

THE MEDITERRANEAN MARKET

Aspects of Trade in Classical Times

INTRODUCTION

In this issue of *Expedition* we publish the proceedings of a symposium entitled "The Mediterranean Market: Aspects of Trade in Classical Times," to be held at the University Museum on October 13, 1979. The symposium will be presented by the Philadelphia Society of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) and the University Museum, to celebrate the Centennial of the AIA.

In the Mediterranean world, the 5th century B.C. was a time of great political, social, and artistic activity. Material remains of this century are among the finest from any period of antiquity. Literary forms which came of age at this time—drama, history, rhetoric—are rich in the details of daily life. A common feature which influenced all aspects of the cultures in the Mediterranean basin, a feature which affected every aspect of those cultures, was exchange, whether it was the exchange of raw materials, of manufactured items, or of ideas. To select just one example, metal was exchanged in the form of ore or refined metal in ingots; it was exchanged in the form of tools, implements, statuary, or money; even the very notion of making coins to simplify paying for goods and services was learned by the Greeks from the Lydians.

Yet scant attention was paid by ancient writers to questions of exchange or trade. The archaeological record has its limits also, because many trade items have not survived the intervening centuries. Consequently, the student of antiquity must search diligently in the archaeological and written records for whatever clues he or she can find as to which items were traded, who bought and who sold them, how they were paid for and how they were transported, how political changes affected commercial activity (or *vice versa*), why one source was preferred over another for the same commodity, what sort of people actu-

ally engaged in the business of merchandising, and the extent to which the state controlled—or did not control—trade.

In the papers which follow, the authors have focused on the rich evidence primarily of the 5th century B.C., although this time limit, imposed by the nature of modern scholarship, is indeed artificial, and evidence is drawn from the 6th and 4th centuries as well. Each author has taken a different approach to determining the nature and function of trade in ancient societies.

G. Kenneth Sams examines the variety of foreign imports at Gordion during the late archaic and early classical periods. The evidence at Gordion consists of contemporary archaeological remains in a city which saw many political and commercial changes in a short period of time. Dr. Sams deals with the difficult problem of determining the kinds of items traded between well-developed or culturally sophisticated peoples at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, in Asia Minor, and in the Near East. He also raises the vital question of how to account for the presence of a foreign object at a site: is it gift exchange between a local person and a foreigner? Transfer of an individual's belongings when he moves from home to a foreign city? Or commercial enterprise, pure and simple?

For the other end of the Mediterranean, and at approximately the same period, Peter S. Wells investigates the nature of trade which took place between the relatively primitive societies of Late Iron Age West-Central Europe and the more technically advanced society of mainland Greece. He questions the decline of that exchange of goods which had flourished for most of the 6th century, clearly to the benefit of both Greeks and Europeans, and offers a theory for that decline.

John Boardman, also dealing with the

western Mediterranean, continues Dr. Wells' theme and examines a specific body of material—Attic pottery. Wide-spread, technologically distinctive, and practically indestructible, pottery from Athens offers perhaps the most durable evidence of exchange relationships. Yet it gives up its secrets reluctantly. Dr. Boardman raises questions about the extent to which Attic pottery was manufactured on commission, and which shapes were traded for themselves and which for their contents. In trying to quantify the decline in pottery trade, he employs a method of study which has been popular among prehistorians, to determine if it is a valid procedure for historical times.

Homer Thompson has concerned himself with another prominent and durable trade item, stone used as a building material. Here he has been fortunate to have as evidence not only the stone itself, but an abundance of epigraphical records of the 4th century B.C. (Dr. Thompson's paper is not included in this number of *Expedition*).

Next we turn to two other factors which played vital roles in the mechanisms of trade: people and money. Lionel Casson, drawing on the evidence provided by Attic comedy and orators, describes the people on whom the burdens of trade quite literally rested: the merchants, the bankers, the ship captains, and the sailors. Dr. Casson paints a vivid picture of those individuals and how they managed to transport everything from a jar of wine to a shipload of grain from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, without benefit of check books, credit, or telephones, and on ships which by today's standards are tiny—not much larger than a modern Greek *caïque*.

Investigating the numismatic evidence, Margaret Thompson is concerned not with the cost of items traded nor with the use of coins in paying for goods, but rather with how the evidence of two special categories of coins, those which have been

overstruck and those found in hoards, might reflect trading patterns.

Using six different approaches and six different foci of attention, the authors bring us closer to an understanding of trade in classical times. If it seems, however, that they do not answer all the questions, each author has brought us closer to solving the problems raised by elusive archaeological evidence and incomplete written records. Moreover, each paper provides a springboard for future research.

In the one hundred years of its existence, the Archaeological Institute of America has been dedicated to furthering mankind's understanding of the past. By presenting this symposium and publishing the proceedings in *Expedition*, the members of the Philadelphia Society of the AIA and the symposium committee hope that we have contributed to the AIA's goals. In co-sponsoring the symposium, the University Museum has made a signal contribution to the AIA's Centennial celebration. The departments of ancient history, anthropology, classical studies, and history of art at the University of Pennsylvania, the department of classics at Swarthmore College, the departments of art history and classics at Temple University, and the department of fine arts at Villanova University collaborated in this effort, and to all these we extend our thanks.

It is a pleasure also to thank the many individuals who contributed to the success of this celebration. The symposium committee consisted of Philip P. Betancourt, A. John Graham, Phoebe A. Sheftel, Elizabeth Simpson, Harold and Virginia Spaulding, and Tamara S. Wheeler. To the Museum's Publication Service, especially Bernard Wailes, Geraldine Bruckner, and Martha Phillips, we are indebted for their contributions to the publication of the symposium proceedings.

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