

In Y's narrative, the thread running through all these developments is the increasing control of the wife over her property (clearly summed up in 262-68). Although I am not wholly persuaded of all the claimed motivations (such as fear of the depreciation of jewellery), the general picture he has created appears extremely convincing and far better than the rather static description offered by Häge. Y explains all the phenomena in his material as internal developments in Egypt, and he may be right. Although Palestinian documents are occasionally mentioned, he does not really discuss possible links with social practices prevailing in the eastern Mediterranean at large. In this way Y achieves a very compelling and focused line of reasoning. Readers interested in social and family history might have appreciated some hints of how his findings fit into a larger picture. He also expressly omits the history of the *hedna*, gifts from the groom's side to the bride's side (6). They appear in papyri at the beginning of the fourth century and seem to have increased in value both in Egypt and elsewhere in the later Roman empire. Their emergence must be placed in the third century, but Y may be forgiven for not discussing a phenomenon for which there is no evidence, however closely it is connected with the main topic of his book.

The book's remaining chapters, dealing with other clauses in marital documents, seem to me competent though less innovative. They also argue for a general improvement in women's rights. Y can perhaps be criticized for always looking for logical rules and rational motives behind different practices, when the observed phenomena may sometimes have been due simply to inertia or misunderstandings, and may have been just as ambiguous for contemporaries as they are for us. One such irrelevant relic may be the *praxis* clause, which Y suggests had no bearing on the right of execution (236-37), and even *kyrieia* (240-57). Perhaps the same could be said of the rules which governed return of the dowry after divorce: it is difficult to see what it really mattered for the spouses that the *pherne* had to be returned in sixty days (208-14), if in the first century CE it had mainly symbolic value (150-52). Finally, I find it less probable that *hekousa* in *P. Gen.* I 21 could refer to the wife agreeing with her father, who wished to dissolve her marriage (201-3).

The text is followed by no fewer than a hundred pages of informative charts and tables, an edition of six previously unpublished marriage documents, and appropriate indexes. Y's virtues are clarity, reliability, systematic approach, attention to details, and ample documentation, not entertainment or broad visions. His book is not written for beginners but for those who have a previous interest in the topic, and for them it is easy to read. It has changed my views on marital arrangements in Roman Egypt. Some difficult gaps in our knowledge he leaves undiscussed, which is a pity but perhaps unavoidable. His book will be necessary reading for anyone publishing new marriage papyri and for all those who wish to study the dowry and other marital assets in the ancient Mediterranean.

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L.H. Schiffman (ed.), *Semitic Papyrology in Context: A Climate of Creativity. Papers from a New York University Conference Marking the Retirement of Baruch A. Levine*. Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 14. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003. xiv + 288 pp. ISBN 90 04 12885 9.

In 2003, four years after Professor Levine had already received a Festschrift (R. Chazan, W.W. Hallo and L.H. Schiffman [eds.], *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine*, Winona Lake, IN, 1999), the proceedings of a *siyyûm* held in his honour were published. This well-produced volume consists of twelve learned papers, followed by Levine's epilogue, in which he comments not only on his colleagues' contributions, but also (in a personal and thoughtful manner) on the 'power of language'. A detailed and helpful index of ancient sources cited closes the volume. The choice of the conference topic was related to

Levine's work of the time on the archive of papyri dating to the period preceding and covering the so-called Bar-Kokhba revolt, but the individual contributions cover much wider ground.

In the first paper, 'Ancient Egyptian scripts — literary, sacred, and profane', O. Goelet, Jr. discusses the 'intimate *working* relationship between papyrus and monumental writing' (1) and argues from an evaluation of the 'Book of the Dead' how religious texts could come to function as surrogate tombs to those who could not meet the expense of a proper 'monumental' burial place. The focus of D.M. Gropp, 'The Samaria papyri and the Babylonio-Aramean symbiosis', is on the origins of the formulaic patterns applied in the Persian period to the sales of slaves (which is what the majority of these papyri found just north of Jericho, from 4th-century Samaria, deal with). Gropp's meticulous analysis of the material leads to the conclusion that the Samaritan documents go back to Mesopotamian legal traditions which are different from the sources of the better-known papyri from Elephantine, and that as such they may help to compensate for the dominant role of the latter with regard to our understanding of the history of Jewish law. The paper by B. Porten, 'Elephantine and the Bible', is on the papyri found at this Nile island, which once rocked the academic world with the revelation that the Jewish temple there was known by a label virtually identical to the Temple at Jerusalem. The papyri are compared, from epistolographical, legal and religious points of view, with biblical evidence, to mutual benefit. E. Tov's 'The corpus of the Qumran papyri', with a useful appendix (100-03), shows what conclusions can be drawn from cataloguing the material, especially with regard to the surprising fact that at Qumran, the majority of the papyri are literary rather than documentary. H.M. Cotton, 'The Roman census in the papyri from the Judaean desert and the Egyptian *κατ' οἰκίαν ἀπογραφή*', starts with what is doubtless the most famous of all references to countings of population in Roman history, the beginning of the second chapter in Luke. Cotton studies the information gained from the archive found on the shore of the Dead Sea within the framework of what historians can learn about the imperial census from inscriptions, Egyptian papyri and the Roman lawyers, and she urges the reader to consider not only that the census in the provinces was subject to variation, but also that 'Judaea was a normal province and Jewish society part and parcel of the society of the Roman Near East' (122). Moving away from papyri, W. Eck shows in 'The language of power: Latin in the inscriptions of Iudaea/Syria Palaestina' how in the Orient Greek, as 'the official language of communication between Rome and its subjects' (123), was replaced by Latin only when the representatives of Roman power 'made their claims for being recognized as such' (125). The paper by R. Katzoff, 'Oral establishment of dowry in Jewish and Roman law: *דברים הנקנים באמירה* and *dotis dictio*' is not on papyri either, though differently: 'it has to do with what is *not* written on papyrus' (145). He argues that the legal principle that mere oral declarations are binding in the arrangements regarding marriage settlements (as known from the Talmud) was not the exception to the rule that Jewish law remained unaffected by Roman law, but rather an independent development, 'natural in terms of the social circumstances under which it arose' (164). The editor's own contribution, 'Witnesses and signatures in the Hebrew and Aramaic documents from the Bar Kokhba caves', points out the apparent inconsistency in signing practice against the background of the prescriptions given in Rabbinic law. Schiffman interprets it as a 'reflection of the customary legal practices, derived from both ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman sources, as they were practiced in Palestine by Rabbinic courts' (186). In the least documented of the papers, 'The Roman Near East: the view from below', F.E. Peters contemplates the 'microcosmic perspective' (187) on which Semitic (and other) papyrology can throw some light (wittily referring in passing to the venue's past reputation of assault), as 'the papyrological moment ... is both more ephemeral and more occasional than the epigraphical' (196). The last three papers in the volume deal with later periods. L. Koenen comments on the 6th-century archive of Greek papyri from Byzantine Petra in 'The decipherment and edition of the Petra papyri: preliminary observations'. G. Khan, 'An early Arabic legal papyrus', shows how 'Arabic legal documents that have been preserved from medieval Egypt have roots in pre-Islamic traditions' (237). M.R. Cohen, 'The voice of the Jewish poor

in the Cairo Genizah', deals with the nature of medieval and early modern sources and their contribution to the study of lower-class Jews in Egypt.

All in all, this collection of papers, centred around the multi-cultural traditions of writing on papyri, is a versatile one, which is doubtless to be welcomed by specialists. However, the collection does not, with but a few exceptions, manage to make this difficult material very accessible to the outsider. That is a pity, as the growing number of papyri is obviously of the utmost importance for the historian of the Near East, and scholars and students who are not specialists in papyrology and related sciences should be invited to make use of the documents as much as possible. The honorand himself, in any case, has certainly kept that in mind throughout his own work.

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Tonio Sebastian Richter, *Rechtssemantik und forensische Rhetorik: Untersuchungen zu Wortschatz, Stil und Grammatik der Sprache koptischer Rechtsurkunden*. Kanobos: Forschungen zum griechisch-römischen Ägypten 3. Leipzig: Verlag Helmar Wodtke und Katharina Stegbauer, 2002. ix + 447 pp. ISBN 3 934374 06 9.

Coptic legal documents, most of which date from the sixth through twelfth centuries CE, are important sources for the legal, economic and social history of the Christian population in Byzantine and early Islamic Egypt, but are relatively under-utilized by historians. Among the first Coptic documentary texts to receive scholarly attention, these documents record the details of transactions and interactions of church, state and private individuals, along with a wealth of circumstantial information. Such a rich set of sources also poses unique difficulties for the researcher, especially in the complex, formulaic yet often heavily abbreviated language in which they are written. There have been a number of useful attempts to come to terms with the formulae of Coptic legal documents, but the present volume is the first to deal systematically with the language of these important texts. In doing so, the author (in a revision of his 1999 doctoral thesis) provides an admirably thorough and detailed study of the grammar, style and vocabulary of Coptic legal documents, as well as an examination of the relationships between these texts and earlier documents from Egypt.

It is this last point — the relationships between the grammar, vocabulary and phraseology of Coptic legal documents and those of documents of the Roman period written in the earlier phase of the Egyptian language, Demotic — that may prove to be of the most immediate interest to readers of the present journal. Some scholars have suggested close continuities between the Coptic and Demotic documents, and the author of the present volume does an excellent job of presenting past discussion of this issue (9-57). It would not be surprising to find such continuities between documents in different phases of Egypt's indigenous language, except that a relatively large gap exists between the latest Demotic legal documents and the earliest Coptic ones, indeed between Demotic and Coptic documentary texts as a whole. Moreover, with Greek being the official language of administration and business for much of the time covered by these Demotic and Coptic documents, one might expect considerably more relationship to Greek documents. The question remains: are these actual, demonstrable continuities of significance, or are they merely apparent continuities forced on the documents by the general relationships between Coptic and Demotic? The author of the volume reviewed here goes far beyond past discussion of this matter to present an impressive array of evidence to support his arguments, settling ultimately for a position against the significance of apparent continuities between the Coptic and earlier Demotic legal documents, in the process raising interesting questions about the nature of the relationships of the Coptic and Greek texts. The author's conclusions may not prove to be the last word on this contentious subject, but he has clearly set the stage for future discussion.