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András Hudecz and Máté Petrik (eds.) *Commerce and Economy in Ancient Egypt: Proceedings of the Third International Congress for Young Egyptologists 25-25 September 2009, Budapest.* BAR International Series 2131. Archaeopress. Oxford, 2010. iv & 187 pages; illustrated throughout. £ 38.00. Paperback. ISBN 9781407306728¹.

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The theme of the Third International Congress for Young Egyptologists (Budapest 2009) was very promising.² The aspects of commerce and economy generate a lively discussion in Egyptology and as one can gather from the table of contents, the publication covers a wide overview of these topics. The purpose of this volume is not only to outline the evidence, but additionally, to showcase current research directions in the understanding of Ancient Egyptian economy and society.

The book includes the work of fifteen conference delegates. Overall, to my mind, the papers cover a wide range of discussions and provide a solid picture of Ancient Egyptian commerce and economy in both space and time. Indeed, often the presented research extends over the geographical borders of Egypt (e.g. Alessandro Cappellini and Sara Caramello). Moreover,

1 The same publication is also available in hard-cover by the Byblos Foundation: *Commerce and Economy in Ancient Egypt: Proceedings of the Third International Congress for Young Egyptologists 25-25 September 2009, Budapest.* Edited by András Hudecz and Máté Petrik. The Byblos Foundation. Oxford, 2010. iv & 187 pages; illustrated throughout. € 40.00 plus shipping. Hard-cover. ISBN 978-1-905739-35-6. <http://byblos.org.hu/index.php> (accessed 17 January 2012). I have reviewed the Archaeopress publication, though to my knowledge, the material and content in both publications is identical.

2 For a report of this conference see Sfakianou Bealby, M. 'Report: The Third International Congress for Young Egyptologists 2009', *Rosetta 7* <http://www.rosetta.bham.ac.uk/issue7/report-egyptologists/> (accessed 17 January 2012).

academic works examining various chronological periods have been accommodated in balance, ranging from the Pre-dynastic Period (e.g. Marcin Czarnowicz) to Greco-Roman Egypt (e.g. Marco Rolandi). The variety of the papers in topics and style signifies that these were selected with both young and advanced researchers in mind, and that the publication does not cater solely for Egyptologists.

It is impossible to discuss all articles of the proceedings in detail; however, I will refer to a number of contributions on the basis of my own archaeological interests.

The foreword is written by Prof Dr Jac. J. Janssen who has published several works on the economics of the Ramesside Period.³ Professor Janssen prologues some of the major topics of discussion in Egyptian economy, such as the system of redistribution, buying and selling, the value of products, the aspect of reciprocity, the market, etc. Jansen's foreword is crucial as it introduces key concepts that are explored further by the individual papers. By the same token comes the article of Prof Dr David A. Warburton which provides an overview of the nature of the Egyptian economy and the laws of economics. Warburton debates crucial issues in Ancient Egyptian economy, such as the market, production and value and the demand stimulus. While Warburton's suggested theoretical model is a worthy contribution to the field, in my opinion, his work should be placed in the very end of the publication, in the form of a postscript, so that the reader is able to put this model to the test after having read the rest of the articles.

Jose M. Alba Gómez discusses olive tree cultivation and trade in Ancient Egypt in a very informative work which provides a historical overview of the import, cultivation and use of olive trees and their products. The author

³ Professor Janssen sadly passed away in August 2011.

investigates whether there was an intensive farming of olive trees in Egypt and when and how olive trees and their produce were imported. In another paper discussing foodstuff, Maria Rosa Guasch examines the wine industry in Ancient Egypt. She addresses topics such as the labelling and presentation of wine, Egyptian wine-jars and the different types of wine made in Egypt. It is worth mentioning that whereas Gómez has studied the olive products in a comparative work, i.e. in both Egypt and the wider Mediterranean, Guasch's contribution, although presenting solid archaeological evidence from Egypt, would benefit from a similar transcultural approach.

One of the most argumentative papers in the proceedings is the work of Alessandro Cappellini and Sara Caramello. The article attempts to refute Mario Liverani's thesis that the phenomenon of 'gift exchange' of valuable materials and luxury goods between Egypt and other Near Eastern royal courts represents a true type of commerce (1999, p.329).⁴ To the contrary, the authors suggest that:

The Amarna Letters reveal a “prestige chain” and “gift exchanges”: they represent only private deals among kings and not a kind of international commerce (p.32).

In other words, Cappellini and Caramello believe that the Amarna Letters should be re-interpreted as simple gift-giving among royal families. However, to my mind, the theses of Liverani and Cappellini / Caramello do not contradict, but complement each other and should be viewed as two sides of the same coin. A third point-of-view is expressed by Hanadah Tarawneh, whose work also focuses on the Amarna Letters. In this work, Tarawneh notices that the exchange of precious goods among the superpowers of the era does not consume a major portion in the Amarna correspondence. Therefore, the author believes that:

⁴ Liverani, M. (ed.) 1999. *Le lettere di el-Amarna*. 2. Le lettere dei 'Grandi Re'. Brescia.

The Amarna Letters are not economic or commercial documents (...); however, (...) one may say that Egypt had some commercial activities with other great powers with some understanding of the concepts of value, availability and quality (p.148).

Overall, the contributions of Cappellini / Caramello and Tarawneh offer a solid background in the understanding of the Ancient Egyptian economic and administrative system, while, at the same time, they highlight the multifaceted character and versatility of the Amarna archive.

The papers of Anna Kathrin Hodgkinson and Virpi Perunka provide a deep insight into the mechanisms of Egyptian economy and the socio-economical aspects of production, consumption and circulation of glass and pottery respectively. Hodgkinson's contribution is valuable as it highlights the role of high-status goods, such as objects made of glass and faïence, in both Egyptian and international economies. This concept is of course not new; nonetheless the straightforward discussion of the evidence sheds new light on old perspectives. Moreover, one of the most original contributions in this manuscript, Perunka's paper, presents cross-cutting research and pioneering material through the author's personal examination of early Middle Kingdom storage jars from Ayn Soukhna.

I have also chosen to accredit three papers which debate the mechanisms of the collection, redistribution and circulation of goods. Giulia Pagliari discusses how, and for what reasons, commodities were collected and stored in royal buildings. Pagliari's contribution to the proceedings is important because it reviews the critical points of current knowledge with respect to the storage of goods in the Egyptian palaces. Birgit Schiller approaches the issue of customs duty in the Late Bronze Age through a wider Mediterranean framework, by revisiting debatable topics such as the extent and nature of the operation of private merchants in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole. She particularly inquires about the exact nature of the taxation of foreign, imported goods when the latter enter the Egyptian state and she introduces the

pioneering idea that '... if there is a demand for paying taxes for imported goods, one might expect the existence of smuggling as well' (p.123). The idea that goods were transported to Egypt in violation of applicable fiscal regulations remains to be confirmed by the textual and archaeological evidence but it certainly opens up new areas of research and calls for a comparison with similar practices which took place in the ancient Near East.

Last, and in my opinion both remarkable in the field and particularly absorbing, is the topic discussed by Barbara Gilli. The author demonstrates that it was gods that determined the success of commercial and mining expeditions; and that, since all precious goods coming from the desert are divine property, the desert economy is based on the principle that men who participate in these expeditions must compensate the gods. Gilli's theory is strengthened by the discussion of a number of texts. These texts are provided in hieroglyphs, transliteration and translation, so that the readers can study them and develop their own view about the topic.

The publication succeeds at its main purpose, which is to promote fresh thinking with respect to various aspects of Ancient Egyptian economy and stimulate new discussion in the field. Of course, as always happens with collaborative publications, the quality of the papers with respect to content and methodology ranges too. However, all contributions are above average as far as pioneering research is concerned, and I maintain that some papers (e.g. Virpi Perunka; Prof Dr David A. Warburton) are outstanding. There are the occasional typos and a few phrasal mistakes, but these are unavoidable in most publications, particularly those of international authors and editors. To conclude, in my opinion, the publication demonstrates that the young researchers of Egyptology will have a very promising academic future. I would certainly advise Egyptology researchers (and particularly university students who study Egyptology) to read this book.