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Philip D. Curtin. *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Pp. xi, 293, incl. 31 b/w maps, 1 b/w ill. \$34.50 (hb.), \$9.95 (pb.).

This book is not a history of trade but a study of patterns in cross-cultural trade, trade among societies that differed from each other culturally. The author chooses as his model the trade diaspora, the networks of merchants living abroad as foreigners. He examines commercial diasporas from antiquity down to their disappearance in the industrial age. But he is not interested in diasporas in general. A specialist in African trade, he explicitly seeks to give a "non-Europe-centered view of the human past", focussing on Africa, Asia, and North America, in what seems an informed and confident manner, insofar as I am qualified to judge them. Not so with classical antiquity. Curtin is only peripherally concerned with Greece, and Rome hardly interests him, apart from the Roman trade with India and China. The somewhat more complete, but still superficial, observations about Greece are drawn chiefly from Austin/Vidal-Naquet, Starr, and Heichelheim, with some Polanyi and Finley added for good measure. The mixture of those sources is not very expertly done and makes for difficult reading, unless one keeps consulting them as one reads Curtin's text. As an illustration of his dependence on those sources, one example might be cited:

*Austin/Vidal-Naquet (p. 43):*

“The word *emporos* which later referred to the maritime trader *par excellence* still only means ‘passenger’ (on a ship).”

*Curtin (p. 75):*

“The word *emporos*, which later meant a maritime trader, then meant only a passenger on a ship.”

Classicists and ancient historians need not look to this book, then, for particularly enlightening or original information. By using sources that question the existence of much commercial activity in the early Greek world, Curtin avoids the need to devote attention to the increasing evidence pointing to the commercial role of colonies (they were “mainly for agriculture rather than commerce,” p. 78), and writes off Greek trading communities like Massalia, Al Mina, and Naucratis as “exceptional.” Beginning with the fifth century B.C. and culminating in the Hellenistic period, Greek commerce was so “homogenized” and “ecumenical” that “open” trade did away with the need for even such trading settlements as had existed previously (pp. 80-81, 88-89, 127). The same reasoning allows the author to ignore all but the India and China trade of Rome. Roman colonies and the groups of foreign traders at Ostia and at Roman Delos, Alexandria, and elsewhere are not referred to, since Curtin can think only in terms of a “homogenized” Mediterranean in the Roman period. Rostovtzeff, Frank, Wheeler, Tarn, and Hatzfeld, all still useful for their rich store of references, are not included in the Bibliography, and the rapidly growing body of archaeological evidence (especially from underwater finds) bearing on ancient trade is all but ignored. While the book and its many maps will doubtless be of interest to readers concerned with trading diasporas in more modern times, its treatment of the topic in Greek and Roman antiquity is disappointing.

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