

theme, and the theme of the fifty-first meeting began with lexicography – appropriately, for the venue was the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, home since 1921 of the great Assyrian Dictionary Project that was one of the most extraordinary successes of twentieth-century research in the humanities. The meeting coincided with the dispatch to the printer, more than eighty years on, of the last of the dictionary's twenty-one volumes.

To make room for contributions on archaeology and art history, the idea of lexicography was stretched to a more accommodating, but wordier, "Classifications of knowledge in the ancient Near East: lexicography, iconography, stratigraphy". The publication is divided likewise into three: "Lexicography, philology, textual studies", "Iconography and art history" and "Archaeology and stratigraphy", and the forty-one articles are ordered alphabetically, by contributor's name.

Among the Assyriological papers this reviewer's eye was caught especially by Uri Gabbay's paper on the *kalû* (pp. 49–56 "The *kalû* (gala) once again"). He suggests a clever new etymology for *kalû*, cognate with *kulûu* (possibly *kullûu*) and deriving from the root  $\sqrt{kl}$  "both, hybrid", thus meaning "one who is both (sexes)", i.e. an hermaphrodite.

In the art-historical section Stephen W. Holloway discusses some bricks brought back from Mesopotamia by a merchant-captain in 1817 (pp. 287–98 "Austin's Asiatic antiquities: the first cuneiform inscriptions published in America"). These discoveries provoked national pride in Americans' prominence in pursuing ancient Near Eastern studies and were at once put to use as educational illustrations in successive editions of a family bible. The nineteenth century was an age when enlightened people understood that, compared with the written legacy of the rest of the ancient world, "the Bible is a very incomplete record of an obscure people", as John Steinbeck had one of his characters say in *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932). It is pleasing to learn of the impact of Capt. Austin's bricks nearly two centuries later, in a time when governments seem to care little for the archaeology of origins and the new fundamentalists repudiate comparative knowledge out of hand.

The archaeology of Sumerian and Babylonian sites has figured prominently in the research of the Oriental Institute. A paper by the veteran excavator of Nippur, McGuire Gibson (pp. 383–8 "The Oriental Institute and its role in Mesopotamian archaeology"), will correct any false impression that the institution's sole glory is its matchless reputation as a centre for Assyriology and cuneiform lexicography. His contribution is also a record of the terrible decline of archaeology in Iraq, from the Institute's exemplary excavations in the Diyala basin in the 1930s to the two decades of destructive looting initiated by the Kuwait war and subsequent Shia uprising in 1991.

**A. R. George**

HOLGER GZELLA and MARGARETHA L. FOLMER (eds):  
*Aramaic in Its Historical and Linguistic Setting*.  
 vii, 388 pp. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008.  
 ISBN 978 3 447 05787 5.  
 doi:10.1017/S0041977X11000085

This volume consists of the proceedings of a conference which took place in the Netherlands in August 2006. The volume has no introduction to highlight the major themes or derive some overall conclusions from various articles, so the reader

is left to consider what major contributions to the field of Aramaic studies have been made; one would like to have had some preview or guide to the major new developments in our understanding of Aramaic on offer. Before addressing this question, it is useful to review the articles individually. On the Neo-Aramaic front, Otto Jastrow offers some reflections on how modern Aramaic dialects can sometimes adopt phonemes known from far earlier periods in the history of the language, while Geoffrey Khan comments on the determined state in Neo-Aramaic dialects and Olga Kapeliuk treats perfect tenses in Neo-Aramaic from Urmi. As for grammar and syntax, A. Gianto discusses the well-known features of Aramaic (in common with other Semitic languages) in losing its final vowel and he refers to the *q̄tal hwā* form of the verb as a narrative construction somewhat comparable to a pluperfect. This same verbal construction is discussed in far more detail in Syriac, in the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, by Craig Morrison, who argues that this form is used in narrative discourse for past events, in contrast to the *q̄tal* used in direct speech. Renaud Kutty follows in a similar vein by studying the syntactic use of participles in the Targum Jonathan of Samuel. Edward Lipinski offers a useful catalogue of the phenomenon of Aramaic broken plurals, while Steven Fassberg gives an exhaustive catalogue of all forms for “son” and “daughter” in Aramaic, including some useful evidence from cuneiform orthographies. Na’ama Pat-El writes about historical syntax, isolating a few features which are unique to Aramaic within Semitic languages. Margaretha Folmer returns to the problem of object indicators within Aramaic, and Randal Garr studies the Aramaic plural morpheme *ê*. Regarding inscriptions, André Lemaire offers some corrections to published Aramaic docketts and some preliminary transliterations of new texts, without photos or copies of the originals. Holger Gzella re-edits some previously published Parthian Aramaic inscriptions with remarks on the dialectal features of Eastern Aramaic, although the inscriptions themselves are rather meagre in content, mostly being short inscriptions containing proper names. Looking further afield, Jan Joosten looks at Aramaic in the Septuagint, while Abraham Tal documents the well-known influence of Targum Onqelos on other Aramaic texts, using the Book of Tobit as a prime example. Peshitta studies and the general relationship of Syriac to other Aramaic dialects are discussed by John Healey and Wido van Peursen. Helen Murre-van den Berg writes about Chursch uses of Syriac, Neo-Aramaic and Arabic from 1500–1800, while Stephen Kaufman ends with a description of the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*.

The question is, what is new here that has not already been discussed elsewhere? It is instructive to have a cursory look at the bibliographies at the end of individual chapters. The great majority of works cited are in English, especially recent and modern studies of Aramaic. One contributor only bothers to cite his own work, while another cites eleven works, seven of which are his own; one author cites a thesis advisor no fewer than six times in the bibliography. Most contributors cite Nöldeke or Rosenthal or Dalman, but hardly anything in this volume would have surprised this older generation of scholars, since there is little here that was not already considered in previous studies of Aramaic grammar, syntax, or even inscriptions. Moreover, it is a matter of some puzzlement to the present reviewer that some exciting and new areas of research in historical perspectives of Aramaic are hardly represented in the present volume. One such question is the language of the Zohar and so-called mixed dialects of later Aramaic, which present complex linguistic puzzles that deserve much further study. Another important area of inquiry is Aramaic syntax, since it is the only ancient Semitic language to have replaced aspect with tempus in its verbal system. It is remarkable that no author in this collection has considered the fact that participle + verbal base is a characteristic of Indo-European

syntax, reflecting *tempus* rather than *aspect*, and these instances are likely to reflect Persian influence on Aramaic. It is also noteworthy that this volume shows no awareness of the important contribution which cuneiform studies has made to understanding ancient Aramaic. The important article by M. Streck, for instance, on “Keilschrift und Alphabet” (in D. Borchers, F. Kammerzell and S. Weninger, *Hieroglyphen, Alphabete, Schriftreformen*, Göttingen, 2001, 77–97) has gone unnoticed. The famous Aramaic Uruk incantation in cuneiform script [published by the present reviewer in collaboration with T. Kwasman in *JEOL* 36–37, 1997–2000, 127–46, with corrections in N.A.B.U. 2001 No. 4, “Corrections”, No. 101, p. 97] offers new insights into Aramaic dialects and the phonology of Achaemenid Aramaic, since the Uruk tablet is much more reliable and authoritative than Massoretic pointing of biblical Aramaic or any other comparable means of assessing vocalization of the language. Any discussion of Aramaic in its historical setting ought to include these new perspectives.

To return to the original question posed regarding the overall impact of this volume on Aramaic studies, the judgement of this reviewer is that the book itself, while containing useful information and comment, is rather dull, conventional and unexciting.

**M. J. Geller**

WILLIAM W. HALLO:

*The World's Oldest Literature: Studies in Sumerian Belles-Lettres.*

(Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 35.) xxxii, 766 pp. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010. €195. ISBN 978 90 04 17381 1.

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The volume under review here is a collection of selected scholarly articles by William W. Hallo, Professor Emeritus of Assyriology and Babylonian Literature at Yale University, with an introduction by two of his erstwhile students, Peter Machinist and Piotr Michalowski.

William Hallo is without any doubt among the most prolific and influential scholars in the field of cuneiform studies – and especially its sub-branch of Sumerology – from the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century onwards. His works were instrumental in shaping Sumerology, and cuneiform studies in general, into their current state of development. Many of them have resisted the ravages of time and are still indispensable tools and sources of inspiring ideas not only for Assyriologists but also for historians of antiquity as well as biblical and religious scholars. For instance, his doctoral thesis *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis* (New Haven, 1957) is still in print (reprint 1988) more than half a century after its first appearance and continues to be acknowledged as a basic study by anyone seriously interested in the early history of Babylonia.

It is therefore to be appreciated that forty-five of Hallo's key papers on the subject, hitherto dispersed in various journals, edited volumes and a dictionary, have been collected in this splendidly designed volume produced by Brill in keeping with the publisher's traditionally high quality standards.

As the title suggests, Hallo's Sumerological works are included, yet because his expertise is much broader, covering virtually all aspects of ancient Near Eastern studies with a focus on the cuneiform record, Biblical and Jewish studies, some