

Introduction

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The present volume contains the acts of the conference *The Black Sea in Antiquity: Regional and Interregional Economic Exchanges*, which was held at the Sandbjerg Estate near Sønderborg, the main conference centre of the University of Aarhus, from the 26th to the 30th of May 2004. The two editors of this volume organized the conference on behalf of the Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Black Sea Studies.

The purpose of the meeting was to bring together specialists in various fields and disciplines, who would undertake to explore the nature, intensity and, whenever possible, the volume of the economic exchanges in which the Black Sea region was involved from the seventh century BC to the fourth century AD. In particular, we wished to elucidate the economic interplay between the various areas within the Black Sea region itself and also between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Consequently, trade, especially maritime trade, stood out as one of the dominant themes of the conference. Yet, even though trade was allotted a privileged position, we deemed it necessary and important that "production", too, should receive its due share of attention. We use "production" in a broad sense to allow the inclusion of all kinds of commodities (including coins) as well as production facilities and manpower. All along, we were well aware of the enormity of the task and particularly of the severe challenges it poses, not least that of achieving even a reasonable degree of coverage, thematic as well as chronological. Nevertheless, we thought it worthwhile to take the risk.

In order to make the conference a forum for a successful inter-scholarly discussion, we invited a broad range of internationally acknowledged historians and archaeologists to contribute on a topic within their particular field of expertise. In addition, each participant was asked to address explicitly a number of issues, of which the most important were the following: (1) *Types of sources and methodological approaches*: What types of evidence are available for elucidating the particular topic treated by the paper, and which research methodologies are likely to yield the most rewarding results? (2) *Regional and inter-regional patterns of exchanges*: What are the goods and/or services that are being exchanged with nearby or distant commercial partners? Can these exchanges be expressed quantitatively (i.e. volume and value of imports and exports)? How did the wealth generated thereby affect the public and private sectors? (3) *Transport and infrastructure*: Is it possible to detect improvements in transport technology and in trade infrastructure? What is the degree and nature of

investment – public or private – in these areas? (4) *Public and private institutions*: What are the institutional settings within which economic interaction unfolds? Can we observe any institutional innovations? Is there a convergence between public and private concerns? (5) *Commercial actors and politics*: Is it possible to map out relatively stable or shifting partnerships? What might be the factors conditioning these partnerships in the short and long run? To what degree do politics and hegemonic or imperial structures affect economic processes? How does production and trade between “barbarian” centres and Greek cities affect political relationships between these two types of community?

Naturally, most, if not all, of these issues are interrelated, and the majority of the papers do, in fact, address more than one of them. In the end, therefore, the thematic priorities and methodological preferences of the individual author have been allowed to take precedence over the editors’ initial (and perhaps rigid) wish list. And, consequently, the thematic focus is maintained less rigorously in this publication than was envisaged in our original plan. What is gained, in return, is a greater variety of approaches to our overall theme and a much richer ensemble of issues that receive thorough treatment. As regards the sequence in which the contributions appear, we have opted for an arrangement which assembles into clusters papers dealing with the same (or similar) kind of commodity or commodities (e.g. timber, slaves, wheat, wine, fish, pottery and other ceramics); in between these clusters we have placed papers that focus on such general issues as tribute and taxes, traders and travellers, coin circulation and relations between the Black Sea region and Ptolemaic world.

It was never the intention of the editors to seek a consensus amongst the authors, let alone to impose our own views on their papers. We deemed it vital that the articles should reflect as accurately as possible the on-going scholarly debates about the issues raised. Hence, none should be surprised to find divergent opinions (or even strong disagreement) from one chapter to the next – for instance, on the economic significance of the Black Sea region as a supplier of grain to the Mediterranean. The issues involved are far too complex for simplified solutions, and the time has not yet come for drawing definite conclusions. But at least – and that may indeed be salutary – the discussion has begun.

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Unless otherwise indicated, all line drawings of complete amphorae in this volume are reproduced to the scale of 1:10, fragments and other finds of vessels to 1:2, and lamps to 1:4.