

Legal Documents in Ancient Societies

Call for Papers: “Archives and Archival Documents in Ancient Societies”

30 September-1 October 2011, University of Trieste

Organized by Michele Faraguna, Dipartimento di Storia e Culture dall’Antichità al Mondo Contemporaneo

The research group on “Legal Documents in Ancient Societies” (<http://www.juris.u-szeged.hu/karunkrol/tanszek-kutatasai/legal-documents-in-the>), aiming to promote a cross-disciplinary approach in the study of ancient documents, has so far organized three meetings: “The Letter” (Rome, 28-30 September 2008), “Transaction Costs in the Ancient World” (Washington, 27-29 July 2009) and “Identifiers and Identification Methods” (Leuven and Brussels, 23-25 September 2010). The fourth meeting will be dedicated to “Archives and Archival Documents in Ancient Societies” and will be held in Trieste on **30 September-1 October 2011**.

Archives, to be defined as “the organized body of records produced or received by a public, or private, entity in the transaction of affairs and preserved by it for its own specific needs and purposes”, played a significant role in the functioning of ancient institutions and administrative systems, both at State and at local level. Records were written on a variety of materials, including clay tablets, papyrus, wooden boards/tablets but also leather, and bronze and lead plates, and sometimes were available in more copies and versions on different media, so that, even when they are lost, their existence can often be inferred from other documents (or, in some cases, from the concentration of seals). Private archives, i.e. documentary assemblages by private individuals, are also relevant and are often a fundamental source of information on legal and administrative practices.

The focus of the Trieste meeting will be on the similarities and differences of archival practices in the various societies around the Mediterranean. The questions related to the physical aspects of ancient archives and the contribution of archaeological evidence to this effect were examined in the seminal volume on *Archives et Sceaux* edited by M.-F. Boussac and A. Invernizzi (1996). With due attention to these aspects, rather than concentrating on the mere technicalities of ancient record-keeping, we would like to investigate the different ways in which archives, and written records, interlocked with, and were functional to, the workings of the different administrative, and political, systems, i.e. how they were organized and managed, whether for instance they were “centralized” or polycentric, what purposes they served, in what ways the information they stored was used for legal and institutional purposes. To more narrowly define the boundaries of the topic, seven basic types of records can be, provisionally, suggested: laws, records concerning past administrative action, financial records, land records, records concerning persons for military and tax purposes, judicial records and “notarial” records. Contributors may be interested to look into one (or more) of these aspects.

Scholars who are interested in the topic as defined above are invited to send a brief abstract of a proposed paper (not longer than 300 words) to faraguna@units.it by **29 January 2011**. Papers will then be selected by the Steering Committee and those attending the meeting will be asked to submit a full version of their paper ahead of the workshop, at the latest by 10 September 2011. Both the abstracts and the full versions of the papers can be in English, French, German or Italian.

Discussions at the meeting will be held in English. Experience has taught us that in view of time and budget constraints, we will have to keep the number of participants to approx. 20 and, regrettably, not all papers will be automatically accepted. We will be able to cover meals and accommodation, but no travel expenses.

On behalf of the Steering Committee of Legal Documents in Ancient Societies

Michele Faraguna