



S. BUSSI, *ECONOMIA E DEMOGRAFIA DELLA SCHIAVITÙ IN ASIA MINORE ELLENISTICO-ROMANA*. Milan: Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto, 2001. Pp. 178. ISBN 88-7916-151-2. €15.50.

It may seem surprising to those not working in the field that scholars have to be reminded of the importance of slavery in Hellenistic Asia Minor, especially given the uprising led by Aristonicus in the second century B.C., who was supported by so many slaves that this is sometimes referred to as a slave war. Nevertheless, there has been a trend to underestimate the significance of slavery here, as elsewhere, and Bussi does the subject an enormous favour by her careful examination of the evidence for slavery in this area of the Mediterranean.

It has been suggested that slavery was not very important for the economy away from the coastal regions of Asia Minor. This is in spite of the fact we are told by Strabo 14.1.38 that after being defeated near Smyrna, Aristonicus went inland, Strabo being quite specific in his words at this point, and there he recruited a large number of poor people and slaves. However the current view is that generally in much of Asia Minor in this period, away from the more Hellenised west, the *laoi* did the agricultural work that in Italy, for example, was done by slaves at this time. Quite what this term *laoi* refers to has been the subject of much debate and the few references we have to these people have been scrutinized vigorously. There seems clear enough evidence that they were not slaves, but were they tied to the land, that is were they a type of bonded labour?

B. makes the suggestion that the famous quip from Nicomedes, King of Bithynia, that he could not supply the Romans with troops because the Romans had enslaved all the Bithynians, may refer to these inhabitants of the land; the Romans did not recognize the fine distinction between slaves and *laoi* and considered them to be slaves (117). She deals briefly with these and with *hierodouloi* in her introduction, and at the end she has an appendix on the use of the term *laoi* for people in Egypt, and also a brief overview of slavery in Egypt, another neglected area in her view, but the bulk of this slim book discusses in three main chapters the sources of supply of new slaves, their employment and the role slavery played in the economy, and what difference the presence of the Romans in the area made to the organization of the working of the land.

The work is a timely and most welcome contribution to the debate about the role of slaves in Asia Minor, challenging the consensus in a refreshing way, as well as a reminder about the state of our evidence for this topic. B. would have profited from a more conscientious editor since there is much of interest in the footnotes, which sometimes are extremely long and which could usefully have been incorporated into the main text for a more sustained argument. An index would have been helpful. While no new evidence indicating an abundance of slaves in inland Asia Minor is brought forward, the work is a valuable addition to the study of the region and to the larger debate about the extent of slavery in different parts of the ancient world.

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