

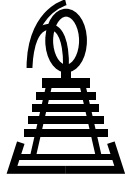
ENKI & PTAH

Journal of Technology and Trade
in Ancient Egypt and Western Asia

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The workshop area of Level 3b at Logardan, ©FARMQaD, French Archaeological Mission in the Qara Dagh

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Editorial

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It is with great pleasure that we introduce the first issue of *Enki & Ptah. Journal of Technology and Trade in Ancient Egypt and Western Asia*, a new peer-reviewed scientific publication dedicated to the study of technology, scientific knowledge, crafts, exchange in the ancient societies of Egypt, Nubia, the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia. Ranging from prehistory to the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the journal offers an interdisciplinary platform for exploring the material foundations of ancient economies and the cultural dynamics that shaped them. *Enki & Ptah* was conceived with the ambition to bring together complementary perspectives from archaeology, history, and philology, and to foster a cross-regional and diachronic approach to the study of ancient technologies and exchange interactions. By placing Egypt, the Eastern Mediterranean and South-Western Asia within a shared analytical framework, the journal highlights the interconnected worlds of technological innovation, craft specialisation and long-distance trade, and the many ways in which these shaped social and economic structures over time. Rooted in the long-standing Italian tradition of Egyptology and Near Eastern studies, the journal aims to serve as an intellectual meeting ground for scholars

investigating the technological, economic and social dynamics of pre-modern cultures, while also fostering methodological innovation and new interpretative frameworks. Its scope embraces a broad thematic and chronological range, inviting contributions on raw-material procurement and processing, production and distribution systems, archaeometric and scientific analyses, as well as textual and iconographic sources on technology and know-how. Particular value is placed on studies that illuminate the transmission of technical knowledge across regions or periods, or that explore the relationship between innovation, environment, agency and local traditions. A defining feature of *Enki & Ptah* is its commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue. The journal encourages the integration of archaeological, scientific and textual evidence, offering a space in which methodological reflection and theoretical perspectives can inform new understandings of ancient technologies and economies. We especially welcome research that challenges disciplinary boundaries or proposes innovative approaches to the study of craft practices and exchange networks. Co-directed by its editors together with a dynamic board of early-career researchers from the University of Milan, *Enki & Ptah* adopts a double-blind peer-review

system and benefits from the guidance of an international scientific committee composed of leading specialists in Egyptology, Assyriology, and the history and archaeology of ancient Western Asia. The journal consists of a section of research articles and a section dedicated to reviews of recent volumes relevant to its areas of interest. Published by the Milano University Press in open access, with print-on-demand options, *Enki & Ptah* reflects the University of Milan's commitment to fostering high-quality, accessible and interdisciplinary research, according to the FAIR principles. This first issue opens with a substantial collaborative article by a team of scholars from the Centre of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires at the University of Helsinki. Their contribution offers a far-reaching comparative analysis of the relationship between kingship and economic structures in ancient Western Asia, a field of research that has recently experienced a notable revival, enriched by new methodological perspectives. The article presents a systematic diachronic comparison spanning more than a millennium, examining the economic foundations of kingship and, to a lesser extent, queenship, across seven major empires (Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Teispid-Achaemenid, Seleucid, Ptolemaic, Arsacid and Roman). Particular attention is given to the distinction between "state" and "royal" assets and expenditures, explored here to an unprecedented degree. Massimo Maiocchi's article addresses the methodological and historiographical challenges surrounding the study of the earliest writing systems of south-western Asia and northern Africa: proto-cuneiform, proto-hieroglyphic and proto-Elamite. A reassessment of the scholarly debate reveals persistent disciplinary biases and the modern prestige attributed to literacy, which have long

shaped narratives that overstate writing as the primary marker of civilisation. By exposing these ideological assumptions, the study advocates for a more balanced interpretive framework that situates the origins of writing within the broader cultural, technological and social dynamics of the late 4th millennium BCE. The contribution by Padovani and Zingarello examines the mechanisms of control and management of ceramic production during the late Early Bronze Age in northern Mesopotamia, adopting an explicitly archaeological perspective grounded in the analysis of manufacturing contexts, particularly in light of recent discoveries in Iraqi Kurdistan. Focusing on the site of Logardan, the authors present newly uncovered workshops equipped with large and technically sophisticated firing installations. Drawing on fresh spatial, architectural and technological data from ongoing excavations, the study reassesses long-standing assumptions about the political, technical and socio-economic dimensions of pottery manufacture under the first empires of the 3rd millennium BCE, highlighting an incipient trajectory towards proto-industrialisation. Ilaria Sieli's article investigates the relationships between Lower Nubia and Egypt through the analysis of three cemeteries belonging to different phases of the A-Horizon, the earliest cultural horizon of the region. By tracing changes in funerary customs and their implications for Nubian society, and by emphasising regional distinctions within Lower Nubia, the study highlights episodes of contact, tension and divergence with Egypt, as well as instances of creolisation that made Lower Nubia a key interface between distinct cultural spheres. The final contribution, by Ahmed Mansour, turns to the emerging field of ancient Egyptian metallurgy. Despite numerous scientific analyses on metal

composition and technology, our understanding of early manufacturing processes and working conditions remains fragmentary. By examining the written evidence that accompanies Old Kingdom metallurgical scenes, the article integrates textual and visual data to clarify technical procedures, operational stages and the demanding working environment of ancient metalworkers. Together, these sources offer a more accurate and coherent reconstruction of one of Egypt's most specialised industries.

As this inaugural issue brings together diverse perspectives on handicraft production, exchange, and economic systems across ancient societies, we invite our readers and contributors to join us in a shared space where new findings, approaches and ideas may converge, shedding fresh light on the complex interactions and cultural meanings that shaped the procurement, transformation and circulation of materials and products in ancient Egypt and Western Asia.


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Review: A. Bats and N. Licitra (eds), *Storage in Ancient Egypt and Nubia. Earthen Architecture and Building Techniques*, Sidestone Press, Leiden 2023, 196 p, 14 illus. (bw), 66 illus. (fc), Paperback ISBN: 9789464262230 - € 40,00, Hardback ISBN: 9789464262247 - € 120,00, Free Enhanced Digital Edition

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In 2019, Adeline Bats and Nadia Licitra, members of CNRS UMR 8167 Orient & Méditerranée, founded the *Research Group on Storage in Ancient Egypt and Sudan*, with the aim of studying storage structures in the ancient Nile Valley and Nubia. The group organised two workshops dedicated to the topic, entitled *Architecture et techniques de construction des bâtiments et aménagements de stockage en Égypte et au Soudan anciens*, held online on the 28th and 29th of September 2020 and on the 21st and 22nd of June 2021. Two years later, Adeline Bats and Nadia Licitra collected nine interesting contributions of the two workshops in a beautiful volume published by Sidestone press, consisting of 196 pages with 80 figures (65 of which in colour) and 14 tables. The Preface (pp. 19-20) is authored by Thierry Joffroy, architect-researcher at Université Grenoble-Alpes and Director of the équipe CRATERre (*Centre international de la construction en terre*), a group founded in 1979 by some students of the École d'Architecture de Grenoble. Joffroy briefly describes the objectives of CRATERre and explains the reasons why the group decided to support the organisation of the two workshops conceived by

Adeline Bats and Nadia Licitra: the construction of storage warehouses is fundamental for meeting the economic needs of ancient and modern settlements, and the hope is that multidisciplinary studies in this field can contribute to the identification of the durable solutions that the world urgently needs for its future today. Joffroy's words well describe the spirit of the workshops and, therefore, of the book, whose content is implicitly organised into two main cores. On the one hand there is archaeology, and on the other, the application of this study to the present context and its problems. This is the most innovative aspect of the book, which thus presents itself as original and different from other, albeit excellent, studies on the subject, developed mainly in France, such as those dating from the late 1970s and early 1980s by François Sigaut and Marceau Gast (see in particular Gast et al. 1971; 1981; 1985) and by Adeline Bats herself (in particular Bats 2017; 2019), although there has also been no lack of works on the subject by Italians (see, for example, Geraci 2008; 2015; Geraci and Marin 2016). This new book, however, offers readers an unprecedented dialogue between archaeologists and architects

where one discipline contributes to solving the problems of the other and vice versa. For this reason, it seems to me that the nine contributions can be divided into two main sections. The first, consisting of the first six essays, has a properly archaeological focus and is centred on Egypt, while the second brings us back to the present. The first contribution, by Adeline Bats and Nadia Licitra, entitled *Storage buildings in ancient Egypt and Nubia. Issues and perspectives* (pp. 25-53), constitutes an ideal introduction to the subject matter of the book by presenting the main issues and perspectives related to the study of storage construction in the ancient Nile Valley and is the only essay to refer in part to Nubia. It is to the authors' credit that they have devised a suggested sheet (table 3, pp. 52-53) for recording and analysing the deposit buildings, for the use of the researchers excavating these structures. After this first essay with an introductory character, the following five contributions present five case studies arranged, according to a wise construction of the material, along a chronological line from the 4th millennium BCE to the Imperial Period. To the Predynastic and Early Dynastic site of Elkab is dedicated the contribution by Wouter Claes, Stan Hendrickx and Elizabeth Hart entitled *Pits, pots and silos. Storage facilities at the Predynastic and early pharaonic settlement of Elkab* (pp. 55-67), which illustrates in detail the excavations conducted since 2009 by the *Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* in Brussels at this site, which have made it possible to identify various storage methods (pits, jars, domestic silos and a late Early Dynastic public storage facility that testifies to the presence of an organised economy under the control of the local or central government). The essay by Marie Millet, *Les structures circulaires de stockage à Karnak aux XII^e et XIII^e dynasties* (pp. 69-82) is dedicated to a series of circular mud-brick structures to the east and north of the temple of Amun

at Karnak datable to the 12th and 13th dynasties (indicating the presence of a civil quarter around the temple in the Middle Kingdom). The contribution examines structures already known in the literature and those that came to light during excavations between 2001 and 2007. A small multifunctional storage building, organised around a circulation space leading to storage rooms and a courtyard with silos, built during the Late Period at Kom el-Nogus (the ancient village of Plinthine) west of Alexandria, is the subject of Bérangère Redon's contribution, entitled *Le bâtiment BAT 603 de Kôm el-Nogous/Plinthine: un édifice de stockage polyvalent de l'époque saïto-perse ?* (pp. 83-95). The text is detailed and well documented, but perhaps a reconstruction of the building's elevation (even if hypothetical) would have benefited the reader, who can nevertheless enjoy excellent colour photographs and a plan of the sector in which the building was found. Also very rich in colour photographs and plans is the contribution by Gisèle Hadji-Minaglou, *Le thésaurus ptolémaïque de Tebtynis (Fayoum)* (pp. 97-105), which takes the reader to Graeco-Roman Egypt and describes a 2nd or 1st century BCE *thésaurus* to the east of the dormitories of the temple of Soknebtynis, excavated between 1999 and 2000 by a joint mission of Ifao and the University of Milan. The chronological line of essays concludes with the contribution by Loïc Mazou, entitled *Un thésaurus à Bouto. Architecture et organisation d'un bâtiment de stockage dans le Delta nord-occidental à l'époque impériale* (pp. 107-115), devoted to a large food storage building in Buto datable to the early stages of the Roman Empire, which according to Mazou would have belonged to a private individual, a landowner. This supposition remains, however, in the realm of hypothesis as there are no written sources that testify, and the author prefers not to answer the question of who the beneficiaries of the surplus were stored in this building.

Anne Mayor and Thomas Pelmoine's contribution, *Variabilité des dispositifs de stockage en Afrique de l'Ouest: approches ethnoarchéologiques* (pp. 117-139), leads us to the second part of the book (although this division is not expressed in any way in the structure of the volume). The essay proposes a study of granaries in West Africa, through a first part linked to the analysis of scientific literature (see also Mayor 1989, which has two important precedents: Brasseur 1968; Bedeaux 1982) and a second part reporting the results of a field study conducted thirty years later in eastern Senegal, a region characterised by contrasting cultural groups and environments favourable to documenting the architectural variability of structures (which was the subject of Pelmoine 2020). The complex relationship between archaeology and architecture has recently been discussed in a miscellaneous book edited by Philippe Fraisse (Fraisse 2020), which however focuses on the exchanges between the two disciplines since the Renaissance. In our book, some members of the Association CRAterre (David Gandreau, Thierry Joffroy, Philippe Garnier, Nuria Sanchez Muñoz, Majid Hajmirbaba and Mauricio Corba Barreto) return to the subject. The CRAterre team has cooperated with archaeologists in the past, e.g. in Mari in Syria for the preservation of archaeological remains in mud bricks. The essay *Intérêts croisés des échanges transdisciplinaires entre architecture, archéologie et développement durable* (pp. 141-149) has the double merit of illustrating well the advantages that archaeology and architecture derive from mutual cooperation and of presenting concrete proof of this through an experimental archaeology project: the NGO Entrepreneurs du Mond commissioned CRAterre to construct an onion storage building in Senegal, in the Matam region, which the architects built after a careful study of past sources and local techniques, taking into account the

environmental characteristics and the real economic and practical possibilities of the local inhabitants. The building was realised between 2019 and 2020 and is well illustrated by several floor plans and a 3D reconstruction (figs 2-4, pp. 146-147). The last contribution, *The Egyptian mud-brick silo. Technical and functional analysis of a grain storage device* (pp. 151-171), by Adeline Bats, Nadia Licitra, Thierry Joffroy, Bastien Lamouroux, Aurélie Feuillas and Julie Depaux, presents an excellent case of experimental archaeology. Adeline Bats led a team of archaeologists and architects in a project funded by the *Fondation des Treilles* to build two grain silos in France using ancient Egyptian techniques. These techniques, which Adeline Bats had dealt with in her PhD thesis (Bats 2019) and so had Leslie Anne Warden (Warden 2017), are well documented in the first part of the contribution, while the second part describes how the two silos were built in May and June 2021 with the collaboration of Roland Feuillas' bakery *Le Maîtres de mon Moulin*, which makes products using ancient grains. On the whole, all the contributions in the volume are well documented: the bibliography is always up-to-date and also takes into account many contributions that were in print at the time and were published later (e.g., Choimet 2023). Instead, as it was not published at that time, it was not possible to take into account the miscellaneous volume edited by Mennat-Allah El Dorry (El Dorry 2023), in which there are a number of essays on storage buildings from different areas and periods. Slightly more space could be given to philological discussion of the terms used for these buildings (see, for instance, Eissa 2023, not included in the bibliography). Finally, in order to better fulfil the promise of the title, more space should have been devoted to Nubia, which remains almost totally absent. Beyond this, the book is of great interest

above all because through a multidisciplinary approach it provides concrete evidence of how the study of the past is useful to the present and vice versa and, in particular, how archaeology can provide architecture with the key to understanding how people in the past respected the criteria that architecture today defines as “sustainability”, proving useful in responding to the needs of the present, as Thierry Joffroy rightly states in the preface. The construction of a storage building for onions in Senegal through the study of ancient techniques, for example, far from being a purely academic exercise turned out to be an intervention of considerable importance in solving pressing problems for the region’s economy. The book is on the whole well-structured and very well documented, and each contribution is interesting. The efforts of the two editors did not fail to yield remarkable results.

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