

Christel Rüster, Gernot Wilhelm: *Landschenkungsurkunden hethitischer Könige.* (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten, Beiheft 4). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012. 271 S., 75 Tf. 21,5 × 30 cm. ISBN 978-3-447-06796-6. Preis: € 94.

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This volume, authored by Christel Rüster, to whom we owe the fine hand copies of the royal sealings and of many of the fragments, and Gernot Wilhelm, who took over the project after the untimely death of Erich Neu, constitutes the definitive edition of the Hittite royal land grants.¹ Each document is presented in transliteration and translation, with philological commentary where necessary. Photos and hand-copies are provided for most of the pieces, with occasional referral to easily-accessible images published elsewhere.

Hittitologists have traditionally referred to these documents, as do indeed the authors, as “*Landschenkungsurkunden*” (LSU, CTH 221–223), but in fact, the breadth of matters treated in them is broader. For example, No. 1 records the adoption of a new son-in-law by his bride’s father, albeit with the additional conveyance of real property. No. 3 is a legal case involving a disputed inheritance (lasting over four years!) decided by the king, and No. 28 documents the transfer of three singers from the vizier (LÚSUKKAL) to the “Chief of the Deaf Men” (GAL LÚ.MEŠÚ.ḪUB). The common factors are that each matter is decided by or undertaken by the king and that real estate almost always plays some role in the business.

The royal grants are visually distinctive within the Hittite archives, with their pillow shape and raised fields in the center of the obverse to accommodate the impression of a royal stamp seal.² A number of similarly formed decrees each bearing the impression of the seal of a Hittite Great King or of the viceroy of Karkamish have turned up in Syria, but at Boğazköy/Hattusa this type of tablet is restricted to the LSU.

¹ The previous major study, K. K. Riemschneider, *Die hethitischen Landschenkungsurkunden*, MIO 6 (1958) 321–381, was based on much more scanty material, lacking in particular the pieces later recovered from Tempel 8 and the “Westbau” in the Oberstadt of Boğazköy. On the latter deposit, see C. Mora, *The enigma of the ‘Westbau’ depot in Ḫattuša’s Upper City*, in: M. E. Balza et al. (eds.), *Archives, depots and storehouses in the Hittite world: new evidence and new research* (Pavia 2012) 59–76.

² On p. 169 the authors cite S. Herbordt, *Die Prinzen- und Beamten-siegel der hethitischen Großreichszeit auf Tonbulln aus dem Nişantepe-Archiv in Hattusa* (Mainz 2005) 27, to the effect that in the case of at least one of these tablets (No. 32) the convex portion was applied to a previously-formed matrix.

The significance of this corpus for Hittite paleography cannot be exaggerated (see pp. 59 f.), for it is reasonable to assume that each text is an original document inscribed during the reign of the particular monarch who issued it. Therefore the documents can be seriated and the development of the script—in regard to sign usage but most importantly as to sign shape—followed in some detail. The authors carry out this examination clearly, in a discussion illustrated with photographs of individual signs appearing on the tablets and a list of key forms (pp. 64–78).³

However, one problem had to be tackled before this paleographic study could be undertaken: prior to the reign of Alluwamna, the sealings of the Great Kings, although unique to each ruler, refer to the monarch, both in the impression itself and in the introduction to the document, anonymously as *Tabarna*, “Emperor.” Therefore, to order the earliest texts, the authors had to investigate the evolution of the royal stamp seals (pp. 39–48),⁴ a task made easier by consideration of the prosopography of the high officials witnessing each transaction. Wilhelm concludes that the earliest preserved record, the “*İnandık Text*” (No. 1 here) dates not to the opening era of the Hittite kingdom as posited by its editor,⁵ but rather to the time of Telipinu, or perhaps of one of his predecessors, Huzziya I or Ammuna (pp. 50 f.). The latest document (No. 91) was promulgated by Arnuwanda I and his wife Ašmunikkal.

With the exception of this latter piece, the texts are all composed in the Akkadian language, but contain many words and occasionally even short sentences in Hittite, primarily constituting technical agricultural terms and expressions.⁶ A standard format is employed (pp. 35–37): 1) introductory formula (“seal of *Tabarna* [PN]”), 2) description of property and affirmation of transfer of possession, 3) vindication formula (“In the future no one shall contest possession with PN.”), 4) sanction clause (“The

³ Unfortunately this chart is based only upon texts published for the first time in this book, but it is undoubtedly valid for the entire genre.

⁴ See also D. Easton, *Hittite Land Donations and Tabarna seals*, JCS 33 (1981) 3–43.

⁵ K. Balkan, *Eine Schenkungsurkunde aus der althethitischen Zeit gefunden in İnandık* (Ankara 1973).

⁶ An interesting exception is No. 8: 12’-13’, where the sanction clause is expanded with a Hittite-language curse, which unfortunately breaks off after “that one to the earth/underworld ...”

word of the *Tabarna* [PN] is of iron; it is not to be disregarded or broken. The head of whoever alters it shall be cut off!”), and 5) place of issue, witnesses, and scribe.

Given the epigraphic and philological acumen and depth of experience of the authors, there is little for the reviewer to correct here—and only a handful of typographical errors in a most complicated text! Rather, I would like to consider briefly what we can learn of Hittite society from these sources.

Of course, in the total absence from the Hittite archives of private records of sales, loans, inheritance, lawsuits, and so forth, we rely on the LSU for much of our information regarding the organization of the rural economy in Hatti.⁷ From them we see that members of the elite were assigned large tracts of land⁸ in return for their service to the royal court,⁹ and that these “gifts” (NÍG.BA) of the king included households of (presumably bound¹⁰) peasants and artisans who would perform the work on the estate—for a good example see the almost complete No. 22.

A single land holding might consist of two categories of property, that “of the palace” (*ša É.GAL*, No. 5, obv. 10. 15. 18) and that “of the plowmen” (*ša LÚ.MEŠ^ŠAPIN.LÁ*, obv. 6. 16. 19. 25). The significance of this distinction is not immediately clear, since the document in question

⁷ See H. Klengel, *Studien zur hethitischen Wirtschaft*, 2: Feld- und Gartenbau, Aof 33 (2006) 3–21.

⁸ Smaller holdings, presumably of individual cultivators, are recorded in the cadasters (CTH 239), on which see M. Paroussis, *Répartition de la terre et équilibres structureaux. Une tentative d’analyse des listes des champs hittites*, *Hethitica* 6 (1985) 161–184.

⁹ Among the recipients are a wet-nurse (*mušēniqtu*, No. 16), the Chief Musician of the Queen (No. 47), a *uriyannu*-official (No. 87), and a “lady’s maid” (*MUNUS^ŠSUHUR.LÁ*, No. 91).

¹⁰ No. 31 rev. 10’, No. 39 rev. 9’, No. 50 obv. 6’, and No. 79: 5’ mention persons who had fled (*ḫalqim*, *ḫalqū*).

records the transfer of the usufruct of this latifundium from an individual courtier to what is presumably a royal establishment, the “House of Hattusa in Sarissa” (rev. 31).

The gender and social hierarchies in the Hittite world are reflected in the manner in which the lower-class workers are registered in the LSU: the household (É) is designated after the senior male, and its members are then enumerated, most by name. First we find all the non-enslaved men, followed by the boys and the male babes-in-arms. Only then are the free women, the girls, and the female babies listed. The non-productive old men, old women, and blind persons (*IGI.NU.GÁL*) come next, while the (unnamed) male and female slaves complete the account.

I close with a question: why were no bullae bearing sealings corresponding to the witnesses on the LSU found in the accumulations in the Westbau¹¹ or in the older deposit from Gebäude D¹² on the royal citadel from which the majority of these records were recovered? Many of the texts display string-holes from which cords bearing sealed clay pieces once hung. If the LSU were excavated in their original archival context, one would have expected to find loose sealings belonging to their witnesses nearby. Were the documents, none of which date later than the reign of Arnuwanda I, relocated during the thirteenth century, long after the demise of those who had witnessed them? By this time, the cords attaching their sealings would have decayed and it would have been of little importance to gather up the bullae and bring them along.

¹¹ So Mora (as fn. 1) 66.

¹² Published by H. G. Güterbock, *Siegel aus Boğazköy, zweiter Teil: Die Königssiegel von 1939 und die übrigen Hieroglyphensiegel* (Berlin 1942).