



HELLENISATION AND RESISTANCE

KOSMIN (P. J.), MOYER (I. S.) (edd.) *Cultures of Resistance in the Hellenistic East*. Pp. xiv + 305. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £75, US\$100. ISBN: 978-0-19-286347-8.
doi:10.1017/S0009840X23000768

Due to considerable research into the Hellenistic period carried out since the 1990s, scholars of antiquity have significantly changed their view on this era. New archaeological excavations and discoveries of epigraphical and papyrological sources drew scholarly attention to the social, cultural, economic and religious phenomena typical for that period, whereas until the 1960s and 1970s such phenomena had been studied only as the background to political and military events. Until these decades, scholars by and large perceived the Hellenistic period through a colonialist lens, asserting that Alexander the Great's conquest of the Achaemenid Empire brought the more advanced Greek civilisation to the Achaemenid subjects and uplifted them culturally.

However, what belied this idealised picture were anti-Ptolemaic uprisings of native Egyptians, the Maccabean revolt in Judaea and testimonies of inhabitants of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, the Near East, Iran and Egypt, who opposed the spread of Greek culture. The latter testimonies, collected by S.K. Eddy (*The King is Dead. Studies in the Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism, 334–31 B.C.* [1961]), directly challenged the widely held assumption that Greek rule over the East and the concomitant Hellenisation unambiguously benefited local populaces. Since Eddy focused chiefly on religious resistance, his findings initially found little acceptance, with widespread critique of Greek colonial practice gathering momentum only many years later. Nonetheless, Eddy's work appeared crucial to the organisers and participants of 'The Maccabean Moment' conference, held at the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, D.C. (18–20 January 2016). The volume under review collects some of the papers given at the conference.

The conference participants concentrated on traces of resistance against Greek rule across the Hellenistic world, with their frame of reference set by the Maccabean revolt and the Egyptian uprising in the second century BCE. The conference organisers set two objectives: (1) to determine, through sociological analysis, how local cultural norms in the East shaped anti-Hellenic resistance, and (2) to frame manifestations of that resistance, so that it can be appraised in the local context (and not solely from the perspective of Hellenistic power centres) (p. v). Thus formulated, the conference objectives stand for an attempt to open up a new research avenue.

Kosmin and Moyer's extensive introduction presents not only the stated conference objectives but also perceptions and appraisals of events evidencing local resistance against Hellenistic rulers. The editors assert that the majority of research on these issues overly attributes such conflicts to ethnic and cultural differences, omitting other contributing factors. Only recently has the scholarly community realised that non-Greek inhabitants of Hellenistic monarchies may have had more reasons to resist their rulers. This paradigm shift is reflected in the volume's internal arrangement. Made up of three parts, it scrutinises different manifestations of anti-Hellenic resistance in the Hellenistic world, as set in local and regional contexts (pp. 13–14).

Part 1, 'The Big Events: Pattern and Crisis', considers two well-known examples of local uprisings against Hellenistic rulers: namely, the Maccabean revolt and the Egyptian revolt of 206–186 BCE. Since the surviving sources describe their course and character, one can draw illuminating parallels that contextualise other manifestations of

anti-Hellenic resistance. Until recently, those researching the Maccabean revolt have used the sources to attribute the revolt to the religious outcry of the majority of Judaeen society: cherishing their Jewish traditions and customs, they fiercely opposed those of the Jewish elites who (supported by Antiochus IV) would impose, by administrative means, customs and practices typical of Greek culture. Recent research questions this assumption, with scholars tracing Judaeen resistance to other factors, such as fiscal burdens. Sharing this newer perspective, E.S. Gruen, in ‘The Maccabean Model: Resistance or Adjustment?’, asserts that leaders of the Maccabean revolt sought not to win independence but rather to restore the autonomy Judaea had before Antiochus IV (pp. 53–4); accordingly, the Maccabean revolt should not be perceived as a model of an anti-Hellenistic military revolt. The Egyptian revolt of 206–186 BCE somewhat resembled its Judaeen counterpart, since its leaders rallied their people against the Ptolemies by arousing religious sentiments and alluding to the glories of the Pharaohs. Nevertheless, A.-E. Veisse, in ‘The “Great Theban Revolt”, 206–186 BCE’, ascribes the breakout of the revolt to economic developments, stating that, although both uprisings show certain similarities (e.g. both opposed fiscal and administrative policies of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids), they differ in terms of their outcomes (pp. 72–3). Veisse’s valuable observations notwithstanding, the author omits certain key disparities in how these revolts developed. In case of the Maccabean revolt, its ultimate end – Judaea’s independence – was accomplished because the revolutionaries chose a new leader after Judas Maccabeus’ death and renewed their resistance. Furthermore, the favourable political climate in Syria enabled Jonathan Apphus and Simon Thassi to consolidate their political gains. On these grounds, the Maccabean revolt stands out among all other anti-Greek uprisings in the Hellenistic world.

The chapters that make up Part 2, ‘The Grounds for Resistance’, broaden the geographical scope, with two chapters on Babylonia, one on Judaea and another on Egypt. According to J. Haubold, in ‘Memory and Resistance in the Seleucid World: the Case of Babylon’, no evidence survives on any anti-Seleucid local uprising in Babylonia (p. 92); one can only hypothesise that Babylonian priests may have expressed the common disapproval of Seleucid rule in their historical texts. The priests dated Babylonia’s prime to the Neo-Babylonian period and Nebuchadnezzar’s rule whereas they regarded the Persian and Assyrian eras as times of oppression, with the Seleucid era seen as tolerable. Certain Babylonian texts appear to criticise obliquely the Syrian rulers by allusively juxtaposing them with some hated Assyrian and Persian overlords; however, in the opinion of K. Stevens, in ‘“After Him a King Will Arise”: Framing Resistance in Seleucid Babylonia’, such insinuations are not explicit enough to be considered an act of resistance (pp. 120–4). In ‘Diverging Memories, Not Resistance Literature: the Maccabean Crisis in the Animal Apocalypse and 1 and 2 Maccabees’ S. Honigman, known for her distinctive perspective on the historiographical tradition on the Maccabean revolt, pits the chronicle on happenings in Judaea as found in the Animal Apocalypse (1 Enoch 85–90) with the corresponding account in Maccabees 1 and 2. Honigman declares that the phrasing of the Animal Apocalypse’s analysed fragment criticises the Hasmoneans in general and John Hyrcanus in particular, dating its origin to his rule. According to Honigman, the searching and measured critique of John Hyrcanus in these passages does not fit easily within so-called resistance literature (cf. pp. 125–8, 147). In Egypt tangible expression of the anti-Ptolemaic sentiment took many forms, from writing prophetic texts to destroying public copies of royal documents. In Moyer’s view, in ‘Revolts, Resistance, and the Materiality of the Moral Order in Ptolemaic Egypt’, the sheer scope and fierce intensity of palpable anti-Ptolemaic resistance in Egypt were incited by harsh living conditions of the masses.

Part 3, 'The Edges of Resistance', discusses forms of anti-Seleucid resistance as seen at the limits of their empire, in Asia Minor and Central Asia. Among Mediterranean regions, Asia Minor attracted Greek colonists already in the Mycenaean era. It appears likely that integration and assimilation of the local populace would accelerate under Hellenistic rule. Nevertheless, L. Capdetrey, in 'An Impossible Resistance? Anatolian Populations, Ethnicity, and Greek Powers in Asia Minor during the Second Century BCE', challenges this view by examining testimonies from Western Asia Minor that problematise ethnicity and ethnic identities as factors determining positive or negative attitudes of locals towards the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. The analysis showcases that the ethnic identity of inhabitants of Asia Minor facilitated their sense of particularity, but it was not yet a defined sense of ethnicity that would lend itself to organised resistance against Hellenistic rulers.

It is certain that local inhabitants more easily accepted Greek rule and absorbed the culture if they had been exposed to it for a long time. A different scenario unfolded in Pontic Herakleia, where the local elite, taking great pride in their autonomy, adamantly opposed newly installed Seleucid rule. Some, such as Nymphis, a third-century BCE historian from Herakleia, expressed their dissatisfaction with the Seleucids by writing an account of the city's history (which partially survives) that emphasised its former independence and criticised the new overlords (pp. 212–24). According to D. Tober, in "'Herakles is stronger, Seleucus": Local History and Local Resistance in Pontic Herakleia', Nymphis' work follows the fourth-century BCE trend in historiography for localised accounts, emerging when Athens sought to limit Macedonia's expansion, although the origins of local historiography in Herakleia go back as far as the fifth century BCE (pp. 205–12). The scarcity of surviving sources on Hellenistic Bactria poses numerous problems with chronology, with Justin's *Epitome* (the only work that could potentially solve some of chronological inconsistencies) often wrongly synchronising Bactrian events with happenings in other parts of the Hellenistic world. R. Mairs, in 'Central Asian Challenges to Seleucid Authority: Synchronism, Correlation, and Causation as Historiographical Devices in Justin's *Epitome* of Trogus', asserts that Justin deliberately paired up events in Bactria with other developments to highlight links between Bactria and the Seleucid Empire as a whole.

The volume contributes greatly to research on this still poorly understood aspect of the Hellenistic world, that is, the resistance of indigenous people to Greek rule. The contributors' analyses and interpretations of what had been thought to be forms of anti-Hellenic resistance often question their pertinence. The authors demonstrate that anti-Seleucid resistance was less widespread and stiff than previously thought; furthermore, its scope, forms and ideological background varied depending on the sociocultural context. Although the greatest manifestations of armed resistance in the Hellenistic world had a religious and cultural character, they were most often fuelled by political and economic reasons. The research clearly shows that most forms of resistance relied on the local historical tradition, from which the accompanying ideological content was derived. *Cultures of Resistance* opens up a new methodological perspective on the problem of opposition to Hellenistic rulers, revising and challenging long-held views on this opposition's sources, manifestations and intensity.

Jagiellonian University in Kraków

EDWARD DĄBROWA
uwdabrow@cyf-kr.edu.pl