

THE COINS AND THE HELLENISTIC, ROMAN AND BYZANTINE ECONOMY OF PALESTINE

BY JANE DEROSE EVANS, WITH A PREFACE BY ROBERT J. BULL. PP. XXIV + 229, FIGS. 25, B&W PLS. 4, COLOR PLS. 4, TABLES 11. THE AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ORIENTAL RESEARCH, BOSTON 2006. \$84.95. ISBN 0-89757-074-X (CLOTH).

The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima undertook excavations at the site between 1971 and 1987, with some additional operations in the early 1990s. While there have been several tantalizing references to—and even a few selective, partial publications of—the coins recovered by the Joint Expedition over the years, it is only with this volume that we are given a full picture of the team's numismatic material from the time the town was established in the Hellenistic period to the point of its Islamic occupation in 640 C.E. Evans presents the 2,734 legible Greek, Roman provincial, Judaic, Nabataean, Arabian, Axumite, Roman imperial, and Byzantine coins retrieved from 1971 through 1987, as well as the hoard of 99 Late Roman gold solidi found at the site in 1993, in one accessible and informative package.

The catalogue portion of the book contains details to please both the numismatist and the archaeologist. In addition to the coin descriptions and references, it includes their findspots, with the result that the material can be used repeatedly in future interpretations of the site. In line with the current trend in numismatic studies, Evans does not rest with a mere catalogue of the coins; she also includes useful commentaries on the coins, their context, and their meaning for Caesarea and Palestine. Following a brief overview of the history of the site and the Joint Expedition's excavations there, Evans characterizes the coins found, period by period. She pays special attention to countermarks and to coins from (and thought to be from) the mint at Caesarea; she also carefully notes examples associated with the mint that were not found in the excavations, all of which assist in sorting out the history and pro-

duction of Caesarea's mint. As the title of the work indicates, Evans also compares the finds from Caesarea to those from other sites in the region and beyond to determine a sense of Palestine's economy. Yet Evans is too perceptive a numismatist and field archaeologist to imply that coins alone can describe the economy of a region. She refers to literary sources, inscriptions, material culture (esp. pottery), building programs, events such as athletic games, and even the presence of standing legions as indicators of the area's economy. I might wish even more economic indicators were addressed, especially luxury items (e.g., sculpture), but this work, with its new material and outlook, picks up on and decidedly advances the topic of Palestine's economy so prominent in recent years (Z. Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine* [London 1994]; J. Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine* [London 1997]).

In comparing the coins found at Caesarea with those from other sites, Evans describes and critiques the methods used by numismatists over the years in tabulating coins to be studied. She considers the percentage of coins belonging to different periods from a site (but periods are often too broad); the number of different types produced by the local mint, with the idea being that a greater number of coins produced meant a greater prosperity within the region (but assumptions regarding die use and issue size are suspect); and the Annual Average Coin Loss, in which a formula is used to enable comparisons of site coins in an even-handed manner, regardless of whether a coin came from an emperor who ruled for 20 years or for one, and whether a site offered a large or small number of coins. Prior to Evans' work,

the method of Annual Average Coin Loss had been applied to several Roman sites in the western half of the empire but not to those in the eastern half. In applying this method to the finds from Caesarea and other sites in the east, Evans moves the discussion considerably forward; in fact, she could have stopped there with a job well done. The method of Annual Average Coin Loss has not been without its critics, however, who have protested that many factors affect the presence of coins at a site—some mints turned out more coins than others, for example, making it important to take into consideration the mint that served a site—so Evans takes another step forward by introducing a fourth method for analyzing coin finds: the chi-square test. This “goodness-of-fit” test is meant to show whether numbers in a classification are due to random chance. Evans is able to use the chi-square test to confirm results from the Annual Average Coin Loss method. In short, Evans has provided site numismatists with another tool for their analytic toolbox, and her volume must now be considered required

reading for all numismatists and historians of the ancient economy.

The major flaw in this work is one over which Evans had no control: the lack of comparable material. Some sites used as comparisons for Caesarea Maritima were somewhat more distant in location or size than would be perfectly desirable (e.g., Antioch, Sardis). Evans herself pleads for the publication of coins from sites, without which there can be no cross-site comparisons and regional analysis of the economy (29), and I add my voice to hers. In spite of this, however, Evans’ work, with its useful catalogue, application of new methods for analyzing site coins, and roadmap of what other work needs to be done, serves as a splendid foundation block for our understanding of Palestine’s economy.

LIANE HOUGHTALIN

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS, PHILOSOPHY, AND RELIGION
UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON
FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA 22401
LHOUGHTA@UMW.EDU