conflict between rich and poor”, and not of a political conflict? P. 599 n. 27: here could have been referred to E. Ruschenbusch, ΣΟΛΩΝΟΣ ΝΟΜΟΙ (Hist., Einzelschr. 9, Wiesbaden 1966). P. 629 n. 33: The final section of Xenophon’s Oeconomicus is not “one of the earliest Greek texts discussing monarchy”, but a discussion of the right way to lead and to command other people. P. 654 f.: S.’s arguments against the reliability of the tradition of the glorious exploit of Dexippus as commander of an Athenian free corps against the Herules in 267 A.D. deserves careful consideration.

More critical comment might be added, and I could have been less chary with agreement and appraisal. But even so the importance and the wide range of De Ste Croix’ magnum opus will have been made sufficiently clear.

The book is excellently produced. It is concluded with a vast bibliography and a general index.


2) See also p. 7, where S. says that the collapse of the Roman empire “was due to the deliberate (my italics) actions of a ruling class that monopolised both wealth and political power”; p. 463: “it was because slavery was not now producing as great a surplus as it did in Rome’s palmiest days that the propertied classes needed to put more pressure on the free poor”.


Every historian of antiquity knows that the Persian empire used many Greek mercenaries in its armies. However, exact data concerning the role of the Greek soldiers in the Persian armies have previously not been available. Seibt is to be commended for collecting all the relevant data from Greek literature in order to analyze the significance of the Greek participation in the Persian militia. He shows that Greek mercenaries were used from the middle of the fifth century, at first by (revolting) satraps of the western part of the empire. Later, in the fourth century, the Persian kings themselves began to hire Greek soldiers, who again had to fight in the western part of the empire.

This conclusion is supported by the evidence of the Persian and Babylonian sources, to which, unfortunately, Seibt did not pay attention. From the so called Murašû-archive from Nippur (ca 424 B.C.), we learn that the Persian army consisted of contingents of several nationalities, e.g. Carians, Cimmerians, Tyrians, Arabs, Indians, Phrygians and Sardians, but no Greeks¹). These soldiers were given possession of a piece of land in exchange for service in the army. It is likely that these soldiers (or their ancestors) were deportees. The tablets from Persepolis sometimes mention Ionians, but always as workmen, never as soldiers²). From this it appears that the Greeks had a different position from their fellow soldiers in that the Greeks were mercenaries, the others mainly fief holders. Although this conclusion may rest only on the accidental survival of written evidence, it does not seem unreasonable. The Greeks were not deportees, but volunteers who did not like to settle in the Persian empire (cf. p. 211-2). It is therefore understandable that the Egyptians had to issue special coins to pay their Greek mercenaries. Seibt’s conclusion that there was hardly any integration between Persians and Greeks (p. 213-18) seems indeed logical.

An explanation of the increasing number of mercenaries has been given by Dandamaev, who argued that the fief system declined because the fiefs, in the course of time, were divided by inheritance, so that they became too small to support a soldier³). It is even possible to argue that the fief system began to facilitate the mercenary system. From the Murašû archive it appears that the fief holders kept paying their dues, consisting of agricultural products, which were converted into silver by the Murašû firm. Among these dues there was one which was called “šab šarrî” = “king’s soldier”. It seems that the obligation to serve in the army could be bought off with silver. In any case, the taxes on fiefs could well have been used by the king to hire mercenaries.

Due to lack of space I can only point at, not argue about Seibt’s analysis in his last chapter. The analysis has become somewhat oldfashioned, because he worked with traditional concepts such as the religious tolerance of Cyrus the Great (p. 199) and the decadence of the Achaemenid empire in the second half of its existence (p. 200 ff.), about which new ideas have emerged recently⁴). This should be taken into account by the reader of Seibt’s book, although the book itself contains valuable information.