

STRATA

Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel
Archaeological Society



Volume 29

2011

and browsing often through the pages of this book and I am sure I shall continue arguing with the author's views expressed therein, thereby hopefully enriching my insights.

Meir Malul
University of Haifa, Israel

Sophie Démare-Lafont and André Lemaire (eds.), *Trois millénaires de formulaires juridiques*. Hautes Études Orientales 48, Moyen et Proche Orient 4. Paris: Librairie Droz, 2010. Pp 480, incl. 16 b/w illustrations. €91.08 . ISBN 978-2-60001-355-0.

This handsome volume is dedicated to the phraseology of legal contracts recorded in various Semitic languages used in Syro-Palestine and some neighbouring regions (Egypt, Yemen), from the second millennium BCE to the beginning of the Middle Ages, with a particular focus on changes and continuity in the standardised formularies. It publishes the proceedings of a symposium held in 2006 at the École pratique des hautes études in Paris. In fifteen chapters (with two exceptions, all in French), established experts discuss the topic on the basis of a wealth of primary sources: from Akkadian, Ugaritic and Aramaic clay tablets to Aramaic and Nabataean papyri, from South Arabian, Nabataean and Palmyrene inscriptions to Syriac parchments, from the Talmud to the Hebrew and Arabic documents of the Cairo Geniza. The book provides an important contribution to the history of law and will be of interest to anyone interested in the cultural and social history of the ancient world. The chapters feature numerous text samples, usually with a detailed commentary, and provide an excellent introduction to the primary sources. It is slightly disappointing that (with the exception of one chapter) the different materials and scripts used to record legal affairs are not illustrated by photographs.

The editors are Sophie Démare-Lafont, a legal historian best known for her work on the law traditions of the cuneiform world, and Andre Lemaire, a prominent specialist in Old Aramaic. They explain in the introduction why the geographical focus of the collection lies on Syro-Palestine rather than on the Middle East more generally (pp. 7–11): the availability of text corpora from that region allows to study legal traditions, their transmission and evolution over a period of three millennia.

The first chapter deals with cuneiform tablets from Mari, on the Euphrates near the Syrian-Iraqi border, in the early 2nd millennium BC. In his analysis of property sale contracts, Dominique Charpin pays special attention to divergences from the formulary attested in Southern Mesopotamian documents which he sees as reflections of local Amorite traditions (pp. 13–42). The next three contributions deal with clay tablets of the 14th–13th centuries BC from Syria. Sophie Démare-Lafont offers a survey of the different genres of legal documents attested in Emar on the Middle Euphrates and a detailed discussion of how debts were secured (pp.

43–84). The other two chapters deal with Ugarit, the Mediterranean harbour city. Wilfred van Soldt deals with legal texts in Akkadian language (pp. 85–124, in English) while Dennis Pardee and Robert Hawley discuss those in Ugaritic (pp. 125–140).

The following five chapters deal with documents of the Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Persian and Seleucid empires, from the 8th to the 3rd century BC. Pierre Villard surveys the formularies of the Neo-Assyrian legal texts in cuneiform script from the 8th and 7th centuries BCE (pp. 141–161, with 41 text samples in an appendix on pp. 162–185). André Lemaire's contribution is a companion piece, as it deals with legal texts from the same period and from the same sites but inscribed on clay tablets in Aramaic alphabet script (pp. 187–224). The texts in both scripts use the same legal phrases although the documentation in Aramaic is far more restricted and mostly concerns debts. Lemaire's chapter contains an overview over recent publications of new material from Syria to which E. Lipinski's monograph *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics, Volume III: Ma'lana* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 200, Leuven 2010), can now be added.

Lemaire also publishes five new tablets from illicit excavations (pp. 191–204, with photographs on pp. 220–224), two of which can be identified with certainty as originating from Dur-Katlimmu (modern Tell Sheikh Hamad on the Habur) because of the typical personal names with the divine element Salmanu (*šlmn*). As one of the excavation epigraphers, I find it regrettable that there is yet more evidence for lootings in this important city. The discussion of Aramaic legal texts continues in H el ene Nutkowitz's chapter on the papyri from the island of Elephantine at the First Cataract of the Nile during the Persian rule over Egypt. She concentrates on marriage contracts and testaments, offering editions and analyses of two examples from 449 and 404 BCE (pp. 225–260). We return to the cuneiform world with Francis Joann es' survey of the legal texts in Neo-Babylonian cuneiform script from the 7th to the 3rd centuries BCE, covering the periods of Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Persian and Seleucid rule over Southern Mesopotamia (pp. 261–278); despite the political changes, the legal traditions prevail and the contrast with the very different formularies used in Northern Mesopotamia and also Syria (cf. Villard on p. 141) is striking. With the next chapter, we return to Aramaic documents from the Persian period. Jan Du sek's contribution deals with the papyri from a cave in Wadi Daliyeh, also known as the 'Samaria Papyri', dating to the years 375–332 BCE and probably hidden from Alexander's advancing army. Du sek offers a detailed discussion of the slave sale contracts (pp. 279–316).

The next three chapters bring the value of very different primary sources to our attention, namely monumental inscriptions which publicise legal acts. Fran ois Bron surveys the relatively meagre evidence from South Arabian inscriptions and draws attention to sources from the 2nd or 3rd century CE that have only recently come to light in clandestine excavations in Yemen: archival texts inscribed in a cursive script on wooden sticks (pp. 317–319). Mahdi Abdelaziz briefly discusses the legal information contained in Nabataean inscriptions before turning to his main topic, the Nabataean papyri from the Cave of Letters at Na hal Hever on the

Dead Sea (known as the Babatha Archive after its protagonist, a Jewish woman). The texts date to the years 93–132 CE and were apparently hidden during the Bar Kochba revolt (pp. 321–336). For her overview of the legal formulary of the 3rd century CE, Eleanora Cussini combines evidence from Syriac contracts on parchment and subscriptions added to Greek contacts with citations of sale contracts in Palmyrene monumental funerary inscriptions (pp. 337–355).

In the final three contributions, we turn to rabbinical law and the Medieval Jewish world. Liliane Vana analyses the *get* (bill of divorce) as a legal and social institution and as a document type (pp. 357–389). The last two chapters deal with the rich legal documentation from the geniza of the Ben Ezra synagogue at Medieval Cairo (al-Fuṣṭāṭ).

Lastly, Judith Olszowy-Schlanger offers a survey of the different genres of legal documents attested in Hebrew (pp. 391–410) while Geoffrey Khan provides editions of two Arabic house sale contracts from 1126 CE and 796 CE (pp. 411–423).

In the conclusions, the editors give a helpful overview over the formularies discussed in the preceding chapters, bringing together the components of the legal documents in a comparative analysis (pp. 425–433). The volume concludes with a list of bibliographical abbreviations (pp. 435–441), indices of primary sources (pp. 443–453) and place names (pp. 453–456), a useful selection of legal terms (pp. 456–468) and a thematic index (pp. 469–470). All contributors are to be congratulated on this informative and well produced book.

Karen Radner
University College, London

Hershel Shanks, *Freeing the Dead Sea Scrolls, and other Adventures of an Archaeology Outsider*. Continuum International, 2010. Pp. 251. \$27.95. ISBN: 978-1-4411-5217-6.

Hershel Shanks is Mr. Biblical Archaeology – both a compliment and a criticism. He founded Biblical Archaeology Review forty-five years ago and has seen it grow to a circulation of 130,000: a phenomenal achievement. On the other hand, today, connecting archaeology with the Bible is unacceptable to the purist. But the Bible will not go away, and journals that have dropped the biblical connection are not reaching the public.

Whilst acknowledging the new trend, Shanks has retained the biblical association, and the great amateur public is with him, they love his journal. Not so some of the professionals, who resent the grip he holds on the subject. By publishing their works in popular form, Shanks performs them a service but he also publishes his own views on professional matters – and he can do that without peer review. His background is that of a successful lawyer and he sees archaeology through that lens. He saw the rights of publishing the Dead Sea Scrolls before the scholars had