive increase in the number of Italians in the Sicilian poleis. What is definitely clear is that the Romans strengthened their position in Sicily and let the Sicilians decide between destruction and peaceful submission.

Z. has produced a meticulous and meaningful study of political evolution in Hellenistic Sicily. The book casts light on controversial issues in Sicilian history such as the nature of autocratic power and kingship after Agathocles’ death; the competent use of all kinds of evidence is its main strength. It will be of benefit to classicists and historians who need a comprehensive study of Sicily in Hellenistic times.

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EAGER TO BE ROMAN


doi:10.1017/S0009840X1000257X

This is the book not of but derived from the thesis: readable, not drowning in footnotes, and concise. It is based on written sources (literary and epigraphic), though it might have benefited from a consideration of what light archaeological evidence of acculturation could cast on its principal theme. It eschews not just the old view that provincial Greeks were clearer in their own identity and background than Gauls or Britons, and also possessed of a highly developed and sophisticated civilisation and thus less attracted to things Roman and less affected by Roman influence (F. Haverfield, M. Rostovtzeff), but also more recent acknowledgements that Greeks partook of some aspects of Roman cultural and civic life and that, pragmatically, members of the Greek elite pursued careers in the Roman administra-
tion, or even that the adoption of various elements of Roman (material) culture was either effected without a compromise of cultural identity (G. Woolf) or involved some political and social affiliation with the Roman world but not a general self-identification as Roman (S. Swain). Rather, it argues that Greek intellectuals (as M. terms them jarringly) and members of the local elite were actually keen to identify themselves as Roman and that imperial connections and the adoption of attributes of Roman culture lent them lustre and prestige in the eyes of fellow Greeks. The focus is on the response to Roman rule of the inhabitants of Pontus and Bithynia, i.e. the Black Sea coast of Asiatic Turkey as far as Amisus and its hinterland, from the end of the Mithradatic wars to Caracalla’s edict of A.D. 212; and on a consideration of what is meant by ‘identity’ (how changeable?; how porous?) to eyes ancient and modern, in which M. draws on Amartya Sen’s model of plural identities (pp. 4–5): ‘individuals as well as groups were members of various collectivities at the same time, and therefore defined themselves in several different ways according to the context … [and] community-based identity need not be the principal, dominant or even only factor by which individuals define themselves’. There was no legal need to opt between being Roman and Greek, leaving ‘the opportunity to be Greek and at the same time feel a sense of belonging to the community of Roman citizens …’ (p. 6); whilst there was also a Greek communal identity, largely polis-based.

There are five chapters, plus introduction and conclusion: ‘A Governor at Work’, being Pliny the Younger, provides us with a Roman angle to open the discussion and balance the provincial views later encountered; ‘Roman Rule in Pontus and Bithynia’, including emperor-worship, temples, Greek autonomy and the polis constitution of Pontus and Bithynia, assesses how far Roman rule affected local life, how much or how little Rome interfered, and how far instead it focussed on formalising the connections between local elites and itself. ‘Greeks in the Roman World’ – Greek influence on Roman politics, Greeks in Roman service (why and how) and Roman Greeks – looks at those who left the province to forge careers in imperial service; ‘Turning Roman in Pontus and Bithynia’ – becoming legally Roman, Roman names, status and identity, Greek pragmatism and Roman identity, etc. – at those who stayed, and the changing nature of what it meant to be Roman. ‘Responses to Roman Rule’ are those of Dio Chrysostom, characterised as a ‘bitter patriot’, Arrian, ‘a Roman authority and a nostalgic Greek’ and Cassius Dio, ‘a Roman from Bithynia’ – i.e. critics and/or opponents, but not necessarily opponents on account of their Greekness.

How much was pragmatism, i.e. keenness to get on, and how much enthusiasm (and not just for Roman technology)? ‘Had there been a general resistance to joining the Roman world of politics, it is difficult to explain why so many Greeks suddenly appeared in the Roman political and administrative arenas at a time [second century A.D.] when Greek culture was the subject of increased interest on the part of the elite community in particular’ (p. 129).

The conclusion is that those Greeks who wanted to become ‘Roman’, or at least move from the status of subjects to membership of the empire’s ruling community, often had to work hard at it – through long military service, for example; and that it was eminently possible to have a successful career in the imperial administration without giving up one’s Greek identity: that a deficiency of much modern scholarship has been to adopt a ‘solitarist’ approach to identity, thus oversimplifying things, and giving priority to community-based identity – belonging to the ‘Greek world’ – over the manifold competing or serial identities manifest in social and
cultural connections and institutional affiliations, of which several examples are presented. Any detailed investigation of individuals in societies ancient and modern will reveal a web of connections through which an identity is forged. Which aspects are primary and which subsidiary? It is often less a case of skin, flesh and core than of peeling an onion.

Consideration of the dangers of imposing ‘a modern value-system on a complicated ancient nexus’ (p. 134) leads this reviewer on to the parallel terminological and conceptual problems of colonisation, Hellenisation and Romanisation, a word avoided in the book. What do they mean? – different things to different people, then and since – and are they useful analytical tools? We are not two-dimensional and never have been; nor are our societies. In the pursuit of career and status in the employ of an alien empire, might we not look for comparisons at Greeks in the Ottoman empire or Baltic ‘barons’ in the service of the Swedish and then Russian empires and how they accommodated various questions of identity, culture and loyalty – all before the onset of the horizon-shrinking nineteenth-century nationalism and the convulsions it brought about which forced people to choose an identity or have one prefabricated for them? Multi-national empires appear alien only when viewed through the prism of the modern (pseudo-) ‘nation-state’, itself the alien interloper. As we rediscover our own essential plurality, so now we seek out echoes in our predecessors.

This book is highly recommended. It allows theory its due but keeps its own feet firmly on the ground.

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ANIMAL SACRIFICE

doi:10.1017/S0009840X10002581

In this book, derived from her doctoral thesis, P. ambitiously explores the absence of animal sacrifice in Christianity, a religion that evolved and spread within a world where animal sacrifice was an integral part of the religious experience. In the Preface, she sets out the focus of the book, its divisions, and her methods and limits. The geographical area covered is ‘the Greek speaking East and Jerusalem’ (p. v) although she states that she will not be considering Egypt, a limit she never fully defends since one of her primary sources for Jewish attitudes to animal sacrifice is Philo (a Jew living in Alexandria). She also states that she will not be discussing Roman religion and defends this decision by saying that she is looking at ‘Greek ritual in an area and a period of Roman influence’ since ‘the first encounter of Christianity with paganism took place in Greek-speaking areas, so it would be extremely important to envisage this cultural encounter in its original form’ (p. vi).
Her study is based primarily on literary sources; she does not incorporate any iconography or archaeological evidence, and refers only occasionally to inscriptions.

The book is organised into a chapter on theory and methods and three main case studies; two shorter chapters bridge the gaps between the case studies. Chapter 1, ‘Approaching the Issue of Sacrifice’, gives a fairly comprehensive, though not
Author/s:
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Title:
[Review of the book Eager to be Roman: Greek response to Roman rule in Pontus and Bithynia]

Date:
2011

Citation:

Publication Status:
Published

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/32991

File Description:
[Review of the book Eager to be Roman: Greek response to Roman rule in Pontus and Bithynia]

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