



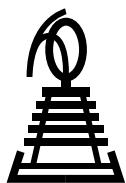
ENKI & PTAH

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 Dagħ

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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: Noemi Borrelli and Giulia Scazzosi (eds), *After the Harvest. Storage Practices and Food Processing in Bronze Age Mesopotamia*, Subartu XLIII, Brepols, Turnhout 2020, xii+146 p, 53 b/w, 14 tables b/w, Paperback - € 80,00, ISBN: 978-2-503-58378-5.

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Food is a quite popular topic in cultural studies and for decades archeological research has been extensively focused on this matter. This includes broad perspectives that draw together archaeological and ethnographical case studies, deeply relying on anthropological theoretical frameworks (e.g., Hastorf 2017). The essential importance of food in defining societies as well as landscapes, shaping politics and material cultures, has always been central to the archeology of Southwest Asia. Studies have largely investigated how food consumption permeated each aspect of people's lives in the Mesopotamian world and beyond (e.g., Milano ed. 1994; Pollock 2012). On the other hand, besides some groundbreaking works (e.g., Paulette 2015; 2016), investigations regarding the collection, sorting and storage of food, as well as preparation of meals and beverages, are usually centered on specific case studies or single proxies (e.g., texts, architecture, archaeobotanical macroremains). The great importance that food production and consumption had in the history of Southwest Asia necessarily requires more interdisciplinary and broader investigations. This volume, which builds on a workshop organized at the 11th International

Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (Munich, April 2018), is the response to a much-needed wide-ranging overview of the topics of food storage and preparation. It brings together diverse research strands via the expertise of specialists from various research fields. The contributions are centered on evidence from the Early Bronze Age, including a large area from Northern Mesopotamian to the Gulf, and investigate both public and private spheres, as well as their overlap. The volume, including eight contributions, is a well-organized publication consisting of approximately 150 pages of both text and illustrations, the latter sensibly placed within the contributions themselves. These are equally divided between papers dealing with food storage and those focusing on food preparation. The authors, although mainly considering specific methodological perspectives, successfully compare the main results of their own research with evidence stemming from other kind of records and investigative approaches. In the Introduction (pp. 1-5), the editors explain the genesis of the volume following the organization of the workshop, centered on the pivotal role that food played in Mesopotamian

socio-economic organizations. The integration of diverse research fields and investigative methods regarding food preparation and storage constitute the response to the necessity of obtaining precise and complete overviews on these topics. K. Wagensonner (pp. 7-28) explores, with an abundance of detail and also via comparisons with later documents, the contribution that the still largely elusive proto-cuneiform word lists and lexical texts offer on the topics of food gathering, processing, and storage. A fundamental role is also played by administrative texts that deal with production, management, and use of plants and animals, representing a central source of information for our understanding of mechanisms of storage and mobilization of staples by centralized institutions. The author organizes the text in a rational, clear, and, at the same time, captivating structure that comprises sections corresponding to steps of food practices ('Gathering Food', 'Preparing Food', and 'Storing Food'). Within the first macro-section, sub-sections correspond to types of raw materials and, if documented, their products (e.g., 'Grain and Grain Products', 'Fruit, Vegetables, and Other Plants', etc.). As a whole, the paper has the merit of treating the texts from a broad perspective, highlighting the information given on diverse plants and animal taxa, as well as various food processing procedures, including less popular (and less documented) aspects, such as preservation and storage of meat and fish. A. Pruß (pp. 29-36) illustrates the organization of food production, storage, and mobilization at the EJZ IIIb (ca. 2425-2340 BCE, Middle Chronology) Upper City of Tell Beydar, ancient Nabada, provincial center of the kingdom of Nagar, with capital at Tell Brak. The contribution brings together information given by the administrative texts uncovered at the site and the analysis of the surrounding landscape, as well as the architectonic and material

culture remains, in order to investigate how grain was produced, stockpiled, and distributed to the inhabitants under the administrative organization of the centralized institutions. In particular, the analysis is organized through a clearly arranged sequence of topics, dealing with the organization of labor, the productive potential of the fields, the redistribution system among diverse classes of inhabitants, and the configuration of food storage between domestic and super-household structures. The article of A. Bramanti (pp. 37-44) focuses on a specific case study represented by the "land-grain" texts of the Early Dynastic Umma corpus. These accounts consist of a relatively small number of texts (40) offering information about the extension of cultivated land and the amount of yield (barley) gathered. Through a careful and detailed analysis of the texts, the author demonstrates that these were the administrative accounts connected to two moments surrounding the harvesting process, the projections of expected yields and the actual amount of the harvested grains, which are then compared. This contribution thus demonstrates how central administration put efforts into the identification and managing of surplus as well as possible food loss. N. Borrelli (pp. 45-63) illustrates the administrative processes surrounding the centralized storage of grains in the province of Girsu/Lagash in the Ur III period, in a contribution articulated through many points supported by a great number of specific in-depth details. This is done through the analysis of textual documentation that records the land cultivation, as well as the amount of yield and how the grain was used, including both the movements of the goods from the provincial areas toward the capitals and storage for local usages. A large space and particular attention is given to the analysis of facilities for grain stockpiling quoted by texts. Diverse aspects are considered, including structural

features also identifiable on the basis of comparative archeological materials, as well as the location of the facilities across the natural, social, and political landscape. Textual analyses reveal the actors, and the mechanisms of supply and disbursement of goods contained in the storage facilities. This reveals a complex system of co-sharing food production and use, in which many diverse social parties participated, and that was ultimately managed by centralized administrative networks. The crystal clear and intriguing contribution of T. Paulette (pp. 65-89) opens the second half of the volume, dedicated to foodstuff preparation. The paper focuses on beer in Mesopotamia from the Late Uruk period to the end of the Bronze Age. It encompasses diverse aspects, from the brewing ingredients to the social and cultural role played by this beverage. The author offers a careful and precise analysis of evidence related to beer production and consumption, as it emerges from multiple types of proxies: textual, archaeological, and biological/chemical. The nature and the features of the beverage itself are analyzed, questioning the comparison with the western modern beer products. Through a particular focus given to the brewing ingredients in Mesopotamia in the central part of the paper, the author integrates the textual and archaeological evidence with ethnographic documentation and the results of ethnoarchaeological experimental methods. This reveals as yet unclear aspects of brewing, suggesting the necessity of rethinking the nature of it as belonging to a large spectrum of fermented beverages, such as those known from ethnographic comparisons. Moreover, the evidence about types of brewing spaces, equipment, and people involved reveal not only differences, but also similarities among diverse types of brewing manufacture, from household-level to institutionally managed ones. The paper of M. Zingarello (pp. 91-112) is

dedicated to the “four-part set”, a specific group of vessels found in the rich graves of Abu Salabikh and other sites of central-southern Mesopotamia and the Hamrin region, as well as in deposits of unclear nature from Mari. This set consists of a strainer bowl, a cylindrical perforated stand, a large bowl or vat, and a tumbler, usually found in assembly, even one inside the other, and thus considered as functionally related. This set, to which a spouted stand was possibly also associated, is interpreted as being aimed at the preparation and consumption of some sort of liquid food or beverage, possibly a specific type of beer. This paper offers a fresh view on the set, thanks to a careful and deep investigation of the evidence, also obtained through a coherent re-evaluation of the results published following diverse archaeological expeditions over several decades. As a result of this analysis, the author highlights the social and cultural value of the ceramic set in association with the specific Late Early Dynastic and Akkadian horizons, suggesting that it could have been specifically manufactured for funerary rituals centered on drinking practices. A. Sołtysiak (pp. 113-123) highlights the advantages of bioarcheological techniques, and in particular isotope methods, for research on subsistence in Mesopotamia. The author describes how these investigative methods allow direct insights into food-related practices, especially regarding subsistence strategies, land-use patterns, and mobility/food transportation. The papers offer an overview on the diverse bioarcheological techniques that can be used for addressing farming and herding practices. It critically assesses the effectiveness of these methods with respect to the archaeological investigations in Mesopotamia, also using first-hand research conducted on pivotal case studies, such as Tell Barri and Tell Ashara. The contribution thus calls for in-depth considerations of the opportunity of systematically

adopting integrated investigative methods into archaeological studies that bring together diverse research strands. The paper of G. Scazzosi (pp. 125-142) focuses on the role of small- and large-scale bread production in the late 3rd to the early 2nd millennium BCE in the Khabur basin and central-southern Mesopotamia. The author investigates diverse types of installations and tools for bread-baking, using archaeological and textual evidence as well as ethnographic parallels, and also based on new results that were obtained from ethnoarchaeological research conducted first-hand in southern Iraq. The comparison among small- and large-scale bakeries highlights the existence of diverse food production systems respectively aimed at household consumption and their utilization at central institutions, such as palaces and temples. While all the aspects of large-scale productions were managed by central authorities, small-scale baking installations were associated with private households, and they could have been also used for commercial purposes. In the latter case, the author suggests the possibility of the involvement of private households in the bread production for institutions through commercial activities. Integrating a large selection of evidence, this paper thus contributes to highlighting aspects of the nuanced socio-economic relationships between households and centralized organizations in the late 3rd to the early 2nd millennium BCE. In conclusion, the volume offers assorted articles that consist of coherent

overviews, fresh perspectives, and stimulating suggestions regarding diverse aspects of food storage and production in Mesopotamia, highlighting the potential of much-needed integrated investigative approaches and collaboration among diverse areas of research on these topics.

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