

Introduction

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“Between kings there is brotherhood, friendship, peace and good terms, (if) there is plenty of (precious) stones, plenty of silver, plenty of gold.” (EA 11 trans. by Liverani 1990, 213)

The Late Bronze Age in the Eastern Mediterranean belongs to the most captivating chapters in the history of the Ancient World. In the period between 1600 and 1200 B.C.E. a tight network of supra-regional relations developed between powers of equal standing (Egypt, Mittani, Assyria, Babylonia, Elam, Hatti, Cyprus, Mycenaean Aegean; cf. map 1 and 2) and various subordinate polities and vassals in the Syro-Levantine region. Cuneiform documents of diplomatic as well as administrative nature illustrate the formalized exchange of gifts and knowledge and the mobilization of tribute and taxes, while archaeological sources highlight the circulation of precious raw materials, prestige items and basic commodities.

In the non-monetary societies of the Ancient Near East and the Aegean, “palaces” and “temples” (except for the Aegean) dominated crucial segments of economic production and the flow of gifts and goods on the regional and supra-regional level. Reciprocal gift exchange within the framework of diplomatic contacts and redistributive mobility of goods in asymmetric political relations shaped regional and supra-regional communication in different ways. Both, written evidence and archaeological contexts attest to the exchange of prestige goods such as jewelry, vessels, textiles, raw materials, and specialists or exotic animals.

Correspondence and contracts inform us about the exchange between political elites in a highly formalized way, while administrative documents provide more information on the actual manner the commodities were transferred from a regional and supra-regional perspective. The latter issues also link to questions about the protagonists, who were involved in the actual transactions and movements of commodities and gifts. The controversial discussion about the role of palace dependent and private merchants may offer a case in point.

For the first time in Ancient Near Eastern history, we also observe the supra-regional use of Akkadian as lingua franca. The most commonly known examples are the cuneiform letters of different origins found at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt dating to the 14th century B.C.E. They provide vivid insights into the interactions of the Ancient Near Eastern Great Powers with Egypt and Cyprus and their individual relationships with the dependent vassal states in Syria and the Levant. Dynastic marriages and shifting alliances as well as the exchange of gifts and messengers are essential elements for the maintenance of inter-regional relations associated with social commitment and the pursuit of prestige. The Akkadian and Hittite texts from the Hittite capital Hattuşa (Boğazköy) in central Anatolia offer important information on the exchange mechanisms of gifts and goods. Apart from texts of correspondence, annals and treaties with their historical flashbacks provide rich details about the political alliances and developments in the Late Bronze Age. Numerous administrative and legal texts come from the centers of lesser polities in Syria (Ugarit, Qatna, Ekaltē, Emar and Azû) and from the seats of Assyrian provincial governors in the western periphery of Assyria (Tell Khuera, Tell Sabi Abyad, Tell Fekheriye, Tell Sheikh Hamad), which document trade and exchange of gifts during times of repeated shifts in the balance of political power.

In this system, market or money did not play the key role for the distribution of goods; instead the palace functioned as the center of distribution (palace economy). The palace primar-

ily organized supra-regional exchange via its dependent merchants, although the extent and limits of private entrepreneurship remain a major issue of discussion. According to the cuneiform tablets, economic and symbolic aspects of gift exchange become blurred and cannot be easily separated from each other. The commercial facets of gift exchange need further study in respect to economic motivation and the potential economic profit of the parties involved.

Contemporary documents (in Linear B) are known from the palaces of the Aegean. However, they do not contain any information on supra-regional exchange of goods and diplomatic contacts. Intended for temporary administrative purposes, these clay tablets inform us primarily about internal management mechanisms and territorial organization, but they remain silent when it comes to external contacts. Mycenaean Greece as a whole or only one of the various Mycenaean palace polities (Mycenae or Thebes) have been and increasingly are identified with the land of Ahhiyawa, which is mentioned in Hittite texts and appears at least partly as an equal partner of the Hittite empire in diplomatic texts. The various perspectives on the so-called 'Ahhiyawa Question' allow different models of reconstructing the exchanges between the lands of the Aegean and its eastern neighbors.

Some paradoxical features of the available data are apparent: While the Hittite texts provide extensive evidence on the exchange of gifts and goods, similar information is nearly absent from the archaeological dimension. However, we have abundant archaeological evidence to illustrate the contacts between the Mycenaean Aegean and Egypt and the Near East, which again are almost absent in the written record.

Archaeological contexts attest to the circulation of prestige goods and commodities, but also to that of specialized craftsmen in the Eastern Mediterranean. This applies to a broad spectrum of materials such as the basic metals for the production of weapons and tools of bronze as well as to other precious metals like gold and silver, semi-precious stones like carnelian, amethyst and lapis lazuli, valuable materials such as ivory, ebony and colored glass for the production of prestige goods such as jewelry, furniture and vessels. Those latter goods were either imported as finished products or manufactured locally from imported raw materials. Transport vessels from the Near East, Egypt and the Aegean served in the distribution of liquids and materials of various kinds such as (scented) oils, wine and resins. The ship with its rich cargo that sank close to the Turkish coast at Uluburun around 1300 B.C.E. epitomizes the various means by which Near Eastern goods reached the Late Bronze Age Aegean.

Imported finished products or locally manufactured goods from imported materials occur in varying concentrations and combinations in various contexts (for instance palaces, temples, tombs and settlements) and exhibit different distribution patterns. They allow for the establishment of an overarching chronological framework for the Late Bronze Age cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean and illustrate the supra-regional networking on various levels of political, economic and social interaction.

Following the detailed discussions about modes of culture contacts and exchanges in previous research, our symposium addresses questions concerning the specific mechanisms and routes of exchange. How and by what means did material commodities and knowledge circulate among the Great Powers, lesser independent states and vassal kingdoms of the Aegean, Anatolia, Syria, the Levant, Mesopotamia and Egypt in the 2nd millennium B.C.E.? Combining written and archaeological sources, one of our aims was to develop a perspective on the specific forms of exchange, (re)considering the interaction of political and economic forces. The reciprocal exchange of gifts in diplomatic interaction and the redistributive mobility of goods under asymmetric political conditions shaped regional and supra-regional communication in different ways.

The diversity of sources in the Eastern Mediterranean not only requires an updated review of the historical and archaeological data; it also raises questions about the specific mechanisms of exchange: Where did the different raw materials and finished products come from, and under what conditions? Who negotiated them? Is it possible to determine regions of production and direct and indirect channels of distribution? Which rules applied within supra-regional

exchange? What possibilities and obligations did the vassal kingdoms of the Levant have towards the Great Powers of the Hittites, Assyrians and Egyptians? Which role did the Mycenaean palaces of the Aegean play within the “international” exchange networks? What sort of information do administrative records offer about the actors who actually carried out the exchange of goods and gifts? Which role did palace dependent merchants play as opposed to private entrepreneurs? Can we develop a model of political and economic interaction?

According to these questions we designed the program of the symposium in order to investigate the rich archaeological and epigraphic evidence for “Policies of Exchange”. A major objective was to establish tangible and practical aspects for understanding the interaction of different political systems in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Late Bronze Age. The wealth of records in this period of international relations allows developing a multi-faceted picture of political dynamics and economic exchanges, which in turn contributes to the creation of models for understanding the intricate interconnections. The manifold archaeological and epigraphic sources are at the core of our discussion and certainly enrich the socio-anthropological portfolio on the different ways of “exchange”. Beyond the standardizing and equalizing powers of theoretical models, which are developed on the basis of external sources, the lively records of the second millennium B.C.E. have the advantage of illustrating complex societies at work in establishing, negotiating, structuring, maintaining and re-shaping relations, contacts and exchange.

We invited internationally acknowledged archaeologists, philologists and historians to our symposium at the University of Freiburg (Germany) to discuss these issues on the basis of current scholarship and to evaluate the archaeological and written evidence within an interdisciplinary framework. We would like to thank all our participants for contributing to a successful and enjoyable conference with lively and stimulating discussions. Most of our speakers were able to submit their contributions for publication and we are thus in the fortunate situation to make this set of papers available to a wider public. These contributions provide a stimulating overview of the different and specific mechanisms of exchange and will certainly spawn further discussion.

Mario Liverani set the methodological framework with his keynote lecture “Exchange Models in Historical Perspective”. His contribution offers a paradigmatic overview of theoretical approaches to “exchange”, whereas the rest of the authors in this volume approach the topic of our symposium with various methods and address models of political systems, which stand behind the different levels and modes of exchange and interaction. The present contributions emphasize the potential of the available epigraphic and archaeological sources for reconstructing the political systems at work and the political dimensions of exchange in the 2nd millennium B.C.E. The papers were arranged in a way to support the critical synopsis of the written and archaeological sources by discussing various issues alternately from both angles. This concept, which aimed to entwine different perspectives and specific methods, produced the desired dynamic.

The thematic sections began with “Syria and the Levant” and, because of a strong Egyptian bias in many papers, blended seamlessly into the following session on “Egypt and its External Relations”: The lectures of V. Matoian and A. Ahrens presented the wealth of Aegyptiaca in the Levant and discussed their importance as objects of prestige in the local contexts of Ugarit and Qatna. K. McGeough located the palace of Ugarit on the basis of written sources and with the help of network models within the local context of the different actors, who were connected to the palace at varying degrees and at different levels. E. Roßberger questioned the concept of the “International Style” by M. Feldman on the basis of the burial gifts from the Royal Tombs at Qatna. She argued that the Late Bronze Age artistic production is better explained by close interregional exchange-networks of artisans than by high-ranking diplomatic gift-exchange. The contribution of E. Devecchi explained the diplomatic rules in external contacts with reference to the treaties of the Hittites with their vassals, while she used everyday documents and letters from places in Syria to complete the one-sided picture by detailed information. The diplomatic contacts of Hatti’s Syrian vassals apparently conformed to the relations maintained by

their overlord with the other Great Powers and the Syrian kingdoms were ready to exploit Hatti's alliances both on the regional and supra-regional levels.

L. Bavay presented the results of the analysis of transport amphorae from the Egyptian Deir el-Medina and illustrated the complex mechanisms of superregional production, bottling and transport of amphorae on behalf of the Pharaonic administration. This was one of the contributions stressing the importance of scientific analysis for determining the origins of clay, glass and organic materials (wine, honey, aromata, etc.) which in turn permits the reconstruction of the routes taken by those goods. J. Mynářová discussed the correspondence of small Syrian principalities, which is far from homogenous, by considering the differences in meaning of the Akkadian terms *kittu* and *mamītu* in their geographical distribution.

E. Morris developed new perspectives on the strategies of Egyptian rule and taxation in the Levant, by developing the idea of “coded taxes”, which were disguised as tributes to regional temples and in fact flowed to the Egyptian administration. F. Höflmayer offered a complementary approach which prompted much discussion. Based on the archaeological and textual record he questioned the intensity of the political and administrative presence of the Egyptians in the southern Levant during the 18th Dynasty. He concluded that any substantial Egyptian presence (military or commercial) in the southern Levant prior to the campaigns of Thutmose III should be regarded as highly unlikely. This contribution raised more general questions about how borders and territory were established and constructed in the states of the Late Bronze Age.

E. Cline opened the session on “The Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean” by addressing the different distribution patterns of eastern imports in the Late Bronze Age Aegean and applying the key words “Abundance vs. Scarcity” and “Competition vs. Cooperation” to his analysis. He argued that the Mycenaeans did not have a centralized government, but rather that the small kingdoms were separate and autonomous and thus probably competed for resources and goods coming from Egypt and the Near East. B. Eder and R. Jung followed a different line of argument in their respective papers, where they discussed various aspects of the import of raw materials from the Middle East on the one hand and the export of Mycenaean pottery to the politics of the Eastern Mediterranean on the other, highlighting the governing role of the palace of Mycenae in these exchange and distribution processes. D. Panagiotopoulos focused on the functioning of Aegean administration on the basis of seals and clay nodules, stressing the very consistent nature of the documents which clearly signal more political coherence than is generally assumed. The presentation by H. Matthäus offered a comprehensive overview of the evidence for copper and bronze production on Cyprus and of trade with Cypriot copper in the exchange networks of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The last thematic section dealt with “The Hittites and their Neighbors”: R. Pruzsinszky and B. Solans focused on the ancient Syrian city of Emar and reflected on its role in the trans-regional trade pointing out various examples which illustrate cases of private trade and (transit) trade under Hittite control. Their paper analyzed the information pertaining to the power of the local government of Late Bronze Age centers in Syria and stressed its importance for the reconstruction of political systems. Finally, M. Novák emphasized the differences in the archaeological record between the vassal kingdoms of the Hittites and the Hittite heartland in respect to the distribution of prestige goods and imports.

“Policies of Exchange”, 30th May – 2nd June 2012, was the first international interdisciplinary conference to be organized at the Institute for Archaeological Studies at the University of Freiburg, which has pooled various archaeological disciplines since 2008. The Institute of Archaeological Studies is one of the few German-speaking institutions where both Aegean Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern studies are represented within the curriculum and research. This situation offered the ideal framework for our symposium, which emphasizes the importance of these two fields of study within the German academic landscape on an international level. The profitable cooperation between Aegean Archeology and Ancient Near Eastern studies is not only important for a narrow circle of specialists: As the topic of our symposium touches on one of the most exciting and dynamic periods in the history of the Ancient World, it

is also of interest for neighboring disciplines such as Cultural Studies, Ancient History and Social Anthropology.

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