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THE MARKET WOMEN OF PHARAONIC EGYPT

Among the features that, for Herodotus,¹ defined how Egyptians differed from the rest of mankind was that in Egypt women went to market and traded, while men stayed at home to weave. This whole notorious passage in Herodotus, written for rhetorical effect, contains gross errors, and creates major misunderstandings if it is taken at face value. The crude implication is that the involvement of women in the market is a cultural anomaly: that Egyptian women could go shopping and Greek women could not. It is neither accurate nor helpful to use this as part of a cultural contrast, according to which the role of Egyptian women would have been characterised by some peculiarly greater personal, social and legal 'freedom'. Herodotus' observation may have been at fault, or at least superficial. He may simply be referring to ordinary, day-to-day household purchases, in which case the passage is of no great significance to understanding the institutional, juridical or social role of women within the economy as a whole, or more specifically in the context of commercial transactions. This paper will argue the opposite: that domestic production for the market by women is likely to have played a structural role in local commerce, and that in this respect activity in the market place represents an extension of the activity of the woman within the household economy:² an activity that could provide a socially acceptable input to her partnership in marriage and to the economic structure of the family,³ at the margins between ideologically male and female spheres of activity.

1. II, 35-36; cf. A.B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II Introduction*, *EPRO* 43, Leiden, 1975, esp. pp. 141-142; 151-152; *Commentary* 1-98, Leiden, 1976, pp. 147-148. Cf. the equally rhetorical and equally inaccurate comment of The Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, London, 1908, II, p. 144: 'It would seem, indeed, as if even in the most trivial acts of life some unfelt impulse, for which no special reason can be assigned, drives the Eastern to do the exact opposite to that which the Western would do under similar circumstances.'

2. For a survey of the ideological and sociological issues and difficulties of such an analysis, see H.L. Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology*, Oxford, 1988. For the analysis of data in an Egyptian context, J. Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, Cambridge, 1985.

3. Cf. D. Sweeney, *JEA* 80, 1994, pp. 208-212 for the situation where a woman may act in effect as representative for her absent husband in matters of private or even public business.

I take as my starting point the simple conclusion that Herodotus was personally struck by the visibility of women in the marketplace in the fifth century B.C., just as he may have seen a professional men's weaving workshop.⁴ I take it that his surprise was conditioned by the presence of women selling and not merely shopping. At issue is the economic role of the local market itself, and the nature of the transactions taking place, whether between men or women. That is to say, whether we are dealing with business or commercial marketing — professional trade — or with proximity marketing of commodities around the subsistence economy. I mean by this to polarise the distinction between trade as a business, with capital investment and capital accumulation,⁵ and small scale, often opportunistic, buying and selling to fill the gaps and provide a mechanism for exchange in the subsistence economy, where the trader does not accumulate or deal in capital, but merely turns over a personal subsistence in the distribution of basic commodities:⁶ marketing in consumables.

First, it is necessary to justify the accuracy of Herodotus' observation of women in the marketplace, and define so far as possible the nature of their activity. The evidence is meagre, because of the normal invisibility of women's activities, and also the virtual invisibility of the local market in the historical and archaeological record. In contrast, we are moderately well informed, from the Ramesside community of Deir el-Medina, about certain aspects of semi-commercial trading as a sideline in goods of some value — especially burial equipment, working animals, and relatively speaking, luxury goods — but these were not goods displayed for sale on stalls in a local market.

Despite the fact that the local market can hardly have been a major source of supply for the tomb and its cult, it is isolated and incidental scenes from the tomb that provide the clearest evidence for both the existence and nature of local marketing of basic subsistence commodities.⁷ The most important scene in this respect comes from

4. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II. Commentary* 1-98, p. 148 notes the employment of men as well as women from the New Kingdom onwards, connecting it with the introduction of the vertical loom, as opposed to the horizontal loom which is characteristically worked by women at all dates; see *LÄ* VI, 1160-1161, s.v. 'Webstuhl', and e.g., H.E. Winlock, *Models of Daily Life in Ancient Egypt*, Cambridge MA, 1955, pl. 24-27, 66-67, pp. 29-33, where the Middle Kingdom model has only women spinning and weaving, but cf. below n. 37.

5. The production and trade in oil and wine in the Graeco-Roman period (and probably much earlier) provide a clear instance of the relationship, in terms of the cash crop produced directly for trade vs. the trading of a surplus production.

6. Cf. J.J. Janssen, *Commodity Prices in the Ramessid Period*, Leiden, 1975, pp. 539-550; 556-558 on 'target trading', with the review comments by B.J. Kemp, *JEA* 65, 1979, pp. 184-187. For a more general attempt at categorising these economic processes see B.J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*, London, New York, 1989, pp. 248-260.

7. For collections of references see H. Altenmüller, *LÄ* III, 1191-1194, s.v. 'Markt'; S. Hodjash, O. Berlev, *Altor Forsch* 7, 1980, pp. 31-49. For discussions see also Eyre, in M.A. Powell (ed.), *Labor in the Ancient Near East*, New Haven, 1987, pp. 34-35; R. Müller-Wollermann, 'Warenaustausch im Ägypten des Alten Reiches', *JESHO* 28, 1985, pp. 121-168; M. Römer, 'Der Handel und die Kaufleute im alten Ägypten', *SAK* 19, 1992, pp. 257-284.

the tomb of the two brothers Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep at Saqqara,⁸ royal manicurists to a king of the late Fifth Dynasty [fig. 1]. Perhaps the best guess is that this market was included as an incidental scene to provide a context that would allow for the incidental inclusion of manicuring and barbering activities in the tomb decoration, and not for the inherent importance of marketing. The scene shows, at the bottom, the boats of the tomb owners sailing on the Canal of the West. Above this, presumably on the banks of that watercourse, which can be regarded as a major highway in the Old Kingdom Memphite area, a series of registers depict trading activities. The items traded are not all entirely clear, but include foodstuffs, vegetables, fruit, fish (fresh and dried), cloth, and small pottery vessels(?). A seal borer is present; grain and copper are used in the exchanges, including fishing-hooks offered to one of the fishmongers. Two women appear among the sellers: one with objects that might be small vessels, and the other pouring a drink, perhaps beer. Also among the customers there is a girl, holding a small boy's hand, buying sycamore figs.

The tomb of Fetekta⁹ shows a similar context: men sitting behind baskets and selling subsistence commodities — cloth, fish and foods — for manufactured goods, including fish-hooks, sandals, necklaces(?), fans, bought from men with bags over their shoulders. Women only seem to appear here among the 'customers', standing in front. A fragmentary scene from the tomb of Ankhmahor¹⁰ only preserves men trading fruit and vegetables from baskets.¹¹

The more complex scene from the Unas causeway likewise includes no women as preserved,¹² although the characteristic baboons on leashes are there. It does, however, contain a number of revealing details. It lies immediately east of a series of craftwork scenes, and specifically is separated by a border line from a metal-weighing scene. Men are shown seated, offering fish from an open bag or a basket, and fruit and vegetables from baskets. They are typically dealing with standing men with bags over their shoulders, familiar from all such trading scenes. In one case this man is clearly offering a wooden chest for trade. In two cases bags stand open on the ground, and on top

For the social importance of the village market cf. Hamed Ammar, *Growing Up in an Egyptian Village*, London, 1954, pp. 18-20, quoting 'Even to get the market's dust is better than not going to it.'

8. Ahmed M. Moussa, Hartwig Altenmüller, *Das Grab des Niankhkhnum und Khnumhotep*, *ArchVer* 21, Mainz, 1977, Abb. 10, Tafel 24, pp. 79-85.

9. LD II, 96; M. Verner, *Forgotten Pharaohs, Lost Pyramids*, Prague, 1994, pp. 89-92; 'The tomb of Fetekta and a late Dyn. 5 - early Dyn. 6 cemetery in South Abusir', *MDAIK* 50, 1994, pp. 295-305.

10. A. Badawy, *The Tomb of Nyhetep-Ptah at Giza and the Tomb of 'Ankhmahor at Saqqara*, Berkeley, 1978, pl. 32-34.

11. A more difficult scene from the tomb of Ptahshepses seems to show exchange of poultry (live and slaughtered), and eggs(?) or pastries(?), and on the registers below possibly meat, although it is not clear if this is part of the market scene; M. Verner, *Abusir - I. The Mastaba of Ptahshepses I / 1, Reliefs* (2 vols., Prague, 1977 < 1986 >, pp. 62-63, pl. 29-30, photos 44-47.

12. S. Hassan, *ASAE* 38, 1938, 520, pl. 96 and *ZÄS* 80, 1955, 139, pl. 13, fig. 2; described from personal collation 16/9/96.

of these is a s3-shaped object, I assume the bundle typically worn round the neck and chest by herdsman.

The simplest understanding of these scenes is that of a static fish, fruit and vegetable market, visited by peddlers: either craftsmen with made-up goods, or herdsman from the margins. I do, however, take the juxtaposition with craft scenes on the Unas causeway as more than mere chance. So, for instance, the scene in the tomb of *Ty* shows trading in a context that juxtaposes stuff-making, leather-working for sandal-making and the cutting of seals, with their exchange.¹³ By and large trade scenes from the Old Kingdom seem to show itinerant peddlers: the same 'bag-men', apparently going round trading, and not men waiting at a set market.¹⁴ Such dealings show a juxtaposition with craft work, or the exchange of craft produce with the craftsmen, and illustrate presumably something of the free market in manufactured goods. The question of how to relate such material to the textual record at Deir el-Medina remains unapproached: — what is sideline, and what is professional craft for commerce. The existence of a free market in manufactured goods does not necessarily imply the existence of 'free' craftsmen running purely private enterprises. Nor does the dependence of craftsmen and craft production on institutional structures — temple, king, or the estate of a great lord — exclude them from private marketing. There are too many gaps in the data for satisfactory understanding.

The two crucial scenes in New Kingdom tombs are even more clearly incidental elements in larger scenes than those of the tomb of the Old Kingdom. In the Deir el-Medina tomb of Ipuy,¹⁵ men from grain barges are dealing with women at a river-bank: men with grain sacks, which in two cases they are emptying into women's baskets [fig. 2].¹⁶ The women are holding out loaves(?), fish and fruit(?), and one woman is sitting in front of a booth with beer / wine jars on a rack. Probably it is worth considering the need of sailors away from home to have food prepared for them — the ships' logs (see below) contain considerable reference to transactions in small quantities of prepared food — and the exchange here might represent that of rations paid in grain to the sailors¹⁷

13. G. Steindorff, *Das Grab des Ty*, Leipzig, 1913, pl. 133 = H. Wild, *Le Tombeau de Ty III*, Cairo, 1966, pl. 174.

14. E.g., Imeru, LD 49b; Kagemni, F.W. von Bissing, *Die Mastaba des Gem-ni-kai I*, Berlin, 1905, pl. 22-23; Djadjaemankh (or Tepemankh), Hodjash, Berlev, *Altor Forsch* 7, pp. 31-49; a Ptahhotep from Saqqara LD 11, 103 = H.G. Fischer, *Egyptian Women of the Old Kingdom and of the Heracleopolitan Period*, New York, 1989, fig. 13 where the 'market' context is questionable, see below n. 37. H.G. Fischer, 'Sunshades of the marketplace', *MMJ* 6, 1972, pp. 151-156 (= *Ancient Egypt in the Metropolitan Museum*

Journal: volumes 1-11, 1968-1976, [New York], 1977, 63-68), esp. 67 = 155, notes the lack of setting of place in such scenes.

15. N. de G. Davies, *Two Ramesside Tombs at Thebes*, New York, 1927, pls. XXX and XXXIV.

16. For the problem of a market in grain see Eyre, 'The village economy in Pharaonic Egypt', in A. Bowman, E. Rogan (eds.), *Agriculture in Egypt: from Pharaonic to modern times*, Oxford, in press, at n. 112-113.

17. Cf. Turin Taxation Papyrus 3, 16; 4, 3; 4, 5; = *RAD* 39, 16-40, 11; Gardiner, *JEA* 27, 1941, pp. 30-32. Note also J.J. Janssen, 'The cost of Nile-transport', *BSEG* 18, 1994, pp. 41-47.

for making up into food by local women.¹⁸

The tomb of Kenamun¹⁹ shows stalls at a quayside, two with men and one with a woman, displaying cloth, sandals and other small goods of uncertain interpretation. The men at least hold scales to weigh metals(?). In this case, however, they are dealing with foreigners, *en route* to the palace, and the goods are perhaps of a different level of cost and luxury to those displayed for the men from grain barges in the tomb of Ipuw. A third tomb, that of Khaemhet,²⁰ shows a similar trading activity at the quayside, but seems only to include male traders dealing with the people from the boats.²¹

One common element is the situation of the market on the bank of the watercourse. The term *mrwt* 'riverbank' is used for the market and for trading in general,²² reflecting the watercourse as highway and natural crossroads, the role of shipping in trade,²³ and of sailors as customers, and probably also the role of fish as a marketed commodity.²⁴

18. Cf. F. de Cenival, *Cautionnements dénotiques du début de l'époque ptolémaïque*, Paris, 1973, pp. 16-17 (P. Lille 6); pp. 34-39 (P. Lille 41) for women as local brewers, and 54-55 (P. Lille 52) as local beer sellers. Janssen, *Commodity Prices*, pp. 346-348 notes the rarity of beer prices at Deir el-Medina, relating this to the relatively low value and the presumption of household brewing. For the modern rudimentary coffee / tea shop see below n. 85.

19. N. de G. Davies, R.O. Faulkner, 'A Syrian trading venture to Egypt', *JEA* 33, 1947, pp. 40-46.

20. TT 57: LD III, 76 = Wreszinski, *Atlas* I, 199-200.

21. PM I, 1, 448, records for TT A4 a scene that contains 'Groups of women, barter scene before storehouses with scribes, and house behind.' I have been unable to check what this actually describes.

22. J. Černý, *A Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramesside Period*, Cairo, 1973, pp. 93-97; J.J. Janssen, *De Markt op de Oever*, Leiden, 1980; cf. Eyre, *CdE* 67, 1992, pp. 277-278 rejecting R. Ventura, *Living in a City of the Dead*, Freiburg, Göttingen, 1986, pp. 79-82. Hodjash, Berlev, *Altor Forsch* 7, esp. p. 36 argue that the market was 'metropolitan', used for the benefit of the tomb owner, not an incidental depiction of an opportunistic market, largely following A. Erman, H. Ranke, *Aegypten und ägyptisches Leben im Altertum*, Tübingen, 1923, pp. 587-591, illustrated from the tomb of Fetekta (above n. 9).

23. For a general survey see E.W. Castle, 'Shipping and trade in Ramesside Egypt', *JESHO* 35, 1992, pp. 239-277.

24. Cf. Müller-Wollermann, *JESHO* 28, 1985, 140-145 for the marked importance of fish in these transactions, and cf. N.S. Hopkins, *Agrarian Transformation in Egypt*, Boulder, 1987; Cairo, 1988, p. 38 on fish brought to the modern village market by outsiders. Note also the juxtaposition of fishermen with *šwry* and other words for traders in the Onomasticon of Amenemope, *AEO* I, 94*-95*, following sailors and preceding singers and dancers.

It is impossible to tell if the apparent absence of butchers' stalls and trading in meat in market scenes is of any significance. An Eighteenth-Dynasty text (T.E. Peet, *Mel. Masp.* I, pp. 185-199; M. Megally, *BIFAO* 74, 1974, pp. 161-169 and *BIFAO* 75, 1975, pp. 165-181; Salima Ikram, *Choice Cuts: Meat Production in Ancient Egypt*, Leuven, 1995, pp. 216-217) refers to temple traders dealing in joints of meat, and it is possible that in practice beef was not generally available except through slaughter in the context of cult, and that pork and mutton were available through domestic slaughter by their individual producer, leaving no slot in the subsistence day-to-day market for piecemeal sale of a carcass by a 'professional' butcher. They also deal with wine: a luxury product, that at this date was much produced on estates controlled by temples, with their liturgical need for wine. Conversely the record may simply be defective.

The material discussed so far is of a different type to that represented by the New Kingdom papyrus Cairo 65 739, published by Gardiner as 'A lawsuit arising from the purchase of two slaves':²⁵ a vital text for a whole range of sociological issues. Here, at the very beginning of her statement, the protagonist, the lady Iry-nefer declared:²⁶

'[I am the wife of the Overseer of the District(?) Samut], and I came to live in his house, and I worked on spin[ning(?)]²⁷ and I wove (*nwf*)²⁸ my cloth (*djw*). Now, in Year 15, in the 7th year since I entered the house of Sa[mut], the trader (*šwty*) Ria came to me with the Syrian slavegirl *Gmj.n=j-ḥr-jmntt* — she being a child — [and he] said to me, "Buy yourself this child, and give me her price".'

I prefer not to treat this remark as mere introductory platitude, but — as regularly in the abbreviated *procès-verbal* of legal texts — as a matter of specific relevance to what follows: a statement of how over seven years the woman had accumulated the capital — that would allow her to buy the slave. The price she paid was comprised, firstly of seven various pieces of very high value cloth and made-up garments, and secondly of a series of other items, mostly copper / bronze vessels, but including a jar of honey and ten ordinary priced 'shirts'²⁹ that were 'bought' from a series of associates: two ladies (*nḥ-n-njw*) and 4 men (a *ḥry-šn*, two *w'b*-priests, and a *mr-pr* of the Temple of Amon; possibly all men connected with the Temple of Amon). The term used — *jny* — is ambiguous. Either the list refers to a series of earlier transactions, in which she had purchased these commodities, and she was quoting these persons as

25. *JEA* 21, 1935, pp. 140-146. T.Q. Mrsich, 'Erenofres Verteidigung', in D. Kessler, R. Schulz (eds.), *Gedenkschrift für Winfried Barta*, Frankfurt, 1995, pp. 291-310.

26. I pass over the issue of her title '*nḥ-n-njw*', although the argument that this is characteristic of widows of some social standing might be relevant.

27. Gardiner rejected the reading *šht*, and suggested *ḥ* (*q + t*). The best solution is probably to read *ḥ*, a verb *qnj*. The term *qnqn nwt*, 'beating thread' labels men preparing linen for working in Middle Kingdom scenes from Beni Hasan (P.E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan II*, London, 1983, pl. 4, 13 = *Wb.* V, 55, 4). A verb *qnj* 'weave' also appears once at Philae, but more immediately one would connect with *qny* 'weaver(?)' in the Salire on the Trades, P. Sallier II, 7, 2-4: 'The *qnyw* inside the workshop, he is worse than a woman; his thighs are up against his chest, and he can't breathe the air; if he wastes a day without weaving, he is beaten with 50 lashes, and he (has to) give bread

to the gatekeeper to let him go out to the daylight'. Perhaps the degree of his imprisonment, not merely his posture, is worse than that of the housewife.

28. Etymologically one might take *nwf* as 'tie'; conceivably the final sewing of the garment might be at issue, rather than work on the loom, although I prefer to take *djw* here as a general term rather than a specific item of clothing: the basic bolt of cloth from the loom, which itself served as a basic over-garment; E. Staehlin, *ZAS* 96, 1970, pp. 125-133; Fischer, *MMJ* 10, 1975, pp. 151-154; *JARCE* 13, 1976, pp. 18-20.

29. For instance, a simple *djw* in the first group is valued at 5 *qdt* of silver, compared to a typical value of 20 *dbn* of copper for a good quality *djw* at Deir el-Medina, whereas the 10 *mss*-garments are only valued at 4 *qdt* in total, a valuation comparable to that of 5 *dbn* each of copper at Deir el-Medina (see Janssen, *Commodity Prices*, pp. 262-263; 265-266). The lady happens personally to be dealing in cloth of remarkably high quality or added value in its making up.

guarantors, or possibly they were commodities that she had taken on credit from friends and associates. Her immediate aim was to deny that any property of the lady *B3k-mwt* had been used in the transaction. She is presenting, as it were, the receipts for all the capital she had used.

Very many questions remain to be asked about the nature of these transactions. It is not unlikely that some sort of (informal?) business partnership had existed between *Jry-nfr* and *B3k-mwt*; the court also refers in passing to the allegation that *Jry-nfr* had used a tomb which *B3k-mwt* had built(?) to purchase another male slave, and since *B3k-mwt* herself does not appear, it is (I suspect) most likely that the case is being brought by her (male) heirs in an attempt to untangle the joint and rather secretive ventures of a pair of enterprising ladies. However, the immediate issue is the suggestion that respectable propertied ladies — a class well enough attested in the New Kingdom, witness for instance the Will of Naunakhte, or the Turin Marriage Settlement — were concerned to increase their capital, and specifically through cloth production as a business venture. Although the evidence of this text is suggestive, and I am confident of my interpretation, it remains speculative unless other data can be brought in support.

The best examples that one can quote for 'private' business in cloth are both early, and do not specifically involve women. The first is again the market scene in the tomb of the Two Brothers at Saqqara, which presents a scenario strongly reminiscent of the *souk* [fig. 1]. One man is measuring out cloth by the cubit from³⁰ a bale held by a second man, with the caption: '[A(?)] cubit of cloth for (*r-db3*) 6 1/2 š't'.³¹ Behind sits a fat — that is old and senior — man, commenting favourably on the price and quality. The second example is provided by the letters of Hekanakhte, who used the profits

30. Moussa, Altenmüller, *Das Grab des Nianchnum und Chnumhotep*, Abb. 10, and Tafel 24, 4th register from top, right end, and pp. 84-85.

31. The price seems implausible. The wall is damaged here, and Moussa and Altenmüller read a number 1 + x in the text; the line drawing shows merely a small blank space, and nothing is visible in the photograph. Personal collation did not allow an improved reading.

The very limited contemporary price information (see below n. 38) would imply that a very substantial piece of cloth — tens of square cubits — would be necessary to justify this price. Françoise Smyth suggests to me that the horizontal loom can only be expected to produce bolts of c. 0.5 m width (1 cubit), while the vertical loom has the potential for widths of up to 1.5 m (3 cubits), the more 'industrial' vertical loom

only being attested from the post-Hyksos period (see above n. 4). Standard cloth widths may have been made up in lengths of up to 10 cubits (cf. G. Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Pharaonic Egyptian Clothing*, Leiden, 1993, p. 6; and for a general collection of illustrations, G. Vogelsang-Eastwood, *De Kleren van de Farao*, Amsterdam, 1994, esp. p. 30 and chap. 1-2), but clearly wider bales could be made up by joining widths, cf. Cairo JE 42 787 = B. Menu, in F. Geus, F. Thill (eds.), *Mélanges offerts à Jean Vercoutter*, Paris, 1985, pp. 251-255, who reads  as 2 × 10, and  as 4 × 10 cubits after P. Posener-Krieger, *RdE* 29, 1977, pp. 86-96; H. Goedicke, *Die privaten Rechtstexte aus dem Alten Reich*, Vienna, 1970, pp. 149-173, at p. 161, n. 11 sees the writings as names, and says sizes are not given.

from sale of weaving *mn*-cloth for investment in renting land.³² A part of Hekanakhte's land was given over to the cultivation of flax,³³ while one of his accounts which deals with flax³⁴ is headed by an entry: 'that which is in the possession of (the woman) *s3t-nb-sh[t]*, as deficit of the yarn (? *mvyt*): 20(?)'. Possibly she had been responsible for a quota of spinning.

Cloth is an important form of capital, that the substantial household could itself manufacture on the basis of its lands and household labour.³⁵ For relatively high value transactions and capital exchanges cloth played as important — if not more important — a role as metal.³⁶ The manufacture of cloth, spinning and weaving, is unlikely to have been heavily 'industrialised' or centralised, despite the existence of institutional workshops for both men and women.³⁷ A network of small independent or semi-independent producers, like Hekanakhte's household, or systems of 'outworking', with raw materials

32. T.G.H. James, *The Hekanakhte Papers and other Early Middle Kingdom Documents*, New York, 1962, letter I, pl. 1, lines 4-6, and cf. letter II, pl. 7, vs. 2. Cf. also the roughly contemporary letter P. Cairo 91 061 = JE 58 045, James, *op. cit.*, pl. 26-27, lines 6-8, for another *b3k n pr gt* organising the weaving of *mn*-cloth and production of *d3fw*.

33. Letter I, pl. 3, vs. 10, and cf. account V, pl. 10, lines 7-17 for the substantial quantities of flax produced and held by his household.

34. Account VII, pl. 14, lines 9-12.

35. Cf. Davies, 'The town house in ancient Egypt', *Metropolitan Museum Studies* I, part 2, 1928-1929, pp. 232-240; F. Doyen, *Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Abstracts*, Oxford, 1995, pp. 52-53.

36. See, e.g., Posener-Krieger, in M. Görg, E. Pusch (eds.), *Festschrift Elmar Edel*, Bamberg, 1979, pp. 318-331; Menu, in *Mélanges Vercoutter*, pp. 249-262. Note also the reading by Vleeming of the demotic word for 'man receiving pay' as literally 'man receiving cloth (*hbs*)' in P.W. Pestman (ed.), *Textes et études de papyrologie grecque, démotique et copte*, P.L. Bat. 23, Leiden, 1985, pp. 204-207.

37. For cloth in general cf. *LÄ* VI, 57-63, s.v. 'Stoffe und Webarten', and note *LÄ* IV, 587, s.v. 'Opferliste'. For a convenient collection of illustrations see R. Hall, *Egyptian Textiles*, Princes Risborough, 1986, chap. 3. There is a difference between spinning, which is difficult to envisage as normally performed in other than domestic contexts by women (G.M. Vogelsang-

Eastwood, Jvan Haeringen, 'The so-called boy spinners of Beni Hasan', *GM* 126, 1992, pp. 95-96), and the skilled professionalism of the finest weaving. Helck, *Materialien zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Neuen Reiches* V, Wiesbaden, 1965, pp. 931-938; Eyre in Powell (ed.), *Labor*, pp. 38, 200-201 for references to women, Old and New Kingdoms, in professional workshops. Note P. Kah. III, 3 (= F.L. Griffith, *Hieratic Papyri from Kahun and Gurob*, London, 1898, I, pp. 75-76, II, pl. 32; E.F. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, Atlanta, 1990, no. 101), a letter from a *nbt-pr* about food for female slaves who weave, and cf. P. Kah. IV, 4 (= Griffith, *Hieratic Papyri from Kahun and Gurob* I, pp. 70-71, pl. 28; Wente, *Letters*, no. 103) for problems about supply of colours (for dye?).

For the Merwer 'harem' as a possible centre of weaving see *RAD* 14-15, 20-26 = Gardiner, 'The harem at Miwer', *JNES* 12, 1953, pp. 145-149 = Wente, *Letters*, no. 34. See also W.C. Hayes, *A Papyrus of the Late Middle Kingdom in the Brooklyn Museum*, Brooklyn, 1955, pp. 105-108 for the list of female weavers in P. Brooklyn 35.1446 verso. See Fischer, *Egyptian Women*, pp. 10-11 and especially n. 86 for evidence from Old Kingdom tombs, where in particular it is unclear whether the scene *LD* II, 103 (see above n. 14) simply shows women from the weaving workshop delivering goods for 'wages', or includes an element of marketing, and cf. fig. 18 = Berlin (East) 15 421 for a woman tomb-owner watching over the flax harvest.

distributed for household processing, seem more typical. The Old Kingdom papyri from Gebelein include a cloth register for two villages (*njw*) of a *pr dt*, the names including a full variety of the professions expected in a village community: a register that seems to represent household production rather than payments in wages.³⁸ The status of women involved in weaving workshops remains unclear: whether married women worked freely in such organisations; whether such work was a potential resource for otherwise unsupported — typically the widow or divorcee — or whether the employed weaver was characteristically a dependent in some socio-economic sense.³⁹

The Nineteenth Dynasty Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1453A⁴⁰ contains on the recto⁴¹ an apparent ship's log, with dated itinerary from quayside to quayside (*mryt*). Against each quayside is an entry listing commodities in significant quantity, mostly foodstuffs, predominantly bread and fruit. The verso of the text follows the same itinerary, although here with one exception the entries are not dated, and one quayside is omitted. At each quay a number of women is recorded as making deliveries: yarn (*nwt*), noted as both black and white, made-up cloth, honey and money(?), although whether actual bullion is at issue, as seems to be the case in some entries, or merely valuations of commodities is not clear. An obvious conclusion would be that the commodities listed on the recto represent outgoings connected with the receipts from the women on the verso, but no such connection is explicit in the text. Indeed, there is no clear connection between the entries of the recto and the verso except for the quay of Dendara(?) (H/V (recto) 10 = V/H (verso) 20-21), where an individual entry for honey appears on both sides, and this was perhaps a scribal error entering the commodity on the wrong side.

The associated P. Brooklyn 35.1453B, apparently part of the same roll, contains a list of women with deficits in yarn (*nwt*) described as 'of last year', in some cases with additional notes of deliveries that wipe out the deficits. The text makes clear that this yarn is the *b3k* 'work' — 'tribute' or 'work-quota' — of the women. If it is right to regard *nwt* as simply the made-up thread, it would appear that the text as a whole deals largely with the collection of spun fibre and honey, to a lesser extent with made-up cloth or clothing, and 'money(?)'. Janssen⁴² envisages these women as

38. Posener-Krieger, *RdE* 27, 1975, pp. 211-221; *RdE* 29, 1977, pp. 86-96, and cf. Posener-Krieger, *Festschrift Elmar Edel*, p. 318, n. 1 on the general issue of Old Kingdom cloth production.

39. Hekanakhte, for instance, does not appear to deal only in the production of direct family members. One may speculate about the reasons for *Jry-nfr*'s purchase of slaves. The evidential value of P. Bankes I (= I.E.S. Edwards, *JEA* 68, 1982, pp. 126-132; R. Navailles, F. Neveu, *GM* 103, 1988, pp. 51-60), a Ramesside letter to a *šwty* about a missing slave-woman and her son, is uncertain. The person accused of taking

them is a *hry-mrt*: unclear whether he is 'chief of weavers' (Edwards) or 'responsable de la main-d'œuvre servile' (Navailles, Neveu); cf. Abd el-Mohsen Bakir, *Slavery in Pharaonic Egypt*, Cairo, 1952, pp. 25-29.

40. V. Condon, *RdE* 35, 1984, pp. 57-82 and see Janssen, *VA* 1, 1985, pp. 109-112; Condon, *VA* 2, 1986, pp. 23-29.

41. Fibres horizontal on vertical, referred to by Condon as side H/V, against the verso referred to as V/H.

42. *VA* 1/3, 1985, esp. p. 109.

retail dealers trading in garments and honey, probably for a temple institution.⁴³ Perhaps more likely they are themselves producers, or the local agents for outworkers: women spinning and weaving in the home, and perhaps bee-keeping. Information about bee-keeping and the production of honey is extremely sparse, and restricted to temple contexts, but the maintenance of garden hives can perhaps be envisaged as a domestic activity.⁴⁴

The nature of the business transactions, whether in some sense retail or the buying in of domestic textile labour, is not clear.⁴⁵ In favour of the latter conclusion one might quote a small number of texts from Deir el-Medina⁴⁶ which deal with issues or quotas of *mw* processed by the women of the village.⁴⁷ The local need to manufacture lamp-wicks from old cloth or yarn to use in the work⁴⁸ means that some processing of material was part of the main work of the community. Nevertheless, although textual reference to women weaving is exceptional in the records of local transactions,⁴⁹ there is substantial physical evidence for the processing and manufacturing cloth in the village,⁵⁰ as well as a significant local market in clothing, and use of cloth or clothing in transactions, and this clearly was not all clothing paid to the workmen as wages.⁵¹ The local records of transactions frequently include cloth among the commodities used to

43. Castle, *JESHO* 35, p. 251, in the general context of temple traders, quotes one example of a woman, daughter of a former military commander, as 'owner' of a trader. The implication, as often with women as land-holders, is that this comes as inheritance.

44. The transaction of P. Cairo 65 739 (see above) includes a large jar of honey of considerable value (1 *mnt* jar of 1 *hqst* content value 5 *qdt* of silver), acquired by *Iry-nfr* from a *w'b*-priest (line 19), but this implies nothing about the source of the honey, only its trading value as a commodity of high intrinsic value and long life.

In general, honey has been regarded as something of a temple monopoly, but it may belong to a class of *ad hoc* production, that is not easily categorised. One would expect it to be associated with orchards, and perhaps also as a sideline by herdsman in the wild country: *LA I*, 786-789, s.v. 'Biene'; 111, 151, s.v. 'Imker'; cf. Janssen, *Commodity Prices*, pp. 352-353; Posener-Krieger, *JEA* 64, 1978, p. 86, n. (g); E.V. Pischilova, *GM* 139, 1994, pp. 74-77; and in general, see H. Chouliara-Rafos, *L'abeille et le miel en Égypte d'après les papyrus grecs*, Ioannina, 1989. Cf. also A. Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials*, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 49,

51 for the association for taxation of goats and honey.

45. J. Černý, A.H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, Oxford, 1957, pl. 54, 1: a woman receiving primarily cloth, oil and basketry in exchange for transfer of days of work to a crewman.

46. Which incidentally may be one of the sites referred to in the Brooklyn papyrus: the *mryt t3 wh't p3 hr* appears V/H (vs.) 14; H/V (rt.) 5. However, other place names refer to *jwnyt*, so that Dendara rather than Thebes seems likely to be the district dealt with, and identification with Deir el-Medina is far from certain.

47. Eyre, in Powell (ed.), *Labor*, pp. 200-201.

48. J. Černý, *The Valley of the Kings*, Cairo, 1973, pp. 53-54, quoting in particular Černý, Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, pl. 35, 3.

49. But note O. Brussels E 6 311, vs. 8-12 = Shafik Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*, Tübingen, 1973, no. 25, pl. 24-27.

50. D. Valbelle, *Les ouvriers de la Tombe : Deir el-Médineh à l'époque ramesside*, Cairo, 1985, pp. 249-250; see also Helek, *Materialien* V, 930-931; Janssen, *Commodity Prices*, pp. 436-438 for thread.

51. Valbelle, *Ouvriers*, p. 152, pp. 281-283.

make payments, although they do not make explicit whether this cloth is the result of domestic weaving by the protagonist or his family.⁵² There is an intriguing contrast between the Brooklyn papyrus, which seems to record the collection of cloth and honey — local products — in Upper Egypt, and the Turin 'Ship's Log',⁵³ which appears to record the activity of a boat (or fleet(?) of ships) from the Temple of Amon at Karnak, trading Upper Egyptian cloth at Heliopolis and Memphis in exchange for products of the Delta and the marshes.⁵⁴ Very tentatively one might wonder whether these two texts do not represent the two ends of the 'commercial' activities of the 'middleman': the wholesale and distribution and not the purely retail side of internal trade, which is to say, the sector of trade often closely associated in the New Kingdom with temple organisations. While there is an impression that such boat's captains, and fifty-traders, may have travelled the Nile, drumming up business wherever they went, such activity is structurally necessary. Local producers, of both agricultural and domestic craft goods, cannot market beyond local proximity trading. Distribution of produce on any scale cannot be but through agents. It is not always clear whether it is more accurate to class the mechanisms for such transfers as ones of taxation, rent collection, or commerce: characteristically, for instance, one classes grain collection as tax or rent, but 'cash crops' more likely as commercial. The real point is that the farmer or housewife, necessary as producer, cannot market him or herself.

To return to the Cairo case about the purchase of the slave girl: it seems that we should envisage here a woman working at home, producing for sale, as a means of personal capital accumulation, converting her cloth into cash — bullion in the form of metal objects — as the opportunity arose. The primary context of women's capital is inheritance and the dowry brought to marriage: property that she controls and makes decisions about,⁵⁵ and that can be developed by the shared profit made during marriage, referred to in so-called marriage contracts.⁵⁶ The question is the extent to which the woman can make profits without her husband sharing.⁵⁷ Outworking of the sort I

52. Cf. G. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1993, pp. 129-130, noting especially Černý, Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, pl. 50, 1; O. DeM 185 as examples where the payment is actually made by a woman.

53. J.J. Janssen, *Two Ancient Egyptian Ships Logs*, *OMRO Supplement*, Leiden, 1961, and see esp. pp. 98-104 for general comments on boats involved in trade; also, Janssen, *SAK* 3, 1975, pp. 161-164 for the issues discussed here.

54. Whether the use of *šm* 'Upper Egyptian linen' reflects in any meaningful way the historical realities of cloth production is unanswerable.

55. P.W. Pestman, *Marriage and Matrimonial Property in Ancient Egypt*, *P.L. Bat.* IX, Leiden, 1961; Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*,

pp. 60, 131-132.

56. Pestman, *Marriage and Matrimonial Property*, pp. 124-128, 153.

57. Note Ankhsheshonq 12, 13-14; 13, 16-22; 25, 20, and cf. (?) 6, 12 on the theme that a woman cannot be trusted not to abstract family money. Cf. for example, A.B. Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt*, Syracuse N.Y., 1984; Cairo, 1985, pp. 179, 210; Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, pp. 44-45; A.E. Macleod, *Accommodating Protest: working women, the new veiling and change in Cairo*, New York, 1991; Cairo, 1992, pp. 47-48 on the deliberate masking of women's input into the family finances for ideological reasons.

envisage here is typical of pre-industrial textile production, with agents collecting what their regular suppliers have produced. In this particular example one should hardly imagine that the merchant was an itinerant door-to-door slave-trader,⁵⁸ but nor do we have the impression of a formal and regular slave market where one would go to seek a suitable purchase. Probably we must envisage an opportunistic set of local trading contacts, where specific needs and requirements are known and fulfilled, or a chance availability of slaves marketed through the country following a military campaign.

The primary economic context is one in which women explicitly retain legal control of the resources they bring to marriage, along with a right to share in the profits of marriage. So, for instance, women are frequently attested as the legal holders of agricultural land although it is clear that they did not farm such land personally, but needed to delegate farming to a male relative or to a lessee.⁵⁹ The degree of activity or the influence of the woman in decision making is therefore largely invisible, except probably in the late New Kingdom letter P. Berlin 8523,⁶⁰ where the writer explicitly withdraws his cancellation of the lease to the addressee after consultation with his wife. In the Pharaonic period the evidence is largely restricted to the appearance of women as landholders in tax registers, but in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, when the documentary records are much fuller, this is expanded by extensive evidence of women buying and selling land, renting it on lease, and receiving it in dowry.⁶¹ Women form at least a significant commercial background, as sleeping partners and owners in the working of the countryside: a feature that has remained normal throughout later periods of Egyptian history.⁶² Women have a significant role as the holders of capital. The

58. As to an extent one visualises the activity of some of the 'traders' depicted in Old Kingdom tombs, see above.

59. But for an unusual example, from a woman's tomb, of the woman watching over the harvest of flax, Fischer, *Egyptian Women*, fig. 18 = Berlin (East) 15 421. In general see Schafik Allam, 'Women as owners of immovables in Pharaonic Egypt', in B.S. Lesko (ed.), *Women's Earliest Records: from Ancient Egypt and Western Asia*, Atlanta, 1989, pp. 123-135. In particular, see the Nineteenth Dynasty case of Mose and his mother, G.A. Gaballa, *The Memphite Tomb-Chapel of Mose*, Warminster, 1977; Allam, *JEA* 75, 1989, pp. 103-112; Eyre, in Schafik Allam (ed.), *Grund und Boden in Altägypten*, Tübingen, 1994, pp. 116-118; Lucie Duff Gordon, *Letters from Egypt*, 1865, reprint London, 1986, pp. 253-254 tells of being offered in joke 100 *feddans* of farmland to stay in a village, and when she said she couldn't work it herself, and had no man to do it, was told several stories of women

who farmed such properties. The possible and the normal are not necessarily the same. Cf. also Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, pp. 40-52.

60. Schafik Allam, in B.M. Bryan, D. Lorton (eds.), *Essays in Egyptology in Honor of Hans Goedicke*, San Antonio, 1991, pp. 1-7; Eyre, in Allam (ed.), *Grund und Boden*, pp. 130-131.

61. Cf. J. Rowlandson, *Landowners and Tenants in Roman Egypt*, Oxford, 1996, esp. pp. 151-165, 182, 200, 263-264, 284-285.

62. Cf. Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, pp. 81-84, 97-98, 100-101; cf. also Macleod, *Accommodating Protest*, p. 70. J. Mabro, *Veiled Half-Truths: Western Travellers' Perceptions of Middle Eastern Women*, London, New York, 2nd ed. 1996, p. 220 quotes Sir Valentine Chirol, *The Egyptian Problem*, London, 1920, pp. 165-169 quoting Willcocks on the activities of *fellahin* women as lenders of money at profit, even to their husbands: essentially village providers of working capital.

problem is the extent to which they played a visible commercial role. In more modern Egypt the norm is that ideologically the woman asserts her female role as wife / mother, supplementing the husband's provision so long as he approves; ideologically the role of a marketwoman may be presented as one of assisting her husband (or male relative), but the involvement of women in the retail market is normal. In practice a significant minority act as businessmen — often with a reputation as a particularly tough businessman — whether at a very small scale or running significant enterprises, dealing at the commercial level as men among men.⁶³ Petty local trading can, in practice, be a characteristic female activity.⁶⁴

The riverbank market is a different level of commercial activity to that of land-holding and land rights. Women are shown selling foodstuff and drinks: the sorts of produce that can be produced domestically. Tomb scenes depict a market in perishable consumables — fruit and vegetables, food and drink, fish — that is best explained as structural to the local economy, and in this the role of women can be seen as an extension of their household activities that need not impinge on their family role.⁶⁵ There is a reasonable presumption that the women who appear in the economic record, as land holders or in commerce, will predominantly be widows or divorcees, involved either through the need to support themselves, or active from a position of relative economic and social strength through independent control of their share of family resources. Nevertheless, the potential for women to extend the family income, or to reinforce their own economic independence within the household by personal dealing, should not be underestimated.

The context of my remarks is a scepticism about models of the ancient Egyptian market that assume it was an essentially controlled and elite activity: structurally an unimportant sideline and surplus to an essentially ordered redistribution economy. I would rather argue that it is the redistribution economy that is the elite feature, which impinged relatively little on the mass of the rural populace (except through taxation), and for whom a local market was a structural necessity for the distribution of perishables, and commodities not produced within the household. That is to say, I envisage the household as the basic unit of production in ancient Egypt, and not the state and temple bureaucracy. I prefer in this respect to draw understandings from more modern Egypt when the ancient data is too limited to stand on its own.

63. Sawsan el-Messiri, *Ibn al-Balad: a concept of Egyptian Identity*, Leiden, 1978, pp. 60, 62-68, 92-93, with quotation of one leading market-woman: 'one bint al-balad equals twenty men in trading'; cf. K. van Nieuwkerk, 'A Trade like any Other': *Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*, Austin, 1995, pp. 173-178.

64. Cf. Macleod, *Accommodating Protest*, pp. 44-

49, 50, 85; and in general Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology*, pp. 89-93, 167.

65. Cf. Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, pp. 91-93 on the complex relations of women to 'domestic' labour: socially necessary in the home, but shameful if work as employees outside the home.

For instance, it has been traditional for women to keep poultry, and perhaps to keep a small household vegetable patch, and there is potential to exploit such activities for occasional profit beyond household consumption,⁶⁶ as well as a potential for local and small scale retail marketing or rather peddling of consumables such as fruit, vegetables and dates. In the late Twentieth Dynasty, the wife of a 'gardener' denied under interrogation any knowledge of the 'silver' stolen by her husband from the tombs. When asked specifically about how she had come to buy some slaves, she replied: 'I bought them in exchange for *md*' from my garden (*hspt*)'.⁶⁷ Her reply is evidently ironic: neither put forward nor taken seriously,⁶⁸ but comparable to the perhaps slightly more plausible claim of another woman, interrogated about 'silver', with part of which she and her husband had bought slaves. Partly she denied having seen it at all — it was her husband's business — and partly she claimed: 'I bought it for grain in the year of the hyenas, when one starved.'⁶⁹ The question is the extent to which such market activities, which are below the level of significance normally appearing in the textual record, can be documented in the Pharaonic period.

The keeping of small animals and poultry is traditionally a domestic, and therefore women's activity, as part of the provision of subsistence for the household.⁷⁰ Milk processing, in particular, is a domestic, which is to say, female activity. The sale of milk itself is regarded as shameful, since it marks both the poverty of the household,

66. Eg. Macleod, *Accommodating Protest*, p. 61 quoting womens' reasons for going out to work: 'I enjoy working because of the salary I can earn, It is more than I could make from raising chickens or ducks in my home as my mother does', with stress on the strong motivation for women to earn small sums beyond the household budget provided by the husband for personal purchases (pp. 59-60). Cf. el-Messiri, *Ibn al-Balad*, pp. 84-85, 96-97; Rugh, *Family* pp. 258-260. Egypt today is only now coming to terms with the impact of economic change on social ideology: between the last 30 years when the earnings of educated women in socially acceptable (that is office-)work have been explicitly regarded as their pin-money, and the current situation when they are in practice forming part of the core financial budget. Women's education has paradoxically become a significant part of their trousseau and value as a potential marriage partner, since it provides access to a respectable source of regular income.

67. P. BM 10 052, 13, 10-26.

68. In the following interrogation, a slave of hers in fact talks of being bought by her husband. The expectation in the Tomb Robbery texts is that the wife acts in essential partnership with her husband: contrast, e.g., P. BM 10 052, 6, 1-13, a woman who claims her husband's share from his associates, with P. BM 10 052, 13, 10-26, a woman who claimed that her father had excluded her husband from his house because he robbed, and that she had not received stolen property from her husband (presumably on the implication of a separation).

69. P. BM 10 052, 11, 4-8.

70. Hopkins, *Agrarian Transformation*, pp. 84-88, with the note that 'men generally profess ignorance of the number of such animals in their houses'. For wider comparison cf. Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology*, p. 44, associating animals and petty commerce in this context.

and the laziness of its women. The sale of clarified butter and white cheese is better,⁷¹ and women are clearly visible in the streets selling white cheese. It is unclear whether this can be detected in the ancient sources. In a pair of 21st Dynasty oracle petitions, probably from El-Hibeh,⁷² a woman asks whether one man has paid another for a cow. Her interest in the matter is not made explicit, but one has to assume that it is financial.⁷³ However, in practice documents show no particular emphasis on female ownership of a domestic cow, which appears to be relatively widespread among the moderately well-off,⁷⁴ and the issue here is rather one of domestic care and exploitation. There is a clear situation in modern Egypt where very small holders of land focus on livestock, since this allows the men to go to other labour:⁷⁵ the women and children are then heavily involved in the livestock care, but this relates to a situation where there is no natural pasturage, and so animals compete directly with arable crops,⁷⁶ which was not so much the case in antiquity, where cattle herding in marginal lands is the focus of surviving evidence, rather than feeding an odd cow on fodder crops from the fields. The context is very similar to that of the woman keeping poultry (for both meat and eggs) and small ruminants, as part of her household duties, the details of which are none of her husband's business,⁷⁷ and there is potential for income.⁷⁸

In the modern village context, Hopkins notes that 'most shopping is done by women and children who do not want to move out of their own neighbourhood',⁷⁹ so that men tend to do shopping in shops, while women are more likely to buy from ambulant peddlers. Women traditionally do not work outside the household, and there

71. Ward, in G.M. Craig (ed.), *The Agriculture of Egypt*, Oxford, 1993, p. 255; Beshai, *ibid.*, pp. 267-268. This can mean that calves are sent unfinished to market to protect milk and avoid loss when they die young, Ward, *ibid.*, p. 255; Rowntree, *ibid.*, p. 433. Cheese is virtually unidentifiable in the ancient texts (see Janssen, *Commodity Prices*, pp. 353-355), but it is difficult to imagine it was not made.

72. K. Ryholt, 'A pair of oracle petitions addressed to Horus of the Camp', *JEA* 79, 1993, pp. 189-198.

73. Cf. O. Berlin 12 630 (= Allam, *HOPR*, no. 14, pl. 10-11 = Wente, *Letters*, no. 256), a letter from a workman to the wife of the scribe Amonnakhte, complaining that he had not paid the promised bovine in exchange for a sarcophagus (and later also a bed). He is demanding she gives him the bovine or return the sarcophagus and the bed, apparently claiming the husband's debt against his wife.

74. Cf. Janssen, *Commodity Prices*, pp. 172-177; E. Cruz-Urbe, *Saite and Persian Demotic Cattle Documents*, *American Studies in Papyrology* 26, Chico CA, 1985, with review by S.P. Vleeming, *BiOr* 42, pp. 508-525.

75. Richards, in Craig (ed.), *Agriculture*, p. 103.

76. Ward, in Craig (ed.), *Agriculture*, p. 254.

77. Among the Bedouin of the eastern desert it is characteristic that the women are responsible for the sheep and goats, and the men for larger animals, Bishay, in Craig (ed.), *Agriculture*, p. 315; J.J. Hobbs, *Bedouin Life in the Egyptian Wilderness*, Austin, 1989; Cairo, 1990, pp. 33-34.

78. Rowntree, in Craig (ed.), *Agriculture*, pp. 431-433; Ruf, *ibid.*, pp. 199-201.

79. *Agrarian Transformation*, p. 38. In practice there are significant regional differences; the further north, the greater there is a tendency to regard shopping as women's work.

remains a revulsion about female manual labour outside the home as shameful.⁸⁰ Limited marketing of the produce from domestic animals, or of fruit, or very recently the little housefront kiosks for bits and pieces, is a greyer area.⁸¹ There is space for the peddling of commodities, either from door to door, or from baskets in the street or on the riverbank (as by the local ferry at Luxor). Better-off women may be seen behind fruit stalls, although small scale peddling is characteristically an activity of the very poor, and especially the widow or the divorcee, traditionally considered as rather shameful, indicating the husband's failure to perform his duty to provide,⁸² whereas to take in domestic sewing — the successor to spinning and weaving in the home — has been more respectable, especially in that it can largely be kept from public notice.⁸³

It is no coincidence that fish, together with fruit and vegetables, are the characteristic commodities of ancient markets: providing a commodity that is almost a necessity, but not produced by the farmer. For antiquity, one surely best envisages these exchanges of fish and fruit for other commodities, which include both grain and craft produce, as the interchange between the arable farmer and the more specialist of countryside producers, which is necessary to both sides.⁸⁴ It is small in scale, but exchange, not redistribution. It is also a sector of exchange in which women are involved as the runners of the household, the household producers of non-arable supplies,

80. Cf. Rugh, *Family*, pp. 193-194, 258-260, 262-271; Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, pp. 91-93; Hopkins, *Agrarian Transformation*, p. 94: 'Adult women essentially work only in the home', apart from educated women in government jobs. Cf. also pp. 52-56, on the very low numbers of women declared economically active in the census up to 1976, and the claim that women do not (at least in Upper Egypt) work in the fields, pp. 83, 85, 185; but note Macleod, *Accommodating Protest*, pp. 49, 51 on the underreporting of female economic activity, and note p. 50 that it is rather that women's work in the fields is not admitted to, although they are typically but informally involved to a great extent in harvesting of a variety of crops on family lands; cf. Tucker, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41, 43, while noting that her source material is somewhat biased, from the Delta and not Upper Egypt. In reality the role and number of women in the workforce is and has been consistently underestimated for essentially ideological reasons: cf. Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

81. Note Hopkins, *Agrarian Transformation*, p. 154: 'One farmer took some onions home with him and tried to sell them from his house. Customers came, but his (marriageable) daughters disapproved saying it was shameful': the local vegetable market is underdeveloped in terms of shops, and relies much on peddlers and casual sellers, who are not necessarily the producers. Cf. p. 146: 'Even the biggest farmers do not take their goods to market themselves, but wait for merchants to come in from outside.'

82. E.g., Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, pp. 13, 60, and cf. p. 58 for the converse: a divorced woman working, liable to lose custody of her children; compare, e.g., Macleod, *Accommodating Protest*, pp. 85-86; Rugh, *Family*, pp. 72-74, pp. 271-272.

83. Rugh, *Family*, pp. 263-264; Macleod, *Accommodating Protest*, p. 47.

84. Cf. Ammar, *Growing Up in an Egyptian Village*, pp. 18-19 on the payment for local village services by both regular gifts at harvest, and irregular gifts of bread and other foodstuffs.

and perhaps at the margins it provided through street hawking a limited source of income for the widow or divorcee.⁸⁵

The commercial activities of women will certainly have been constrained by practical restrictions on travel and personal access outside local and immediate social circles. Nevertheless the role of women — at one level as active participants in local markets in consumables, as producer and retailer, and at another level as accumulators and investors of capital and ostensibly silent partners in commercial projects — is (it seems to me) sufficiently documented in the surviving data to require proper integration as a regular feature in description of the ancient Egyptian economy.⁸⁶ The market is detectable, if only it is looked for.

85. In contrast to the beer-house attested in warnings to pupil-scribes in the New Kingdom school exercise: *LEM* 106, 14-107, 2 = P. Lansing 8, 4-7. The dividing line between brewing for sale, and then admitting customers to drink on the premises is a significant step in moral perceptions; cf. above n. 18. See also el-Messiri, *Ibn al-Balad*, pp. 60-64 on women running very low-level coffee/tea shops, and involved in the production of *fāl* for street stalls, exploiting

basic food production as domestically based low-level market activity, for which cf. above n. 2, 64.

86. Cf. D.C. Snell, 'Marketless trading in our time', *JESHO* 34, 1991, pp. 129-141 for the approach. D.A. Warburton, *State and Economy in Ancient Egypt*, Freiburg, Göttingen, 1997 stresses the role of the market, but only discusses macro-economic issues.

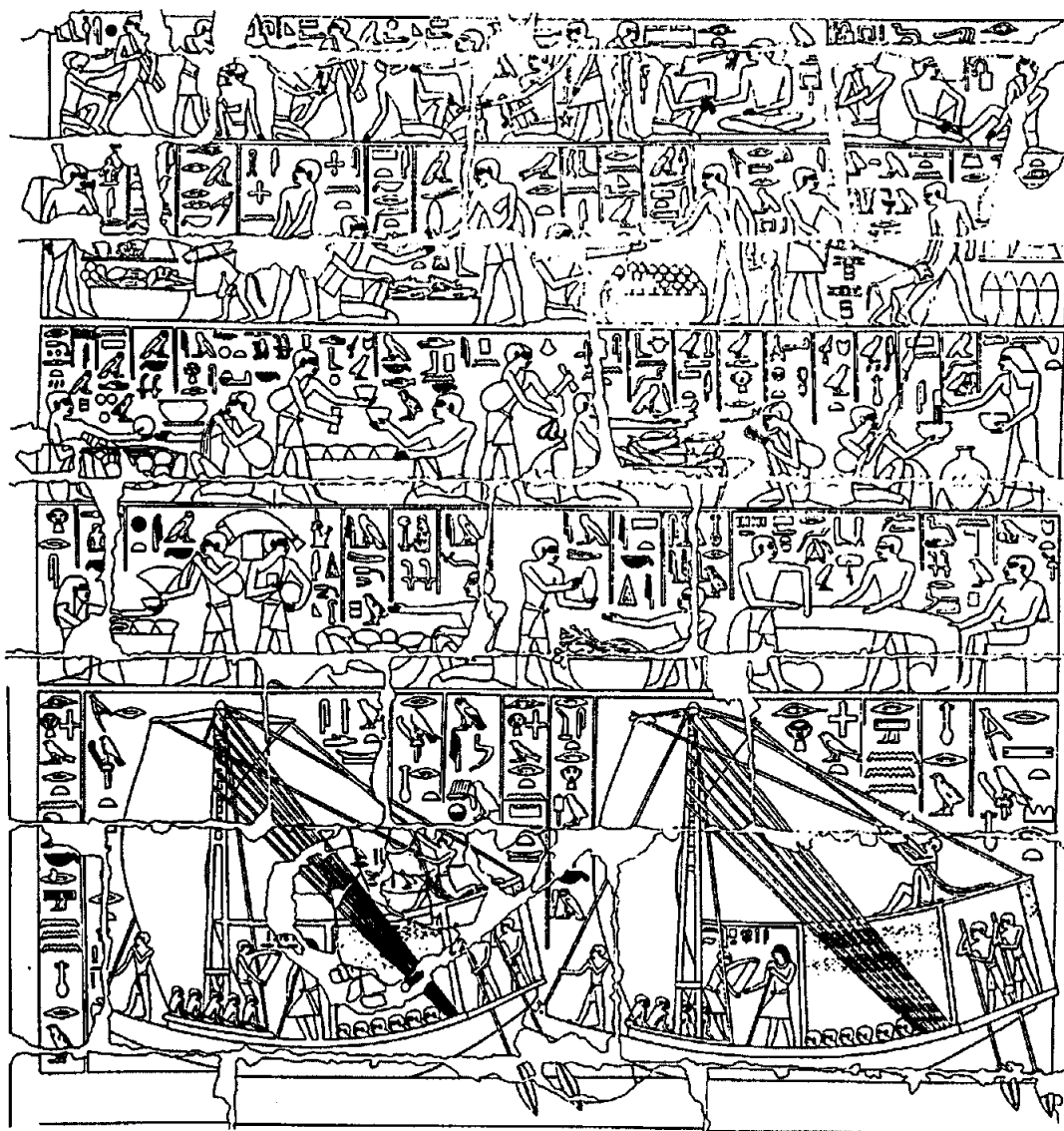


Fig. 1. Ahmed M. Moussa und Hartwig Altenmüller, *Das Grab des Nianchnum und Chnumhotep*, AVA/K 21, Verlag Philipp von Zabern, Mainz am Rhein, 1977, Abb. 10.

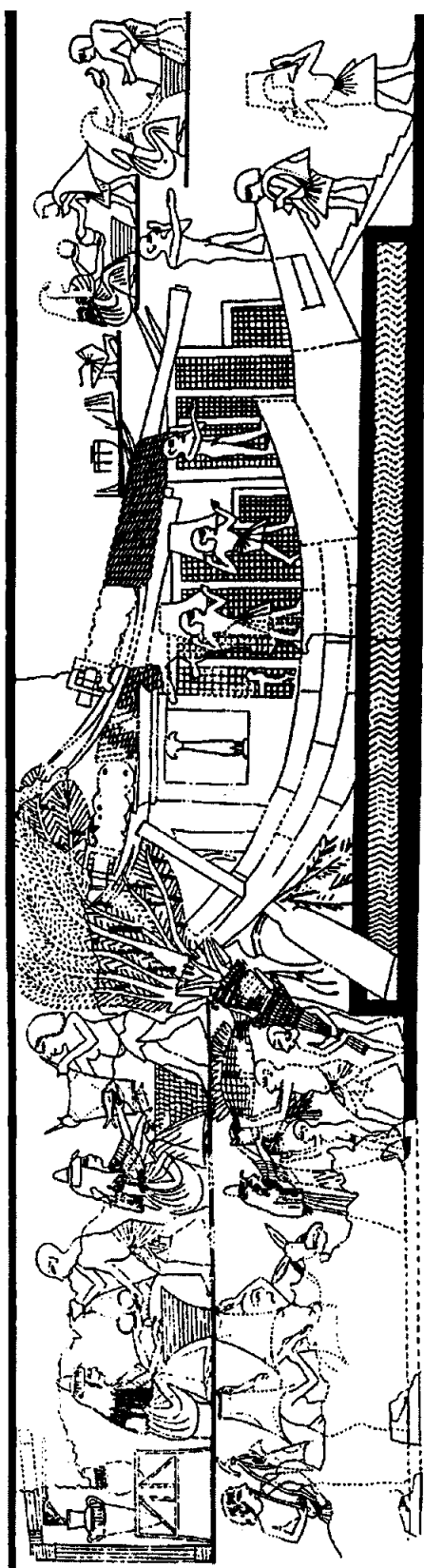


Fig. 2. Norman de Garis Davies, *Two Ramesside Tombs at Thebes*, Robb de Peyster Tytus Memorial Series, Volume V, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1927, pl. XXX.