This volume contains a very interesting analysis of 54 tablets from the ancient city of Nuzi (about ten miles south-west of Kirkuk in Iraq) classified by the local scribes by the superscription: “A document of tidennūtu”.

In the Chapter one of his work the author gives the general information concerning the Nuzi tablets found in the years 1900–1931 in the area of Kirkuk. These tablets, written in an Accadian patois influenced by the native language of the Hurrian scribes and dated approximatively to the second half of the fifteenth century B.C., are of great interest to the students of the ancient Near East because they have made possible a reconstruction of the customs and practices of Hurrians of Nuzi during the middle of the second millennium B.C. The author characterizes also the tidennūtu transaction which is one of the most interesting legal institutions in Nuzi and gives a concise summary of the history of its interpretation by the modern scholars. From this summary results that the nature of tidennūtu transaction is still not clearly defined. Taking into consideration that since the appearance of the last study on this subject the number of published tidennūtu tablets has almost doubled (there are now over two hundred) the author undertakes an analysis of the entire material in which he discerns two classes of texts. The first he designates as real estate tidennūtu in which one of the exchanged values is land or building, the second— as the personal tidennūtu in which one of exchanged values is a person or the persons. The scope of the study is limited to the class of personal tidennūtu (52 tablets) and the author’s purpose is fourfold: to give a detailed analysis of the personal tidennūtu contracts, to determine the nature of the transaction, to bring the transaction in the relationship with similar Mesopotamian institutions and to consider the etymology and meaning of the term of tidennūtu.

The author devotes the Chapter two of his work to the first of these purposes and comes to the following conclusions (pp. 37–47). The personal tidennūtu transactions were not subject to any specific regulations. The tidennūtu institution is identical to antichresis. Creditor provides debtor with capital and the tidennu given by the debtor provides the creditor with antichretic service corresponding to the interest on the capital. This service is not applicable to the amortization of the loan. The tidennu also secures the loan. The 47 per cent of the tidennūtu contracts contain an indefinite duration clause and the creditor seems to be more interested in continuing the services of tidennu than in securing the return of the loan. As long as the borrowed capital remains unpaid, the tidennu loses his freedom of movement and with his children and grandchildren is bound by an obligation of service. In this way the Nuzi landlords assured themselves of a long term agricultural and domestic labor force which was much better as the slaves because the creditor was always protected in the tidennūtu contract against the flight, disappearance or death of the
It is possible that after finishing the seasonal agricultural works the tidennu could practice his trade or even work on his field and during such periods the creditor was not obliged to support him. The personal self-tidennu document has a certain similarity with the ḫāpiru document from Nuzi. They both are the contracts in which a free person voluntarily enters into a state of servitude without selling himself to the patron. But the duration of the service of tidennu (who is an impoverished Nuzi citizen) depends on the return of the loan while the ḫāpiru is an “outsider” who obligates himself for the lifetime of the patron.

In the Chapter three Eichler discusses the possible Mesopotamian analogues of the tidennu institution: 1) the mazzazānātu recorded in the texts from the Old Babylonian period and attested in the area from Alalakh to Suza; 2) the Assyrian sāparu and beʾilātu. The author proves that both the personal mazzazānātu and tidennu transactions are not only a secured loan but also a type of indentured servitude. In Assyria the institution of personal antichresis existed more commonly outside the sphere of pledge law, where it was an accessory obligation of the debtor.

In the Chapter four the author endeavours to determine a possible etymology for the term of tidennu and considers the connection of tidennu with dinānu (“a substitute”) as “the most attractive suggestion for a possible Accadian etymology”.

The Appendix 1 contains English translations of the 54 tidennu texts, the Appendix 2—the prosopographic data; the Table 1—an index of tidennu texts; the Table 2—the distribution of clauses in the personal tidennu contracts. The book ends with a Bibliography, a General Index and an Index of Translated Texts.

Mr. Eichler’s work is a valuable contribution to the knowledge of the social and economic history of ancient Mesopotamia as well as the history of cuneiform law.

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Schafik A11 a m, Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit (Urkunden zum Rechtsleben im alten Ägypten, herausgeg. v. S. A11 a m, Band 1). Im Selbstverlag des Herausgebers. Tübingen 1973, 340 S.

Schafik A11 a m, Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri. Transkriptionen aus dem Nachlass von J. Č e r n ý (Urkunden zum Rechtsleben im alten Ägypten, herausgeg. v. S. A11 a m, Band 1: Tafelteil). Im Selbstverlag des Herausgebers. Tübingen 1973, 133 S.

Schafik A11 a m, Das Verfahrensrecht in der altägyptischen Arbeitsiedlung

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