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Book Review of
The Seaborne Commerce of Ancient Rome: Studies in
Archaeology and History
Edited by J.H. D'Arms and E.C. Kopff,
(Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome 36.)
pp. 338; figs. 113.
American Academy in Rome 1980, \$45.

From November 2, 1978, to April 6, 1979, an international symposium, "The Seaborne Trade of Ancient Rome in the Late Republic and Early Empire: Archaeology and Economic History," was held at the American Academy in Rome. Thirty-one speakers took part, two of them giving more than one paper: 17 were Italian, 5 British, 4 French and 5 American. In all, there were 50 invited participants, including the speakers. This volume is a partial record of the proceedings of the symposium, partial because nine of the papers presented (unfortunately, some of the most important) and all the discussions that accompanied the sessions are omitted.

Orientation within this ambitious and diffuse volume is difficult despite the table of contents, the brief introduction and the program of the symposium. The lack of correspondence between the table of contents and the program of the symposium, both printed at the beginning of the volume with only one intervening page, is confusing when one tries to locate a specific author or paper among the 24 published. In addition, there is no index. The loose organization of the symposium itself is reflected in the volume, since papers on related topics (e.g., slavery or amphoras) were often not delivered at the same sessions. But even such structure as the symposium had was rejected in favor of an alphabetical ordering of papers by author. Adding in the confusion is the fact that the titles of several papers were changed before publication, and the wording of the title of one of them, the keynote address by D'Arms, is also presented differently in the table of contents and in the text.

The keynote address was out of date even at the time of the symposium because D'Arms did not know the results of the excavations of the Port of Cosa (see also below); the text is repeated, almost verbatim, in his *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (1981). The figures cited for the activity of the Sestii at Cosa are inaccurate. Since we now know that the firm already existed in the first half of the 2nd c. B.C., the question raised by D'Arms about the founder of the firm – whether or not it was L. Sestius, P. Sestius' father – has been answered. Relying heavily on E.L. Will's unpublished research on Cosa throughout, he cites her incorrectly as the source for the totals given in n.37. In addition, he presents a distorted picture of the activity of the Sestii at Cosa. It should also be noted that the amphoras manufactured by Cicero's friend, Tuccius Galleo, almost certainly have nothing to do with Brindisi (see E.L. Will, *JFA* 4 [1977] 295-96).

Perhaps the most noticeable fault of this book, however, is the uncertainty the reader feels both about its topic and about that of the symposium itself. Many of the published papers seem only peripherally connected with the subject of seaborne trade, and there is a persistent, intrusive, political tone in several of them. There are also occasional oblique references to another conference that was taking place in Italy at the same time, at the Istituto Gramsci in Pisa. The relationship between the two conferences is not clarified even in D'Arms' keynote address.

D'Arms paper consists, according to the author, of "case studies" on the extent of senatorial involvement in commerce in the Late Republic. D'Arms alludes to seaborne commerce in passing but is more concerned with the involvement of the Roman nobility in trading activities in general. Useful in understanding the thrust of the Academy symposium is the well constructed and provocative paper by E. Gabba, which is also only tangentially concerned with seaborne trade. As the editors themselves point out in the introduction, "Gabba's general reflections gathered many of the threads together." Gabba posits indirect, involvement of the nobility in commerce during the Late Republic, but his chief purpose is to examine Republican trade in terms of its increasingly political and social implications. Economic exploitation, he suggests, led to the discontent that brought about the fall of the Republic. Here we may come closer to the underlying theme of the symposium, for the more analytical papers of an ideological nature represent attempts to interpret Roman economic history in terms of late 20th c. political, economic and social theory. In other words, capitalism and Marxism were also at odds in ancient Rome. One would have welcomed a paper also from a capitalist point of view, since the Marxist interpretation of Roman history is the only political direction represented in the volume.

To turn from the question of the topic to the papers themselves, we find three general areas covered: the objects of trade (including wine, grain, anchors, amphoras, oil, timber, marble, slaves); economic arrangements that facilitated trade (ports, customs duties, trading associations); and finally the different levels of society involved in trade (nobles, slaves, immigrants, freedmen). This list of topics suggests that the choice of subjects may have been left largely to the speakers, which may explain the discrepancy between the papers and the stated theme. Papers only indirectly related to the topic of seaborne commerce include those by A. Carandini on "Imperialist Rome: a case of Precapitalist Development"; L. Cracco Ruggini on examples of social intolerance; and R.E.A. Palmer on the history of the customs boundary in Rome and the nature of tax collection on market goods arriving via the great land arteries. While it is helpful to have a summary of Carandini's important excavations (which see his earlier *Schiavi, e padroni nell'Etruria romana. La villa di Settefinestre dallo scavo alla mostra*, 1979), a connection between the produce of the villa and the seaborne trade of the Port of Cosa and the family of the Sestii has yet to be proved.

Several authors, Gabba among them, do make important contributions. Papers on aspects of the grain trade –Rome's chief import shipped from Africa and Egypt –are of great interest. G. Rickman addresses the important question of the relationship of the state to the important question of the relationship of the state to the individual involved in shipping, storage and trading, i.e., the public to the private sector. He presents evidence for the continued independence of the grain organizations or collegia even into the late Imperial period when the grain trade has generally been assumed to have been under state control: the "collegiate system appeared even then to have been happily devised to advance the interests of *corporatus* and *praefectus*, to promote efficiency without destroying enterprise, to link harmoniously individual and state." L. Casson's paper also concerns "The Role of the State in Rome's Grain Trade," using as evidence for private enterprise the newly discovered wax tablets from Murecine near Pompeii. He selects six tablets (the Latin texts of which are published in an appendix) which concern money lending between two freedmen dealing in grain imported from Egypt to Puteoli. These tablets clearly reveal that at least at about A.D. 40, private dealers were actively involved in this trade and engaged in stockpiling, operating on credit and gambling on the market.

The pioneering scholar in the study of the marble trade, the late J.B. Ward-Perkins, reaches similar conclusions about business practices, although it is clear that the larger marble quarries such as that of Proconnesus were nationalized (under Imperial control) by the mid-2nd c. A.C. Ward-Perkins points out how such national ownership changed the relationship between the source of supply—the quarry—and the customer. Quarries began to produce in bulk for the growing demand of the overseas market. This situation resulted in the modern practices of stockpiling, standardization, prefabrication and the establishment of overseas agencies, capable of controlling monopolies in major cities, to handle the marbles. For illustration, Ward-Perkins relies heavily on marble sarcophagi. He is the first scholar to realize the importance of these often richly decorated coffins for identifying not only Roman trade routes but also business practices. In his paper he also isolates a Bithynian style of marble working, laying the basis for further study on the controversial issue of Roman regional sculptural styles. As one of the last papers delivered by this perceptive scholar before his death, this contribution has special value.

Also concerned with the marble trade, but from the point of view of the individuals involved in it, M. Torelli focuses on a Tuscan noble family active in the trade, the Cossutii. Using mostly epigraphic evidence, he reconstructs their history from about 170 until 50 B.C., when they disappear, perhaps because of proscription. New archaeological evidence for the maritime activities of the wealthiest Republican family in this region of Etruria—the Domitii Ahenobarbi—is brought to light by P.W. Gianfrotta. Following F. Zevi's suggestion, he identifies the name "Ahenobarbi" (in reverse) on a lead anchor stock now in the Museo Nazionale in Palermo.

Several papers on ports and port administration make significant contributions to the stated topic of the symposium. F. Castagnoli's and A.M. Collini's papers reaffirm the importance of the river port of ancient Rome through summaries of the previously known archaeological, historical and literary evidence, as well as through the presentation of the recent discoveries in the areas of the Forum Borarium and the Forum Holitorium. G. Houston presents a case for municipal or private control of ports in Italy, following a thorough discussion of the imperial administration of both Ostia and Puteoli in his well documented paper on "The Administration of Italian Seaports During the First Three Centuries of the Roman Empire." This material has not been collected before and will remain a valuable source for further studies. Houston also addresses the crucial problem of whether indeed we can use Ostia, and to a lesser extent Puteoli, to draw conclusions about the economic history of Italy as a whole. The classical maritime historian J. Rouge adds to this picture of diversity in maritime administration and business arrangements by commenting on "Maritime Loans and Maritime Associations in the Roman World."

There are two papers on slavery. W.V. Harris discusses evidence on the sources of slaves (exposed babies are suggested as the chief source), on the types and locations of slave markets, and on the identities of certain traders. D. Musti focuses on the presumed importance of Puteoli as a slave market (a topic also treated by Harris) and on the relationship there between the slave and the grain trades. S. Panciera contributes an enlightened paper on inscriptions bearing on the oil trade in Rome. On the basis of one of them he suggests that the *portus olearius* in the city could have been in the Velabrum. R. Meiggs gathers source material about the timber trade and suggest that Italy was not as depleted of her forests in the late Empire as is usually supposed.

Among the papers on amphoras, C. Panella's discussion of wine production in the Ager Falernus is an addition to her growing list of useful and perceptive publications. Her remarks

on the likelihood of the production of Falernian wine as early as the first decades of the 2nd c. B.C. accord with E.L. Will's findings on early production in Campania (*Hesperia* 51 [1982] 350-51). E. Rodriguez-Almeida gives an up-to-date summary of how the inscriptions painted on olive oil amphoras manufactured in Roman Spain clarify the history of the regulation of trade in oil during the Roman period. The author is the foremost authority on this topic; his contribution makes his findings available to a wider audience. The summary character of his remarks perhaps explains his use of illustrations, most of which he has already published elsewhere. D. Manacorda's discussion of commercial and agricultural activity in the Ager Cosanus, one of several similar papers recently published by him, was out of date as soon as it was delivered because it did not have the advantage of the results of the excavations of the Port of Cosa. (For more current information, see A.M. McCann *JFA* 6 [1979] 391-411; E.L. Will, *JFA* 6 [1979] 339-50, *Hesperia* 51 [1982] 348-51, as well as the forthcoming publication of the port of Cosa.)

A short chapter by A. Tchernia summarizes several new developments in studies on amphoras. Since he fails to realize that "Lamboglia 2" amphoras can now be divided into at least eight distinct categories, all easily distinguishable on the basis of shape, clay, stamps, and other features, his discussion of whether they were containers for wine or oil is premature. Otherwise his paper constitutes a perceptive and stimulating contribution. He summarizes well the evidence about the type of amphora used to contain Falernian wine in the latter half of the 2nd c. A.C., but does not speculate on the shape of that container. The most likely candidates for shape are the famous amphoras of Mauretania Caesariensis, so "Falernian" should be interpreted as meaning essentially "imitation Falernian." A. Hesnard reports on a deposit of jars found near Ostia ("over 200," according to the summary; the actual number is given elsewhere as 298). Hesnard's presentation of the deposit raises many questions, of which only one will be addressed here. She does not seem to be aware of the chronological range of the amphoras she seeks to describe. To take only the most striking example, the so-called Brindisi-type (p. 148 and pl. 6.3) has a firm date in the first quarter of the 1st c. B.C. Solely on the basis of the presence of jars of that type in the deposit, her description of the amphoras as a homogeneous group dated in the Augustan period is unjustified.

Surprisingly, there are no papers on underwater archaeology, underwater finds or the important Roman harbor sites now being excavated in the Mediterranean which have produced and are producing such startling new evidence about maritime trade, economic history and technology. Also striking is the lack of focus on the Academy's major excavations at Cosa, since information on Cosa's Port and Fishery and the commercial and maritime aspects of this important coastal trading center of the Late Republic would have contributed significantly to the volume's breadth. (A paper on the Port and Fishery of Cosa was in fact given at the symposium by Frank Brown, but it was not included in the volume because the authoritative publication of this site and its finds by the excavators will appear in our forthcoming volume, *The Roman Port and Fisher of Cosa*, Princeton University Press.)

Flaws in the volume itself perpetuate the problem inherited from the organization of the symposium. Editing seems to have been hasty and sketchy, since there are typographical errors and variations in spelling, capitalization, abbreviations and footnote forms. The English summaries of papers written in French and Italian often cover only parts of these contributions (e.g., the summary of Gabba's paper addresses only the least important part of his remarks), and for the English papers, the editors choose to omit summaries entirely. Illustrative material is on the whole poorly presented and uneven in emphasis. For example, Ward-Perkins' discussion of the Bithynian marble workers' style would have benefited from

photographs, while Gianfrotta's paper on anchors required less visual documentation (in fact, some of his photographs are unreadable, e.g., fig 11). Three blank pages appear in the section of plates and there is no list of illustrations.

Overall, while some of the individual papers are of high value, the book as a whole is a great disappointment. All scholars will agree with the initial purpose of the symposium, which was to "integrate some of the specialized research of archaeologists and historians in a field . . . which seemed to present the potential for specialists in the two disciplines to come together, take stock, and collaborate in ways that, then and subsequently, might prove to be mutually beneficial and rewarding." This goal could have been better achieved and the resulting volume strengthened through a broader participation of key scholars in the relevant fields, adherence to the central theme, and the inclusion of some evidence that beneficial interchange did in fact take place.

The editors clearly state the main goal of their publication in their brief introduction: "to produce an accurate published record of the symposium as promptly and efficiently as possible." Since speed was the aim, one wonders whether publication in the expensive format of the Academy's *Memoirs* is justified, and whether one of the less expensive photocopy processes might better have served. IN addition, a different forum for the publication of this symposium might have been more appropriate, since completed manuscripts on material from the Academy's excavations at Cosa—central to its scholarly commitment to the advance of the classical archaeology—remain unpublished, owing to lack of funds.

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