

Preface

The papers presented in this volume sum up the results of the First International Conference of the National Research Network (NFN) “Imperium & Officium: Comparative Studies in Ancient Bureaucracy and Officialdom” held in Vienna in November 2010 and addressing the topic “Official Correspondence and the Language(s) of Power”. Its aim was to study communication strategies within an official context by analysing the rhetoric and general function of administrative letters in order to gain an insight into the underlying structures of governmental control and bureaucratic mentalities. For that purpose, we adopted a diachronic and comparative approach that also forms the basis of the collaboration within our research network by interconnecting different disciplines within the fields of Ancient Studies. Their shared characteristic is that they all benefit from access to large corpora of documentary texts. Geared to the needs of the Network’s focus on polities and empires in the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean World in the period from the first millennium BC to the first millennium AD, we are in the privileged position of having been able to draw upon the contributions a number of experts from the fields of Assyriology, Ancient History, and Arabic and Islamic Studies. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them for their valuable input during the conference and in the course of preparing these proceedings, as well as for their endless patience in awaiting this publication.

The period under consideration clearly exceeds the already comprehensive time frame of our Network’s research by including some of the Bronze Age precursors of the Neo-Assyrian and the Neo-Babylonian empires. It thus covers a span of three millennia, ranging from the Third Dynasty of Ur (2110–2003 BC) to the sequence of state formations during the earlier Muslim period (7th–10th centuries CE). The volume is divided into three sections, each concerned with official epistolography in the Ancient Near East, the Classical World, or Late Antiquity, including Islamic civilisation, presenting the individual papers in chronological order. Section I consists of nine chapters, starting with an overview of the records of royal archives from Ancient Mesopotamia and a qualitative analysis of their information potential (FRAHM), then continuing with individual case studies of official letters from Ur III Mesopotamia (SALLABERGER), Amorite Mari (CHARPIN), the Old Assyrian merchant quarter in Kaniš in Central Anatolia (MICHEL), and the Neo-Assyrian (RADNER, BAKER/GROß, FALES) and Neo-Babylonian (JURSA/HACKL) as well as the Achaemenid (ROLLINGER) empires. Section II contains seven articles concerned with Ptolemaic Egypt (ARMONI), the Hellenistic East, in particular Seleucid and Attalid Asia Minor (HOFMANN and also TAEUBER),¹ and then the Roman Empire as a whole (TAEUBER, ANDO, ECK) as well as on the individual Roman provinces of Galatia (KEARSLEY) and Roman Egypt (BRYEN). Finally, Section III comprises six contributions concerning the post-Classical World, half of them addressing the Later Roman and Early Byzantine period (CORCORAN, TOST, FOURNET), with two of them confining themselves to the Egypt (TOST, FOURNET), and the other half dealing exclusively with Islamic Egypt (PAPACONSTANTINO, REINFANDT, PROCHÁZKA/BSEES). The contributions are preceded by a programmatic introduction that gives an outline of the task and attempts to synthesise the empirical findings of the individual studies. We are particularly happy about the fact that several of the contributions contain translations of exemplary letters, either at their end or integrated in the text, from the respective subject areas

¹ The written version of HOFMANN’s original paper “*Mimesis vel aemulatio? Die hellenistischen Anfänge der offiziellen römischen Epistolographie und ihre machtpolitischen Implikationen*” has been published in *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Romanistische Abteilung* 131 (2014), 177–215.

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under study. These help to support the authors' argument while making the book a handy tool for a first approach of the sources. We are indebted to Martina Schmidl and Klaus Wagensonner, who provided technical support and assisted us with the editorial work, as well as Heather D. Baker and Craig Crossen, who corrected the English contributions in this book. Furthermore, we would like to thank the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) for financing our Network's research, the University of Vienna for providing infrastructural facilities as well as additional funding and, finally, the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) for publishing this volume in its series "Papyrologica Vindobonensia".

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The Editors