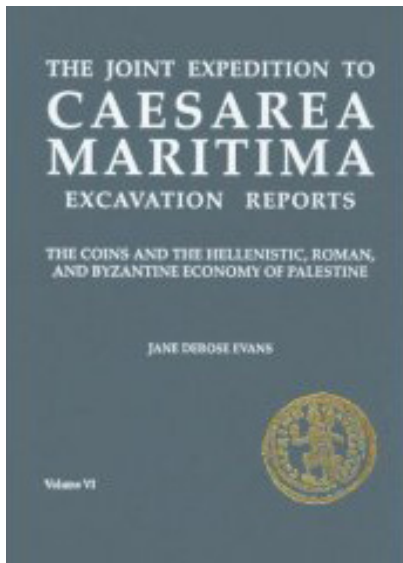


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**Evans, Jane DeRose**

*The Coins and the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Economy of Palestine*

The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima Excavation Reports 6

Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2006. Pp. xxiv + 240 + 8 plates. Cloth. \$84.95. ISBN 089757074x.

Mark A. Chancey  
Southern Methodist University  
Dallas, Texas

Caesarea Maritima is one of the most extensively excavated Roman- and Byzantine-period archaeological sites in Israel, and volumes such as this one make it one of the best published. This book describes the numismatic finds from one of the site's primary excavation teams, the Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima, which conducted its work from 1971 to 1995 under the direction of Drew University's Robert J. Bull. The Joint Expedition recovered over eight thousand coins, almost all of them bronze, with approximately 2,700 dating to the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods. Jane DeRose Evans, an Associate Professor of Art History at Temple University, provides a solid and thorough synthesis of this enormous mass of data.

The organization of the book is straightforward. A preface by Bull provides a brief publication history of the coins. In her introduction, Evans offers a more detailed overview of the city's ancient historical development, the chronology of the Joint Expedition's excavations, and the physical layout of the site.

The first chapter contextualizes the Caesarea Maritima coins within the region's larger history. Highlighted features include the seemingly limited influx of coinage during the Hasmonean period, the first minting of coins at the city itself under Agrippa I, the diversity of mints represented in the coinage of the Flavian period, the increase in the

relatively large amount of coinage from the third century, the city's cessation of minting in 253 C.E., the high frequency of fourth- through seventh-century coins, and the heavy countermarking of coins from the sixth and seventh centuries.

The second chapter compares the coinage of Caesarea Maritima to those of other sites and considers how numismatic data might shed light on the ancient city's and region's economic histories. Evans summarizes three methods numismatists have employed to tackle such question: the measurement of the percentage of coins from different periods at the site; the tracing of changes in the number of distinctive coin types minted per year, with the assumption that the higher the number of coin types, the greater the prosperity; and the Annual Average Coin Loss measurement, rarely used for sites in the Roman East, which establishes a formula to trace and compare the number of coins at a given site minted under a particular emperor. To these methods, Evans adds a Chi-Square Test, which, she argues, demonstrates further that variations in the numbers of coins discovered at different sites and in different time periods are statistically significant and thus a phenomenon to be studied and explained.

The book also includes two appendices, one describing a hoard of fourth-century C.E. gold coins discovered in 1993 and comparing it to other such hoards, the other offering more detail on the methodology used and data generated by the Chi-Square Test. A 101-page catalogue of 2,734 coins contains not only the expected technical data of date, minting authority, description of obverse and reverse images and inscriptions, metal, denomination, weight, and initial publication information for each coin type, but also the field and locus number in which the specimen was recovered. An index of loci and a map of the excavations allow the reader to associate particular coins with particular excavation fields, making this volume both more useful and more accessible than numismatic reports that merely list coin finds. The volume is amply illustrated with maps, tables, graphs, bar and pie charts, and other figures, as well as eight photographic plates.

Evans's methodologically nuanced attempt to relate coin finds to economic questions also sets this report apart. She recognizes that numismatic data alone is insufficient to understand ancient economic patterns but emphasizes that sophisticated comparative analyses can shed considerable light. The challenge facing her in this project was a lack of detailed data from other sites. Scythopolis, for example, would have been a useful point of comparison, but publication of its coinage is too limited. Her choice of sites for comparison varies, depending on the topic under discussion. When using the Chi-Square Test to establish the "normal" profile of an eastern city, she drew upon finds from Antioch, Sardis, Pella, Gerasa, and Hama. For an Average Annual Coin Loss comparison, she looked at Jerusalem and Samaria. Comparisons of percentages of coins per time period considered a variety of sites in Galilee and elsewhere in northern Israel.

Two examples illustrate the types of insights such comparisons can yield. Although mints of origin increased in the Flavian period, the number of coins (as measured by Average Annual Coin Loss) seems to have dropped, an observation that holds true for other sites as well. Combined with a “lack of building projects, loss of population, lack of imported pottery, and extreme wear on the first century CE coins,” Evans suggests a “province-wide depression” (38). Similarly, the Average Annual Coin Loss of multiple cities shows an increase across the board in the amount of coinage from 193 to 324 C.E., a fact that leads Evans to conclude that the period was one of both prosperity and inflation. Evans’s use of the Chi-Square Test in addition to the Average Annual Coin Loss further refines and supplements such comparisons.

This volume is thus an important contribution not only to archaeological and numismatic literature but also to that of Roman-period economics. As Evans is aware, her suggestions will no doubt need revision as more data becomes available. Nonetheless, she has written a provocative study that nudges methodological conversations about economics in a new direction.