

BOOK REVIEW

The Economies of Hellenistic Societies, Third to First Centuries BC. Edited by ZOSIA H. ARCHIBALD, JOHN K. DAVIES, and VINCENT GABRIELSON. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xvi + 460. Hardcover, £89.00/\$165.00. ISBN 978-0-19-958792-6.

For much of the twentieth century the Hellenistic Period was the orphan of Greek historiography. As late as the 1990s Greek history textbooks followed Grote's example and ended with the death of Alexander the Great. Recent years, however, have seen renewed interest in Hellenistic studies, and one of the most active areas of research has been economic history. *The Economies of Hellenistic Societies* is a notable addition to this growing body of scholarship.

The volume contains the proceedings of a conference entitled "Demand Creation and Economic Flows" held in Copenhagen in September 2006. The conference was the third in a series planned to contribute to the reconsideration of the nature of the Hellenistic economy by producing "detailed evidence based studies" of institutions, sites, regions and other features. The ultimate goal of the project is that from such detailed studies general patterns of economic behavior will emerge that will permit scholars to escape the sterile dichotomy between the modernizing views of M. I. Rostovtzeff and the substantivism of M. I. Finley that has bedeviled study of the Hellenistic economy for most of the last century.

As the reference to "economies" instead of "economy" in the title indicates, the emphasis in the conference and its proceedings was on the diversity of economic activity in the Hellenistic Period. As a result, no single theme unites the nineteen papers in the collection. Nevertheless, three tendencies recur in the papers: a focus on studying economic behavior from the bottom up; concern for the institutional framework in which economic activity takes place; and emphasis on sources of demand instead of supply. Their geographical and chronological range is broad, dealing with the eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea and their hinterlands from the third to the first centuries BC. Equally broad is the range and character of topics. The volume includes intensive analyses of individual inscriptions, studies of local economies such as J. D. Davies' account of how Ephesus achieved prosperity over a period of centuries by consistently pursuing policies that sought balance between the various sea and land powers that might

threaten it, and Gary Reger's use of coinage distributions to identify local economies in the Aegean, and papers that treat broader themes. Examples of the latter are Zosia Archibald's perceptive study of connections between labor mobility and economic innovation in the period, J. G. Manning's innovative use of social network theory to explicate the complicated business activities of the recluse Ptolemaios and the organization of Ptolemaic elephant hunting, and R. J. van der Spek's use of comparative data from Ming China to illuminate the problems caused by the persistent need to import silver in Hellenistic Babylonia.

Four papers, moreover, stand out for the novelty and significance of their conclusions. Drawing on evidence provided by the Ps. Aristotelian, *Oeconomica*, Alain Bresson demonstrates in "Grain from Cyrene" that the famous Cyrenean grain inscription does not refer to gifts of grain but to grants of the right to purchase grain to cities with privileged ties to Cyrene during the famine of the early 320's BC. In "The Economy of Koile Syria After the Seleucid Conquest: An Archaeological Contribution" Lisa Hannestad shows that the archaeological evidence indicates that the Seleucid conquest of Koile Syria was followed by a period of prosperity instead of impoverishment as might be expected. Similarly, John Lund demonstrates in "Rhodian Transport Amphorae as a Source for Economic Ebbs and Flows in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Century B.C." that the decade-by-decade distribution of stamped Rhodian amphora handles suggests that the Roman establishment of Delos as a free port in 166 BC did not have a negative impact on the Rhodian wine trade. Finally, Christel Müller argues convincingly in "Autopsy of a Crisis: Wealth, Protogenes, and the City of Olbia in 200 BC" that the famous Olbian decree honoring Protogenes (*IOSPE* 1², 32) reflects a liquidity crisis at Olbia and not simply the prominence of the rich in the Hellenistic Period.

The Economies of Hellenistic Societies is a valuable contribution to Hellenistic studies. One may have legitimate doubts about the ultimate success of the program of which it is a part; experience suggests that the accumulation of uncoordinated detailed studies tends to hinder rather than promote synthesis. Be that as it may, the individual papers are of outstanding quality and will be of interest to everyone interested in Hellenistic history.

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