

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.

This discussion of continuities comes near the beginning of the book, and informs the text of the remainder of the volume, as the author examines specific features of the language of the Coptic legal documents. A detailed examination of the specifically legal vocabulary of the Coptic documents (58-82), for example, examines the vocabularies of Demotic, Greek and Arabic documents as well, showing relationships where relevant in both the indigenous language and the 'foreign'. It is this legal terminology of the Coptic documents that is often so daunting to the modern reader, and the detailed discussion of parallels in other languages that might be more familiar will doubtless prove most helpful for the reading of the Coptic texts.

Specific points of grammar of the Coptic legal texts are examined in the context of a wider discussion of their syntax (83-105), while the functional style of these documents is discussed separately (106-35), with an excursus comparing the forms of address for religious officials addressed in the Coptic documents with the forms of address to gods found in certain Demotic legal documents (136-42). With this latter point, again, the author builds on the work of earlier scholars. The intertextual relations of Coptic legal documents with other Coptic texts are examined in a short but fascinating chapter that brings discussion of this Coptic material into the wider context of theoretical understandings of intertextuality and transtextuality (142-54). The author brings the body of his work to a close with a study of the gradual decline and disappearance of Coptic legal documents under Muslim rule (155-65). This is an especially interesting section, as the later (late 9th-13th century CE) Coptic legal documents come from a period when Coptic was being replaced with Arabic as a language of daily life, and these later Coptic documents show many relationships to later Arabic legal documents involving the Christian population of Egypt. Of all the Coptic legal documents, these later texts are perhaps the least studied and this section is an important guide to what is available.

The remainder of this book is an extraordinarily useful glossary of the Coptic vocabulary of the legal documents (166-374). It is this vocabulary that often makes translation of the documents so difficult — simple words often carry specialized meanings not easy to guess from the standard lexica. (Greek vocabulary in Coptic documentary texts, including the legal documents, has recently been covered by H. Förster's admirable *Wörterbuch der griechischen Wörter in den koptischen dokumentarischen Texten*.) Entries are listed by Coptic root; words are defined and discussed and examples of the word used in context are provided. Even the simplest words (notably the prepositions) are given full entries, while common phrases and idiomatic expressions are also covered. Not to slight the earlier sections of the book, but this glossary is easily the most durably useful part of the book: the earlier sections will be read with profit and returned to on individual points, but the glossary will be an essential reference, used with great frequency. The glossary concludes with indices of the German translations (especially practical) and Egyptian, Greek and Arabic words cited in the glossary (375-90), and the book itself concludes with an index of the first sections of the book (391-407) and a comprehensive bibliography (409-47).

The present book appears as the third volume of the relatively new series 'Kanobos: Forschungen zum griechisch-römischen Ägypten', published in Leipzig, and it has all the best features of the other volumes in the series: substantive contributions to scholarship presented in a handsome and user-friendly format. The present book is a typographically an extremely complex work, especially in the long glossary, yet one finds no errors or font issues. (The Coptic font used, incidentally, is an especially elegant one.) It is certainly a credit to series editors as well as author, and the book is a pleasure to read and use.

This attractively produced book is one of the most important studies in Coptic papyrology to appear in recent years. It is an essential book for Coptic papyrologists, while anyone interested in the language and law of Egypt in the Byzantine and early Islamic periods will also find much of interest in this informative volume.