

The Economic Integration of a Late Roman Province
Egypt from Diocletian to Anastasius

By

Irene Soto Marín

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Prof. Roger Bagnall

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the extent of economic integration between the province of Egypt and the rest of the Roman Empire during the fourth and fifth centuries by analyzing numismatic, ceramological, papyrological and textual data.

The numismatic analysis rests on the compilation of a database of 30,000 bronze and gold coins which revealed the nature of Egypt's currency during the fourth century CE. The patterns observed in the mint analyses showed that the majority of small denomination coinage was minted in outside mints throughout the Empire and in coin molds throughout the province, not in Alexandria. Furthermore, the high percentage of outside mints does not match patterns in the rest of the Mediterranean, where mostly local mints provide the bronze currency. The low impact of Alexandrian coinage makes it clear that Egypt had a positive balance of trade, and that it was able to absorb much more coinage than it was providing.

The amphorae analysis, which measured the rate of imports and exports during the fourth century CE, showed that during the late third and early fourth century, Egypt produced and consumed its own wine, importing negligible quantities. After the 350s CE however, although Egypt continues a high production and consumption of its wine, it starts importing a substantial amount, namely wine from Gaza. This post 350s integration matches the coinage hoard patterns.

The textile chapter shows the literary and papyrological evidence available for the trade of Egyptian textiles as well as the challenges of quantifying it. Nonetheless the chapter demonstrates the centrality and importance of the textile industry as one of the main exported products from Egypt, which probably drove much of its economic output into other provinces.

While much analysis and research remains to be undertaken, it is evident that Egypt is unlike any province in the Roman Empire. The province connected Rome to India,

the East, and Sub-Saharan Africa, it was able to produce large quantities of agricultural products for the rest of the Empire, and it was a well-connected province thanks to the Nile. The historical and multidisciplinary approach of this dissertation helps to explore new methodological approaches for the study of the ancient economy, as well as placing Egypt front and center in the analysis of the Roman economy.