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NILS ANFINSET, *Metal, Nomads and Culture Contact. The Middle East and North Africa*. London, Equinox, 2010, 241 pp., with illustrations, maps and photographs. ISBN 978-1-84553-253-6. USD 96.00

This is Dr. Nils Anfinset's revision of his PhD Dissertation, *Secondary Products, Pastoral Nomads and the Introduction of the Metal: The 5th and 4th Millennia BC in the Southern of Levant and Northeast Africa*, defended at the University of Bergean in December 2005. The main purpose of this book is to describe the characteristics of the pastoral nomads located in northeastern Africa (Egypt and the northern part of Sudan) and the southern Levant. The main topics are related to the production, consumption, social organization, contact, exchange and, most importantly, to their role in the production and circulation of raw materials, especially copper, during the 5th and 4th millennia BC. The volume consists of eight chapters. In the first one, a brief introduction with the author's hypothesis is presented; in the second, the author's analytical approach is developed while discussing some concepts and theories (e.g. World-Systems theory). The third and fourth chapters focus on the communities' description while the fifth one analyzes modern pastoral nomad societies as a reference to analyze ancient ones. The sixth chapter is devoted to the importance of copper and metallurgy; in the seventh one, he studies the exchange established between nomad pastoralist and agricultural societies; finally, a last chapter with his conclusions is presented.

The first two pages in the *Introduction*, show the period's importance with respect to cultural changes: animal husbandry, agriculture, expanding exchange and interaction over many regions. All these elements entailed the development of the early states in Upper Egypt and the rise of the first city-states in the Levant. In fact, the author considers that transformations and gradual changes produced during the 5th and 4th millennia BC delivered into new political, social and economic life styles.

In the next chapter, *Perspectives and Approaches*, Anfinset raises the concepts and theoretical tools that can be used to tackle the subject to study, with a few personal considerations made about its importance and the possibilities of use from the period and the regions analyzed. Firstly, he determines the categories of nomadic pastoralism, specialized pastoralism and secondary products (milk and wool); secondly, he criticizes and considers the applicability of theoretical models referring to the exchange relationships between different communities, as the World-System, trade-diaspora and distance-parity models; finally he makes reference to different concepts that have been controversial along the years such as big-men, entrepreneurs, specialization, social differentiation and complexity, among others.

The next two chapters, *The 5th and 4th Millennia BC of the Southern Levant and The 5th and 4th Millennia BC of Northeast Africa*, are dedicated to the development of three main themes: the historical background, the environment conditions and the importance of exchange. In the first one, the southern Levant is described according

to the economic, social, religious and political aspects during the Late Neolithic, Calcolithic and the Bronze Age I. In the second one, Anfinset focuses on the agricultural development, the increasing of sedentarism along the Nile, as well as the early pastoralism developed on the western desert. Finally, he analyzes the existing evidence to set out the possible appearance of nomadic pastoralism in Lower Nubia (A-Group).

In the chapter *The Role of Nomadic Pastoralists*, Anfinset describes pastoral nomad communities focusing on socio-political and economic aspects on the basis of ethnographic references. Subsequently, the author explores the possibilities and difficulties in identifying nomads through archeological material. Finally, Anfinset analyzes the archeological evidence recovered from the studied regions and defines the features existing in pastoral nomadism.

The metallurgy and the role of copper in Egypt, Levant and Lower Nubia are the relevant themes of the chapter *The Role of Copper in the Late 5th and 4th Millennia BC*. The author tries to find out if activities such as mining, smelting and casting were carried out by the natives and describes the copper devices (chronology, form and function) and their contexts.

In *Contact, Specialization and Value*, the exchange between pastoral nomad communities and the sedentary population are exposed. The author focuses on the role of metals, especially copper. According to Anfinset, pastoralists played an important role in the development of the early states (Egypt and Mesopotamia) as intermediaries among agricultural societies, being the reason behind the importance given to exchange routes. Also in this section, Anfinset considers the copper exchange and its growing importance as a social differentiator.

Finally, the author summarizes through a comparative perspective the cultural change process that took place in northeast Africa and the southern Levant, taking into account all the topics analyzed in previous chapters: the rise of specialized pastoralism, exchange of raw material, use and development of metallurgy, specialization and the connection between nomad and sedentary communities.

To this reviewer, this book constitutes an interesting proposal for a wider audience, specialists as well as students, due to the plurality of the topics worked: pastoral nomadism, metallurgy and metal exchange. These topics are not frequently considered for earlier societies. In addition, the author provides an enriching regional perspective, mainly emphasizing the connections between Lower Nubia, Egypt, and the southeastern Levant. Furthermore, the analysis of diverse theoretical models, the definition of concepts and the presentation of current debates makes the book easy to read. However, some topics should deserve a deeper analysis, for instance, the treatment of World-Systems theory. The author restricts it to Immanuel Wallerstein seminal work on the subject and takes into account the critical statements of Gil Stein, without

taking into account the large material produced on the last thirty or so years on the subject.⁵

More specifically, the author describes the A-Group as a pastoral nomad community, on the basis of the archaeological evidence collected in Laqiya. Nevertheless, the abundant archaeological material found in the cemeteries and near the banks of Nile would have cast doubt on this description.⁶ Actually, that evidence shows that, on the one hand, hunting, fishing and collecting were important activities in that period; but on the other hand, agricultural activities along the Nile Valley are undeniable because of the presence of most of the settlements near the river and the discovery of macro botanical evidence. Certainly, the description in socio-economical terms of the A-Group is still open to discussing and exceeds the parameters of this review.

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⁵ Wallerstein 1974; Stein 1999.

⁶ Seele 1974; Shinnie 1996; Trigger 1980; Manzo 1999.