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**Deutsch, Robert, ed.**

***Shlomo: Studies in Epigraphy, Iconography, History and Archaeology in Honor of Shlomo Moussaieff***

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This volume is a Festschrift for antiquities collector Shlomo Moussaieff of London (a recent recipient of an honorary doctorate from Bar-Ilan University), and it was edited by antiquities dealer Robert Deutsch of Tel Aviv. The publisher is the Archaeological Center Publications of Tel Aviv, a “publishing house” that has been responsible for publishing, among other things, hundreds of nonprovenanced epigraphs (from private collections) during the past decade.

The debate regarding the appropriateness of the study and publication of nonprovenanced (i.e., pillaged) epigraphs within the academic guild is of fundamental importance.<sup>1</sup> Some have suggested that pillaged components of material culture (e.g., inscriptions) should never be the focus of scientific inquiry and publication (e.g., analysis and publication by an epigrapher). However, some have suggested that epigraphers should be most willing to analyze and publish such materials and that epigraphers should be especially grateful to collectors for this largess (i.e., the “privilege” of seeing and publishing such inscriptions). As an *Ausgangspunkt*, I would argue that (1) although it is apparent that there is (often)

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<sup>1</sup> For more discussion of this issue, see also A. H. Joffe, review of *Messages from the Past: Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Isaiah through the Destruction of the First Temple*, by R. Deutsch; and *Biblical Period Personal Seals in the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection*, by R. Deutsch and A. Lemaire, *JNES* 62 (2003): 119–25. For a thorough treatment of such issues, see O. W. Muscarella, *The Lie Became Great: the Forgery of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures* (Gronigen: Styx, 2000); see also W. G. Sayles, *Classical Deception: Counterfeits, Forgeries and Reproductions of Ancient Coins* (Iola, Wisc.: Krause Publications, 2001).

some information still preserved in ancient nonprovenanced inscriptions, it remains a fact that garnering epigraphs through the pillaging of archaeological sites compromises the epigraphic objects in various ways and eradicates forever much of the data that could have been derived from the inscriptions. (2) Furthermore, it is readily apparent that some of the nonprovenanced inscriptions (often the most sensational ones) are modern forgeries and thus contain no useful ancient data.<sup>2</sup> (3) Even further, it is indubitable that the analysis and publication of nonprovenanced materials encourages collectors and ultimately causes the escalation of the “value” of an object. (4) Therefore, the “Festschrift” reviewed here is indicative of an ethical and scientific morass. Circumspect scholars within the field are justifiably concerned.

The volume consists of the following contributions: (1) Yitzhak Avishur, “Motifs and Phrases Common to the Literature of Ugarit and the Bible”—Within this fine article, Avishur does a comparative analysis (based on texts in Ugaritic, Hebrew, and Akkadian) of motifs and phrases such as “making the face of x shine upon y,” “the care for a drunken parent,” “strong as death.” (2) Pinhas Artzi, Jacob Klein, and David Elgavish, “The Letter of the King of Beirut to the King of Ugarit: A Different Interpretation”—This article focuses on an Akkadian letter from Moussaieff’s collection. The authors of the *editio princeps* (Arnaud and Salvini) had suggested that this letter was a stern “letter of order” from a superior (the king of Beirut) to an inferior (the king of Ugarit). However, Artzi, Klein, and Elgavish argue that it is a “diplomatic letter of accreditation. A hand-copy and tolerable photograph are included in the article. (3) Dan Barag, “A Tower-Like Nefesh at Kh. Kurkush?”—In this lucid article, Barag discusses the “form” of a tomb at a site near the village of Modein and suggests that the tomb was constructed by a wealthy Jewish family of landowners and was in use from the Herodian period until the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Photographs and drawings are included. (4) Robert Deutsch, “A Hoard of Fifty Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Hezekiah in the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection”—Deutsch states that the epigraphs published here appeared recently on the antiquities market and date to the time of Hezekiah. One bulla reads “Hezekiah (son of) Ahaz, king of Judah.” One bulla bears the inscription “Governor of the City.” There are also two identical bullae of women. Deutsch suggests that there are some “previously unrecorded designs, as also well-known ones depicted on datable bullae. . . , enriching the corpus of Hebrew iconography with valuable information” (45). He also states that the bulla reading “ ‘Ala’ wife of Shallum” is “noteworthy” because Moussaieff’s wife’s

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<sup>2</sup> For a lengthy discussion of nonprovenanced epigraphic materials, especially forgeries, see Christopher A. Rollston, “Non-Provenanced Epigraphs I: Pillaged Antiquities, Northwest Semitic Forgeries, and Protocols for Laboratory Tests,” *Maarav* 10 (2003). Regarding the problems with the use of nonprovenanced epigraphs in research (and the need for separating such inscriptions from the provenanced corpus), see Christopher A. Rollston, “Non-Provenanced Epigraphs II: The Status of Non-Provenanced Epigraphs within the Broader Corpus of Northwest Semitic,” *Maarav* 11 (2004): forthcoming.

nickname is ‘Ali, which is “very similar to the name on our bulla, while the first name of Mr. Moussaieff is Shlomo and is also spelled šlmh or in its shortened form šlm as on this bulla” (61). I would concur that this is “noteworthy,” but probably not for the same reasons assumed by Deutsch. Significantly, because bullae can be forged, thermoluminescence tests (etc.) should have been performed and the results from these tests published within this essay; however, no such materials are present. Photographs and hand-drawings are provided. (5) Mark Geller and Tuviah Kwasman, “Two More Triangular Aramaic Tablets”—This essay focuses on two nonprovenanced Aramaic inscriptions inscribed on clay tablets. The authors aver that these dockets come from the archive of Šulmu-šarri. Hand-drawings are provided, as are two minute photographs. (6) Martin Heide, “‘One Sack for a Beqa’ of Jerusalem’: A Puzzling Ostrakon from the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection”—This Hebrew ostrakon contains writing on the recto and verso. Heide suggests that it was written by a “professional second-grade scribe” and that it dates to the late seventh century or the early sixth century. The contents are agrarian in nature, and Heide theorizes that it may have been an inventory item, “perhaps for the purpose of a taxation or any similar payment which had to take place” (122). (7) Michael Heltzer, “About the Property Rights of Woman in Ancient Israel”—Heltzer’s article contains numerous references to nonprovenanced epigraphic materials referring to women but no real discussion of the (modest number of) provenanced epigraphic materials referring to women. In addition, there is no reference at all to the foundational and important studies of biblical women (e.g., those by Phyllis Trible, Phyllis Bird, Carol Meyers, Athalya Brenner, Susan Ackerman). (8) Arie Kindler, “Lulav and Ethrog as Symbols of Jewish Identity”—Kindler discusses the significance of the lulav and the ethrog on the “Year Four” bronze coins of the First and Second Jewish Revolts. He argues that these emblems were religious in nature and were intended “to express Jewish identity in Eretz Israel and the Babylonian Diaspora” (145). Several photographs accompany this article. (9) Wilfred G. Lambert, “Leviathan in Ancient Art”—Within this article, Lambert briefly discusses ancient Near Eastern epigraphic and iconographic data for leviathan. He concludes that “the leviathan of Isaiah, and perhaps of the Psalms also, was a snake of natural type as seen on Syrian seals” (154). (10) André Lemaire, “Amulette Phénicienne Giblite en Argent”—Lemaire here analyzes a Phoenician amulet from Moussaieff’s collection. He argues that this incised text, which mentions a certain “Shipitbaal, King of Byblos” should be dated to approximately 500 B.C.E. (172). Photographs and a hand-drawing are included. (11) Dan Levene, “A Happy Thought of the Magicians”—Levene notes that magical bowls referring to exorcism often use some terminology that is very common in Jewish divorce bills. The article refers to talmudic texts, some late Second Temple literature (e.g., the book of Tobit’s reference to Asmodeus), and inscriptions on some magical bowls (including some from Moussaieff’s collection). (12) Edward Lipinski, “Haddiy’s Wine or Donkeys?”—Lipinski discusses the

lexical options for an Aramaic text dating to roughly the seventh century B.C.E. (13) Meir Lubetski, “A Tale of a Seal”—Within this essay Lubetski discusses the personal name on a seal that has been in the British Museum for a century. He suggests that the personal name širir consists of two elements: šir “denoting a dark shade” and ir, a noun with a meaning unrelated to color (cf. Cant 1:16). Ultimately, he argues that ir derives from Egyptian and was used to express the idea of royalty or divinity. The personal name, therefore, meant something analogous to “dark royal one.” (14) Aren M. Maeir, “A Late Bronze Age, Syrian-Style Figurine from Tell es-Safi/Gath”—This article focuses on a (broken) female figurine (with the torso and head being preserved) from a Late Bronze Age stratum. (15) Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, “In Preparation of a Corpus of Aramaic Ostraca from the Land of Israel: The House of Yehokal”—This essay discusses the recent checkered history of a large corpus (totaling in the hundreds) of nonprovenanced Idumean ostraca and focuses on seventeen ostraca that refer to a person named “Yehokal.” The ostraca are dated to the late fourth century B.C.E. There is no real question about the authenticity of this corpus. Hand-drawings of the “Yehokal” ostraca are provided. (16) Béatrice and Mirjo Salvini, “Ararat and Urartu: Holy Bible and History”—Among the most interesting conclusions of this essay is the affirmation that Sennacherib’s assassins found political exile in the land of Urartu (240). (17) Peter G. van der Veen, “Two/Too Little Known Bullae: Some Preliminary Notes”—Van der Veen examines two bullae, one of which is currently in Moussaieff’s collection and one of which Moussaieff sold to the British Museum in the 1960s. He suggests that the personal names on these bullae can be identified with biblical figures. Photographs and hand-drawings are included. (18) Ran Zadok, “West Semites in Administrative and Epistolary Documents from Northern and Central Babylonia”—This important article is essentially a catalogue of West Semites (excluding individuals with typically Canaanite and Arabian names) in Babylonia. (19) Irit Ziffer, “A Narrative Bronze Bowl from the Moussaieff Collection” [Hebrew]—This article is a comparative analysis and interpretation of the iconographic material on a nonprovenanced bowl.

Some general conclusions merit articulation. Some of the essays in this volume are very fine contributions (e.g., those by Avishur, Barag, Lambert, Zadok, Maeir, and Porten and Yardeni). Some are of more modest import. It is significant, though, that a number of the articles focus predominantly (or even exclusively) on nonprovenanced materials (those of Deutsch, Heide, van der Veen, etc.), especially those from the collection of Shlomo Moussaieff. Very problematic is the fact that sometimes reconstructions of certain aspects of ancient society are based heavily on nonprovenanced material (e.g., the article by Heltzer), a tenuous enterprise using materials that have no verifiable provenance. Most problematic, of course, is the fact that modern forgeries appear and are sold as “ancient” on the antiquities market. This should cause substantial pause to those attempting to mine

nonprovenanced materials for data: one could actually be basing a construct about antiquity on a modern forgery. *Caveat Eruditus*.

Several times the collector is lauded. For example, Heltzer opines: “Shlomo Moussaieff has been involved in decades-long activity in building his large collection. From it a large number of scholars and the scholarly world have benefited opening new horizons in research” (133). Lemaire writes: “C’est avec reconnaissance que nous dédions cette étude épigraphique au Docteur Shlomo Moussaieff qui nous a fait connaître et permis d’étudier ce petit objet qui fait partie de sa magnifique collection” (155). Deutsch affirms with satisfaction that the “collection of Mr. Shlomo Moussaieff” is “constantly growing” and has “recently been enriched” (45). Because of the nexus of ethical problems that are part of the antiquities trade, specialists should, in my opinion, attempt to retain a more disinterested position. The trade in epigraphic antiquities may indeed “enrich” the domains of collectors, but such activities serve to “impoverish” the field of Northwest Semitic.

Finally, it should be noted that typographical errors in this volume are legion, and the formatting of the articles (e.g., the footnotes) reflects enormous variation. On a number of occasions, nonidiomatic English phrases are employed. The volume would have benefited from some assiduous editing for such problems.