
Early in this book Grainger makes a comparison between Greeks, Phoenicians and Jews (p. 3): ‘all three peoples had to face the overwhelming pressure of Macedonian and Roman power in the Hellenistic period; the Phoenician response is as valid as that of the Greeks and Jews, and it is different, and the reasons for the differences are the best reasons for studying them’. The author’s general definition of the Phoenician response is kept for later.

Some comment is in order. ‘The Phoenician response is as valid as . . . ’ gives a key to what Grainger is doing in the book. He’s determined to give an ethnic minority its due. This gives rise to characteristic directions in argumentation. In the first place (and *ex hypothesi*) there’s an impulse to minimize the effect of hellenizing influences. Grainger deals with Diotimus son of Dionysius, Sidonian, who won a chariot race at the Nemean Games between 220 and 200 B.C.; the inscription is in Greek (Moretti, *Iscrizioni agonistiche greche*, 41) and the sculptor who made Diotimus’ statue was a Cretan. Grainger comments (p. 81): ‘the limits of Hellenization are thus revealed: it is a process confined to the rich — who were the only ones wealthy enough to afford the education — but it clearly pervades only the ruling group (the oligarchy?) of the city; no artisan, such as a sculptor, has achieved the required skill’.

Well, all right. But the rich are influential. They are quite likely to be popular, too: Grainger, having established that sometimes the poor won’t blink at seeing the rich killed (pp. 28-29: Tennes’ rebellion against Artaxerxes III), proceeds as if the rich must be unpopular. Morally, perhaps, this should be so. In practice, in certain circumstances, wealth can buy popularity and power. The rich often deliberately used wealth for this in the ancient world: élite (in this case Greek) culture could be adopted, or partially adopted, with the same end in view.

Grainger’s point of view leads him to play this down. Take his treatment of Philocles, Ptolemy I’s admiral and also king of Sidon. Grainger is uncompromising. He argues, against earlier scholars, that Philocles was Macedonian or Greek. ‘For the Sidonians, Philokles’ kingship can only have been irrelevant’, he says (p. 64) — and adds, ‘and surely their King’s long absence can only have inclined the Sidonians towards republicanism’. Twice ‘can only’ in four lines. Yet the
alternative is perfectly credible: Sidon had had a succession of philhellene kings called Strato in the fourth century. Grainger’s practice of using the vernacular form of the name (Abdastart) doesn’t prove much. And there’s no reason to assume these kings weren’t in general popular. In view of the hellenized court life, there wouldn’t be anything strange about a Sidonian king in the 280s having a Greek name and patronymic. And it would be perfectly natural for Ptolemy to make a Sidonian king of that kind into the admiral of his Phoenician-built fleet. Sidon had welcomed Alexander, after all: loyalty wasn’t a problematic issue. And Sidonians had generations of naval experience. Macedonians didn’t. Some Greeks did, but why would Ptolemy make an otherwise unknown Greek naval officer into king of Sidon? The balance of likelihood is in favour of Philocles being a hellenized Sidonian.

All the same, there was widespread republican feeling in Phoenicia at this period — when kingship had just come into vogue for the Greeks. With Greek feeling tending to be pro-monarchist, Grainger’s refusal to countenance possible Carthaginian influence seems odd: e.g. pp. 65-66, rejecting any idea that there might be a parallel between a Sidonian shofet and Carthaginian sufetes. I don’t think it’s adequate to argue that Sidon was under Ptolemaic control, so the nature and functions of magistracies in the city must have been defined by the ruling power and can’t have been set up on a model related to other Phoenician practice. Macedonian authorities normally influenced Greek local government institutions indirectly rather than directly: why assume it was different with Phoenician institutions?

Another move to play down hellenization comes on pp. 78-79. Grainger gives a list of things that don’t equal hellenization. Greek names of gods, Rhodian amphorae, Greek coins, Greek architecture, anything short of ‘the use of the Greek language, and of Greek forms of education’. It’s a high standard he’s demanding: ‘if there is evidence of men of Phoenician origin writing in Greek on typically Greek subjects, particularly philosophy, we can then pronounce those men to be Hellenized’. There follows, perhaps rightly, a curt dismissal of the idea that Zeno of Citium was of anything other than purely Greek ancestry and culture (p. 79). But there’s a fundamental mistake here. You can’t say Strato wasn’t hellenized because, though he liked Greek dancing-girls (Theopompus, FGH 115, F 114), he didn’t leave us any philosophical writing. Drawing on elements of Greek culture brought prestige to élites in western Asia from before the fall of the Achaemenid dynasty (Caria and
Lycia are obvious parallels to Phoenicia). If that’s not to be hellenization, then we’d better invent a new word for it.

The other direction Grainger is drawn in is towards the supposition of a sort of pan-Semitic feeling that would make Phoenicians (= Canaanites) natural friends of the Jews, ‘with whom they shared culture, religion [sic] and language’ (p. 3). In several places he writes as if actually unaware of the importance of monotheism in the main stream of Judaism. The more or less unstated argument would run something like this: take Ezra and his mission to return to Jerusalem (398: Ezra ix. 1-4; on the date, e.g. J.M. Cook, *The Persian Empire*, p. 258, n. 23) — he met Jews in Palestine who were following Canaanitish religious practices — so there wasn’t really much difference between Jews and Phoenicians. This is a misleading argument, because it neglects the fact that Ezra’s side — the monotheists — won. The strand in Judaism that treated Canaan as the ancestral enemy (Gen. ix. 25: ‘Cursed be Canaan: slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers’) was dominant, at least in the post-exilic and Maccabean periods.

So speculation like ‘the Semitic populations of the Phoenician cities will have had some sympathy with the Jews in their fight for their own cultural and religious practices’ (p. 127) isn’t worth much. The Semites named in Nehemiah ii. 19 don’t have much sympathy with Jewish aspirations. Grainger plays this pan-Semitic card again at pp. 145-146: this time Semitic ethnicity as a bond between Tyre and the Maccabean state under John Hyrcanus. Tyre in the second century (in contrast to Sidon) was ‘almost as self-consciously Semitic as the Jewish Hasmonean state’ (p. 146). If it was, that doesn’t have to mean friendship with the Jews: and I can’t find anything in Maccabees to suggest mutual sympathy between the Jews and other Semitic ethnic groups (see e.g. I Macc. v. 14-15 [163 B.C.]).

Grainger wants to prove friendship between oppressed peoples and resistance to the imperialists’ ideology and culture. The Phoenicians become an icon, avoiding the Scylla of cultural assimilation and the Charybdis of collaboration. This is even the reason for Grainger’s (laudably) wide span of dates. Covering 360-15 B.C. allows a wide enough canvas for the important changes from Achaemenid to Macedonian, and Macedonian to Roman, domination. But breadth of coverage is subservient to the need to make his multicultural and anti-imperialist points. So, on the institution of Macedonian government in the former Persian empire, he says (p. 22): ‘from Phoenicia’s point of view, that can
only [that phrase again] be regarded as the culminating disaster of the whole series.’. Then, on the Roman takeover (p. 159): ‘the year 64 marks, for Syrians, only the arrival of yet another group preying on their apparent wealth. Syria’s agony continued and intensified’. The model is of decline from that golden age when the Persians needed Phoenicia as the base for their naval power.

It’s regrettable to have to find fault with a book which, in detail, is so useful. Grainger is good on use of literary sources and good on numismatics. His maps, and comments on archaeological remains, are illuminating. The discussion of the relevance of epigraphical texts to the understanding of Phoenician trade (pp. 205-217) is very clear and balanced. It’s a shame that the points he seems the keenest to stress are the ones that are in most need of qualification. And finally, there’s a sting in the tail (or is it only an inconsistency?). Having been told *ad init.* that ‘the Phoenician response is as valid as that of the Greeks and the Jews’, it’s only *ad fin.* that we hear from the author his general definition of that response. It was, Grainger says, to trade and gain wealth. ‘They were a people who had foreclosed the possibility of power and empire, and settled merely for riches’ (p. 219). The multicultural ideal meets the acquisitive impulse! This is *par excellence,* then, an academic monograph for the nineties.

Paul McKechnie


If Fortune had handed us a very few nice palimpsests or papyrus rolls, we might have been able to read Hieronymus of Cardia, Ephorus, Theopompus, Posidonius. Instead, we have Diodorus Siculus. The everlasting temptation is to mine his work for what it shows about his forebears.

Sacks has produced a study of Diodorus himself. To achieve this, he’s felt a need to be radical — ‘this book’, he says, ‘avoids as much as