

BOOK REVIEW

Paul Holder (ed.), *Roman Military Diplomas VI* [= *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 147], London 2024, University of London Press, xlix + 303 pp., ISBN 978-1-915-24965-4. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14296/xhbw1804>.

At its height, the Roman Empire controlled territories stretching from the forests of Germania in the north, and as far south as present-day Sudan. Its domain extended from the Euphrates Valley in the east to the Caledonian Highlands in the west. This vast territory was conquered and maintained by the powerful and efficient Roman army, whose reputation for organisation has become an axiom.

This complex and sophisticated military machine left behind numerous documents that have survived the test of time. Among the most significant sources for understanding the size, deployment, and composition of the army are the military diplomas issued to veterans upon their discharge after long service. For many, these documents not only provided official recognition of their families but, in the case of auxiliaries, also conferred Roman citizenship. Typically inscribed on metal plaques, the diplomas often survived in relatively good condition and remain readable today. Most of the diplomas found were issued to the Auxilia, naval units or the Praetorian Guard.

The current volume of *Roman Military Diplomas* (RMD) attempts, like its predecessors, to gradually incorporate more of the individually published diplomas into a single corpus that will assist scholars, create a common language by providing one accepted name for each diploma, and increase access to the material by concentrating it under one roof. The new volume includes 179 diplomas which were mostly published between 2001 and 2008. This further amplifies the backlog within the RMD volumes as, since then, more than 500 other diplomas have been published, while many others have been found and are yet unpublished, which raises the question of how to best go forward, and how to improve the field and make it more efficient.

The current volume does not include an introduction or analysis of the documents. Instead, it opens with a chronology of all the diplomas published in the *RMD* series, providing updated tables and a notes section discussing their chronology and revisions to the dating proposed for previously published diplomas since their inclusion in the corpus. The volume then proceeds directly to the new diplomas. Each entry is typically given a title based on the emperor named in the diploma and his title in it. This is followed by a date, and a short paragraph noting the original place of publication, findspot, and size. Next follows a transcript of the abbreviated diploma's contents, the full text, and finally a short set of notes, usually addressing issues of dating, parallels, the units mentioned, and the personal names recorded.

Overall, this main section represents an impressive piece of scholarship and will undoubtedly prove useful to many. However, there are a few shortcomings that limit its accessibility and utility. First, I believe translations of the diplomas should have been included. Since many diplomas are copies of the same, at the very least, a translation of the fullest reconstruction, based on all available examples, ought to have been provided. In addition, I would suggest that each document be given a standardised name, including place and date, or at a minimum, a rubric after the title, noting the province, similar to the existing date reference. Personal names should also have been printed in bold to make the texts easier to navigate. In this respect, Giulio Iovine's recent publication *Latin Military Documents from Dura Europos* (Cambridge 2023) offers an excellent model to follow.

Furthermore, and again in line with Iovine's approach, introductory chapters should have been included. These could provide essential background on the format, language, usage, and history of the diplomas, as well as one or two chapters analysing the new material in the current *RMD* volume and the contribution and additional knowledge gained by the newly added diplomas compared to earlier volumes. Such additions would be particularly valuable for students and newcomers to the field, while also helping established scholars who struggle to keep up with the growing flood of diploma publications each year. This seems especially important given the relatively infrequent publication of new *RMD* volumes.

The editions in *RMD* VI are followed by a series of appendices, which include lists of sites in the capital before the year 90, the inner and outer faces of the *tabellae*, the witness lists, and a concordance of the diplomas in *AE* compared with those in *CIL* and *RMD*. The volume concludes with extensive indices of personal names, unit names, and related categories for all *RMD* volumes, not only the present one. These two sections are perhaps the most useful parts of the volume, providing material of great value and representing an immense contribution to the field.

As dozens of new diplomas are published each year, the current review provides a unique opportunity to consider how best to move forward, how to bring

order to the chaos, and how to improve the collection, analysis, and interpretation of this material. Any proposal, of course, remains theoretical and would require significant effort, along with broad agreement across the field, a consensus that, unfortunately, is often lacking. In my opinion, the best solution would be to transform *RMD* into an annually published venue, functioning not unlike a scholarly journal. All new diplomas would be published there according to a standardised format, rather than scattered across a multitude of journals such as *ZPE* or *SCI*. This would ensure that the material is gathered in one place, accompanied by full scholarly debate rather than only the brief notes that currently appear in *RMD* entries.

Moreover, each diploma would receive an official designation, an *RMD* number, from the moment of publication, rather than decades later. This would enable scholars to use a common language and immediately know which document is under discussion in future research. As with the current *RMD*, I propose that English serve as the standard language of publication. However, unlike *RMD* and most publications, it should include a translation for each new diploma. Finally, every few volumes, the series should include synthetic chapters analysing all diplomas published to date, highlighting what the examples added since the last analysis reveal, and how they refine or reshape our broader understanding.

All in all, the new *RMD* volume is a welcome addition and a highly significant publication. However, there is still room for improvement. In any future *RMD* volumes, introductory chapters, translations of the diplomas, and clearer, standardised names for the documents are among the key improvements that should be implemented. Furthermore, as suggested, I believe *RMD* should become an annual publication, serving as the primary venue for all new diploma publications. This would prevent the current scattering of material across multiple journals and edited volumes in various languages, which contributes to the chaotic situation that we have, drowning in an ocean of newly published, scattered and disorganised material, where only few, if any, even remotely understand what actually exists.

[Haggai Olshanetsky]

THE JOURNAL OF JURISTIC PAPYROLOGY

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Abstract: The article presents a new edition and translation of *P. Mert. II 81*, offering textual corrections based on available high-resolution images. The palimpsest document is a letter from Epoeis to Demetrios (whom she calls ‘son’, most likely in an affectionate, non-literal sense) discussing a dispute involving a priest. Epoeis relates she has been engaging in persistent oracular consultations seeking divine guidance for Demetrios, which demonstrates how oracles were used in everyday decision-making in Roman Egypt. The letter provides insights into kinship terminology, social relationships, and ritual practices. The newly restored text clarifies episodes of family negotiation, possibly personal debt, and the handling of sensitive affairs through temple oracles.

Keywords: oracular inquiry, Roman Egypt, private letters, kinship terminology, documentary papyri, palimpsest, family relationships.

Lajos BERKES & Anton KISTOL

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of Jesus' apocryphal letter to Abgar and the other is a tax receipt from Djeme, dated to 717 AD.

Keywords: Dnipro Museum, Coptic ostraca, Egypt, apocrypha, tax receipt.

Jelle BRUNING

Seven Arabic slave sale contracts on papyrus 29

Abstract: Annotated editions and translations of seven Arabic slave sale contracts on papyrus dating from the late ninth and early tenth centuries CE. Six of these documents belong to the Arabic Papyrus, Parchment and Paper Collection of the University of Utah's J. Willard Marriott Library; one document is kept in the Egyptian National Library (its *editio princeps* has been published as *P. Cair. Arab.* II 124).

Keywords: slavery, slave trade, sale contracts, Egypt, Arabic papyri.

Katarzyna DE LELLIS-DANYS, Grzegorz OCHALEA,

✉ Aleksandra PAWLIKOWSKA-GWIAZDA

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Abstract: First editions and re-editions of six Coptic and Copto-Greek ostraca from the collections of the Warsaw National Museum and the University of Warsaw. Five objects come from the Polish-French excavations at Edfu (Egypt) in 1930s, one from the Polish works at Faras (Nubia), and one is most likely of Middle-Egyptian provenance. The pieces from Edfu represent the well-known types of texts on potsherds known from other publications of the material from this site. They include receipts and accounts connected with deliveries of wine and crops. The text from Middle Egypt is an addition to the collection some 170 ostraca of the so-called *etmoulon* type. The ostrakon from Faras is the only literary text in the lot, preserving the beginning of Psalm 1. The edited ostraca are also studied from the perspective of their materiality, presenting the characteristics of vessel forms and fabrics used for their production.

Keywords: Coptic and Copto-Greek ostraca, Edfu, Faras, Middle Egypt, *etmoulon* ostraca, wine, literary ostraca, Psalms, materiality.

Giulio IOVINE

Fragmentary legal document(s?) from the archive of Ammon scholasticus (P. Duke inv. 190-193 and 195) 111

Abstract: Edition, translation and commentary to some scattered fragments from the Duke University papyri collection (P. Duke inv. 190-193 and 195), which are part of the so-called archive of Ammon *scholasticus* (1st half of 4th

cent. CE) and may cover a single occurrence, a petition or records of court proceedings, referring an individual pretending to be a priest to escape his liturgies.

Keywords: archive of Ammon, late antique Egypt, Egyptian priesthood, petition, court proceedings.

Adam ŁUKASZEWICZ

An inscription from Hermopolis 145

Abstract: Hermopolis was an important cultic and administrative centre of Graeco-Roman Egypt. During three seasons (1987–1990) a Polish-Egyptian archaeological expedition directed by Marek Barański carried out excavations in the city's Great Basilica. The inscription under discussion is one of the results of these excavations.

Keywords: Hermopolis, archaeological works, Greek inscription, Hermes.

Gabriella MESSERI

Conto di vino (SB XII 10892 verso) 155

Abstract: First edition of a wine account extending over six columns. Columns i–iv (iv is lost) record the sale of vintage wine and columns v–vi payments to the parties involved (intermediaries, administrators, camel drivers, and donkey drivers) made with the profits from the sale of wine. The vineyards are located in the area of Karanis. The account was most likely written in 194 CE using the back of the land administration register SB XII 10892 edited by Anna Świderek in *JJP* 16/17 (1971) and republished by the author *JJP* LIV (2024).

Keywords: wine account, wine production, wine prices, land transport, Karanis (Arsinoites).

Radosław MIŚKIEWICZ

Diocles' Law (Dem. 24.42) and the problem of the validity of laws in Athens in the late fifth century BCE 179

Abstract: The article examines the significance of Diocles' Law (Dem. 24.42) for the growing problem of (in)validity of laws in the Athenian legal order in the late fifth century BCE. Diocles' Law should be understood as part of the broader set of vital principles that constituted an 'evolving law reform' aimed at consolidating laws and strengthening the rule of law and democracy after deep constitutional crises. This study reconstructs the factual and legal background to which specific clauses of Diocles' Law refer (sections 2.1–2.4; ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ, κυρίου εἶναι, the archonship of Eucleides, ἀναγεγραμμένοι).

More broadly, it outlines the challenges the Athenians faced at that time, and the measures they took to address them, arising not only from the two oligarchic coups d'état, but also from mounting problems in their legal, constitutional, and judicial order. The article also argues that an analysis of Greek legal language – and its manoeuvrings as seen in Andocides' *On the Mysteries* – confirms that issues of the validity (κυρίως εἶναι) of laws must be distinguished from those concerning their application (χρησθαι). Even though the latter also played a role at the time, especially due to the *caesura* marked by the archonship of Eucleides (403/2), the central argument is that Diocles' Law was enacted to impose order specifically on the validity of laws at a very particular historical moment. This law was relevant retrospectively to 'the scrutiny of the laws', with the vital involvement of ἀναγραφεῖς τῶν νόμων from the beginning of their work in 410, and, more broadly, to future law-making. In addition (section 3), the article eventually identifies the principle of 'legal certainty', which underpinned the introduction of Diocles' Law, and formed a key part of Athenian legal culture at the end of the fifth century BCE.

Keywords: Diocles' Law; validity of law; application of law; classical Athens, law reform, law-making, the scrutiny of the laws, legal certainty, law consolidation.

Anna PLISECKA

The stick and the carrot: Notes on P. Col. VI 123, ll. 6–8 237

Abstract: The article formulates a hypothesis that the penalties referred to in lines 6–8 of *P. Col. VI 123* (Alexandria, 200 CE) are related to two edicts copied in *P. Oxy. XLVII 3364* (Oxyrhynchus, 209 CE), ll. 1–9, in which Septimius Severus and Caracalla ordered the population to return to their homeland. In these edicts, penalties were imposed both on the fugitives and on their protectors, but additionally, as an incentive to follow the imperial order, a period of amnesty was announced. Similar amnesty is mentioned also in the Columbia papyrus.

Keywords: ἀπόκριμα, ἰδία, imperial edict, amnesty, petition.

Jakub URBANIK

The purpose of P. Dionysia (P. Oxy. II 237) and its mysterious beginning 251

Abstract: This article presents a new hypothesis regarding the function the so-called *Petition of Dionysia* (*P. Oxy. II 237* = *P. Dionysia*). The study re-examines the papyrus' structure and its procedural context, focusing on its newly deciphered mysterious beginning (col. i) by Constantinos Balamoshev. The findings suggest that *P. Dionysia* be not the original petition but rather a copy, possibly official, produced during its administrative processing. I conjecture that the document represents a late procedural stage, possibly including the governor's final decision and subsequent requests for execution.

Keywords: Dionysia, juristic papyrology, Roman administration of justice, court/judicial procedure, Roman Egypt, local law, Reichsrecht, Volksrecht.

Joanna WEGNER

Clerical authority in late antique Egypt: A papyrological perspective 283

Abstract: Papyrological sources from late antique Egypt attest to a variety of non-religious contexts in which clergy below the episcopal level – mainly presbyters and deacons – exercised authority in rural settlements. These contexts include formal and informal representation of village communities, mediation in conflict, and policing of the morals. While these phenomena have already drawn the attention of scholars, they were often viewed strictly as an outcrop of the religious authority wielded by the clergy. The present contribution is an attempt to nuance this perspective by taking into consideration the diverse socio-economic factors which contributed to the social standing of the clergy. It uses Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, with its subsequent reiterations, as the main theoretical framework and builds on the concepts of capital accumulation and convertibility between social fields in order to arrive at a multifaceted analysis of the clerics' position as fully integrated members of rural societies.

Keywords: late antiquity, Greek and Coptic papyri, clergy, institutional church, authority, field theory, forms of capital.

Marzena WOJTCZAK & Jakub URBANIK

To sell or to have sold? Hypotheke-praxis and dikaia time in P. Budge 311

Abstract: A tiny archive composed of the famous Coptic arbitration protocol *P. Budge* and three associated Greek documents, a settlement of claims, a sale, and a loosely connected marriage document, bring forward a fascinating controversy of the tormented times between the Persian and the Arab conquests of Egypt. Its settlement testifies to the operative force of law, legal awareness of its users, and dispute-resolution strategies in an environment of intrinsic legal plurality. A new text edition, providing an in-depth study of this material, delving into the dispute resolution method, rhetorics, and proper reconstruction of the events, is presently in the works. Before it is published, we would like to present here an aspect of this matter, closely connected to the very origin of the dispute, viz. our hypothesis on the nature of the security provided by the borrower, the widow Thekla, to her creditors, the consorts Philemon and Thekla. This central matter of the *P. Budge* controversy witnesses the profound legal awareness of its parties. Operating within the legal framework provided by Roman law, and without attempts to transgress it, the law-users of seventh-century Edfu managed to bend and form it to serve best their needs, creating a flexible form of security,

fitting the circumstances of Thekla-the-Widow and the creditors couple. It is amazing to see how, even at the dusk of its domination of Egypt, the Roman legal *forma mentis* was so strongly present in this inherently plural society.

Keywords: Edfu, arbitration, late antique Egypt, securities, *hypothèque-praxis*, *dikaia time*, legal practice, *apotage*, *hypothekimaia asphaleia*.

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