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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims and Relevance of This Study

This thesis is a study of Judeans[1] in Babylonia in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE.[2] Most of these people arrived in Babylonia in the early sixth century, being but one of numerous ethnic groups deported and resettled after King Nebuchadnezzar II's conquest of Syria and the Levant. At the same time, voluntary and forced migration had shaped Babylonia over millennia, and continuous immigration had resulted in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society. These features of Babylonia in the mid-first millennium have been acknowledged for a long time and a significant amount of pertinent evidence has been made available. Naming practices among immigrant groups have been thoroughly analysed, but there has been little interest in writing a socio-historical study of Judeans or other immigrants in Babylonia based on cuneiform sources.[3] This thesis aims to fill this gap by conducting a case study of the Judean deportees and placing its results in a wider context of Babylonian society. An important point of comparison is the case of the Neirabians, who were deported from Syria to Babylonia roughly at the same time as the Judeans, lived in the village of Neirab in the Babylonian countryside, and finally returned to their ancient hometown in Syria.

A study of Judean deportees in Babylonia can contribute to three academic fields. First, biblical studies can benefit from new insights into a period commonly known as the Babylonian exile (section 1.3), which refers to Judean existence in Babylonia after the deportations in the early sixth century. The end of the kingdom of Judah and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem was a catastrophe which required theological explanation. The deportations and exile started an interpretative process that contributed to the birth of Judaism and biblical literature, and, indirectly, to the emergence of Christianity and Islam. Academic studies of this period have been primarily based on the Hebrew Bible despite the publication of relevant cuneiform sources already in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There is a need for a careful and comprehensive treatment of the relevant cuneiform sources, as outdated or misleading interpretations of the Babylonian evidence can be found even in recent discussions of the exilic period.[4] A study of Judeans in Babylonia is especially timely at the moment, as the recent emergence of cuneiform sources from the environs of Yāhūdu, '(the town of) Judah' in Babylonia, has more than doubled the number of sources relevant to this study.

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[1] 'Judean' refers here to the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah and their descendants. This is the standard term used in recent studies, and the terms 'Jew' and 'Judaism' are mostly used in reference to later periods. For a discussion of the terms 'Judean', 'Jew', and 'Judaism', see, for example, Mason 2007; Becking 2008, 184–185; Blenkinsopp 2009, 19–28; Beaulieu 2011, 249–250, 258–259; Kratz 2011, 421–424; Law and Halton (eds.) 2014.

[2] All dates are BCE unless otherwise indicated.

[3] See section 1.3.2.

[4] See, for example, Ahn 2011, 52–53; Perdue et al. 2015, 76.

Second, the present study can advance the field of Neo-Babylonian studies. Despite their antiquity, many aspects of Babylonian society and economy are relatively well understood due to tens of thousands of extant cuneiform texts from the sixth and fifth centuries. However, the majority of available sources originate from temple archives and private archives of the urban upper class, and life in the countryside or the workings of the state apparatus are worse understood. A study of deportees and their descendants sheds new light on the margins of Babylonian society, it enhances the understanding of the economic sectors in which deportees participated, and it allows a diachronic study of state involvement in deportees' lives over two centuries.

Third, the thesis can enhance our knowledge of early migration history in the Near East, and it thus contributes to the field of migration studies. Although policy recommendations on modern situations must be sought elsewhere, it is necessary to view the current migration flows within and from the Middle East against the historical background of population movements in the area. An understanding of migration as an ancient phenomenon and appreciation of cultural diversity in the ancient Near East offer perspectives on often heated debates on migration and remind us that the movement of people is an intrinsic part of world history.

This study has three aims, two of which relate to the social history of Judeans and other deportees in Babylonia and one to the political aspects of deportation. First, I aim to write a social history of Judeans in Babylonia in the sixth and fifth centuries. The emphasis is on questions of socio-economic status and integration. 'Integration' refers here to an immigrant's process of adapting oneself to the host society in social, economic, and cultural terms.[5] Second, the study of Judeans will be placed in the wider context of deportees and other immigrants in Babylonia, in order to enhance the understanding of diversity in Babylonian society. A case study of the Neirabian community in Babylonia is of prime importance here. Third, I will study the role of the state in relation to deportees in Babylonia. How can we characterise Babylonian practices and aims of deportation? Moreover, how did the state intervene in the lives of deportees, how did it contribute to the process of integration, and what goals did it have?

The study is structured as follows. The first chapter introduces the subject, its historical context, previous research, methods used in this study, and available sources. Chapters two to seven are case studies on Judeans and Neirabians in Babylonia. They bear witness to the diversity of geographic location, socio-economic status, and integration among the deportees and their descendants. Chapter three on Judean merchants has previously been published as a journal article in *Die Welt des Orients* 47 (Alstola 2017). Chapter eight concludes the study by offering a synthesis of the findings made in the preceding chapters and providing an up-to-date historical reconstruction of the life of Judean communities in Babylonia.

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[5] The term 'integration' is widely used in Europe, whereas 'assimilation' is preferred in the United States. Although the two terms refer, by and large, to the same phenomenon, there are important differences in their meaning. See Schneider and Crul 2010 and other articles in the thematic issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33/7.

1.2 Historical Background

1.2.1 Political History

This study covers the period from 591 to 413, from the first until the last attestation of Judeans in Babylonian cuneiform sources. The early sixth century marks the zenith of the Neo-Babylonian Empire: Kings Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II had consolidated their power in most parts of the former Neo-Assyrian Empire, and the flow of resources to the core of the empire resulted in massive construction projects in Babylon and its surroundings. Judeans, Neirabians, and other deportees from the fringes of the empire were resettled in its core areas. The Persian conquest of Babylon in 539 did not radically alter anything in Babylonian society, but the rule of Darius I at the turn of the century introduced some changes. A dramatic upheaval occurred, however, after the Babylonian revolts against Xerxes in 484. Xerxes' actions against the rebels and their supporters resulted in the loss of power of many old Babylonian families and in the end of many Babylonian cuneiform archives.[6] The richly documented period from the accession of Nabopolassar in 626 until the revolts in 484 attests to economic growth and institutional continuity in Babylonia despite the Persian conquest, and, for this reason, it has been called the long sixth century in Babylonia.[7] The number of available cuneiform sources from Babylonia sharply declines after 484, but Judeans are well attested in surviving documents from the late fifth century. The year 413 marks the end of cuneiform sources pertaining to Judeans in Babylonia but certainly not the end of Judean habitation in the region.

Before the Neo-Babylonian Empire emerged under the leadership of Nabopolassar in the late seventh century BCE, territories from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf had been under Assyrian rule for a century. The Neo-Assyrian period was decisive for many later developments, as state formation in Palestine, the use of Aramaic as an administrative language, and the Babylonian practice of mass deportation were all influenced by the Assyrians. The heartland of Assyria was located on the Upper Tigris, which was the point where the state started to expand from in the late tenth century.[8] The Aramean states in Syria were among the first to come into conflict with the emerging empire.[9] By the late eighth century, the Aramean states were incorporated into Assyria, among them the town of Neirab, located in the vicinity of Aleppo.[10] Aramaic-speaking population groups had migrated to the east and south already long before the expansion of Assyria, and Aramean and Chaldean tribes had reached Babylonia at the turn of the second and first millennia.[11] Moreover, the voluntary and forced migration of Arameans within the empire brought the Assyrians and Arameans into close interaction with each

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[6] Waerzeggers 2003/2004.

[7] Jursa 2010a, 4–5.

[8] On the history of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, see Kuhrt 1995, 473–546; Van De Mieroop 2004, 216–252; Bedford 2009; Radner 2014a, all with further literature.

[9] See, most recently, Sader 2014; Younger 2016.

[10] Neirab is mentioned in Tiglath-pileser III's list of cities subjugated by Assyria (RINAP 1, Tiglath-pileser III 43: ii 3).

[11] See section 1.2.2.

other, and Arameans served the empire in various positions, including high offices.[12] This led to the adoption of Aramaic as an important administrative language of the empire, a practice that was later adopted by the Babylonian and Persian Empires.[13]

Assyrian expansion continued westwards across Syria and reached the small kingdoms of Southern Palestine, including Israel and Judah, in the ninth century. Assyrian rule in the region was not permanent before the reign of Tiglath-pileser III who turned Israel and Judah into vassal states of Assyria in the second half of the eighth century.[14] Although Israel and Judah were two separate kingdoms, they shared Hebrew as a common language, as well as religious and cultural traditions, one of them being the worship of Yahweh. After unsuccessful resistance against Assyria, Israel was turned into an Assyrian province of Samerina, its capital Samaria was destroyed, and part of its inhabitants were deported to the east.[15] The kingdom of Israel ceased to exist, but Judah retained its status as a vassal state of Assyria, received Israelite refugees, and became the main cult centre of Yahweh and keeper of some Israelite traditions.[16] However, King Hezekiah of Judah also rebelled against his Assyrian overlords, and a significant number of Judeans were deported in 701.[17] The deportations from Israel and Judah resulted in the emergence of Yahwistic names in Northern Mesopotamia,[18] but nothing suggests that a significant number of Israelite or Judean deportees found their way to Babylonia at this time.[19] Despite its unsuccessful rebellion, Judah was not reduced to a provincial status, and native kings continued to rule the vassal state.

The territorial interests of Assyria also touched Babylonia, which had, however, a very different status from Neirab and Judah. Babylonia, especially the city of Babylon, was the cultural epicentre of Mesopotamia, and the Assyrians generally respected its special status. Although Assyria intervened in the affairs of its southern neighbour, before the reign of Tiglath-pileser III the empire did not aim to control Babylonia directly.[20] At the same time, internal chaos characterised Babylonia: Chaldeans and native Babylonians fought for the Babylonian throne, and the foreign powers Elam and Assyria interfered in this struggle. For religious and political reasons, Assyria was hesitant to use ruthless practices of conquest against Babylonia, and it tried to employ alternative strategies instead.[21] However, constant Babylonian revolts and the abduction of the Assyrian prince Aššur-nādin-šumi to Elam in the 690's drove Sennacherib to destroy Babylon, deport the ruling family, and eradicate or deport local gods to Assyria.[22] Babylon did not remain in ruins for long, as Sennacherib's successor Esarhaddon started to rebuild the city; this

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[12] Nissinen 2014.
[13] Beaulieu 2007; Fales 2007b; Millard 2009; Nissinen 2014, 276–282; Radner 2014b, 83–86.
[14] Kuhrt 1995, 458–472; Miller and Hayes 2006, 360–391.
[15] Becking 1992; Younger 1998; Knoppers 2004.
[16] Finkelstein 2013, 153–158, 162–164.
[17] Grabbe (ed.) 2003; Kalimi and Richardson (eds.) 2014; Matty 2016.
[18] Zadok 2015b.
[19] See section 1.4.5.
[20] On the political history of Babylonia in the first millennium, see Brinkman 1968; 1984a; Frame 1992; Kuhrt 1995, 573–622; Jursa 2014a.
[21] Porter 1993, 27–31.
[22] Frame 1992, 52–63; Holloway 2002, 353–358; Vera Chamaza 2002, 89–102.

policy was continued by his son Assurbanipal, who returned the statue of Marduk to Babylon.[23]

Despite Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal's restorative policy, internal chaos continued in Babylonia. Assurbanipal's older brother Šamaš-šum-ukīn, who ruled as the vassal king of Babylonia, rebelled in 652.[24] The revolt was quelled and Babylonia brought under Assurbanipal's rule, but peace lasted only until the death of Assurbanipal in 627. The empire was weakened by the struggles of succession, and a man named Nabopolassar, perhaps of Chaldean origin,[25] succeeded in taking the throne in Babylon. After fifteen years of ravaging war, Assyria fell to the Median and Babylonian armies, and the Assyrian capital Nineveh was captured in 612.[26]

After the fall of Nineveh, Nabopolassar and his crown prince Nebuchadnezzar II continued their military operations in Syria and Palestine, confronting the Egyptians who had annexed former territories of Assyria after the empire's control declined on its western periphery. After the Babylonian troops broke the Egyptian resistance at the battles of Carchemish and Hamath, Nebuchadnezzar annexed the Mediterranean coast, including Judah, under Babylonia.[27] Judah continued its existence as a vassal state of Babylonia. However, the turbulent political situation in the Levant and Egypt's promises of support sparked Judean hopes of independence, and the small kingdom revolted against its Babylonian overlords. The attempt was futile and Egypt's promises short-lived, and the Babylonian troops captured Jerusalem in the spring of 597.[28] Part of the Judean population, including King Jehoiachin and other members of the upper class, were deported to Babylonia. Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, on the throne in Jerusalem. Jehoiachin and his sons were held hostage in Babylon to prevent Zedekiah from rebelling, but this was in vain. Zedekiah did revolt, and Jerusalem was destroyed, perhaps in 587 or 586,[29] and more Judeans were deported to Babylonia. Judah was reduced to a province, and the native kingship in Jerusalem came to an end.

Judeans start to appear in Babylonian cuneiform sources right after the deportations in the early sixth century. King Jehoiachin and other royal hostages in Babylon are mentioned in a text from 591, and the first attestation of Yāhūdu, '(the town) of Judah', in the Babylonian countryside is dated to 572.[30] Babylonian deportations from Judah and the advent of Judeans in Babylonia are thus chronologically closely related. There is no

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[23] Porter 1993, 41–60; Holloway 2002, 118–122, 139–141 + n. 202, 358–379; Vera Chamaza 2002, 95–99; Nissinen 2010; Nielsen 2012.

[24] On Assurbanipal's accession to the throne as younger brother and the civil war between Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šum-ukīn, see Frame 1992, 92–190; Crouch 2009, 132–155; Fales 2012, 134–136.

[25] Jursa 2014b, 96.

[26] Fuchs 2014.

[27] The key written sources on the Babylonian annexation of the Levant and Judah in particular are the Babylonian chronicle on the early years of Nebuchadnezzar II (*ABC* 5; also edited as Glassner 2004 no. 24) and the biblical accounts in 2 Kgs 24–25; Jer 39, 52; 2 Chr 36. However, the biblical accounts have a very complex textual history which severely complicates their use as historical sources. See Person 1997, 80–113; Pakkala 2006; Müller et al. 2014, 109–125. Archaeological records from Judah and Ashkelon confirm the picture of war and destruction (Lipschits 2005; Stager et al. (eds.) 2008; 2011; Valkama 2010; 2012).

[28] See section 1.2.3 for a detailed discussion.

[29] On the problems of dating the second deportation, see Albertz 2003, 78–81; Müller et al. 2014, 114–116.

[30] See chapters 2 and 4, respectively.

account of the conquest of Neirab or deportations of Neirabians to Babylonia, but the existence of a twin town of Neirab in the Babylonian countryside in the reign of Neriglissar (559–556) implies that some Neirabians were also deported during the Babylonian expansion at the turn of the seventh and sixth centuries.[31]

Babylonia prospered in the long sixth century.[32] Favourable climatic conditions and political stability in Southern Mesopotamia provided a basis for economic growth. The standard of living was relatively high, and both workers and large institutions could – and often had to – participate in the market-oriented economy. A reliable legal system, well-functioning labour market, and high degree of monetarisation supported commercial activity and economic growth. At the same time, booty from conquered regions flowed to the centre of the empire, and it was used in massive public building projects. Monumental buildings in the cities and defensive structures in the countryside reflected Babylonia's power, and irrigation projects enhanced transport, trade, and agriculture. Transition from cereal farming to date gardening intensified agriculture, especially around the cities in the north, and, at the same time, new land was brought under cultivation in less-populated regions. Deportees played a key role here: they were settled in marginal rural areas and integrated into the land-for-service sector of agriculture.[33] Given plots of land to cultivate, they had to pay taxes and perform work and military service in return. The majority of cuneiform sources pertaining to Judeans originate from the land-for-service sector of Babylonian agriculture. The social structures of long sixth-century Babylonia are studied in section 1.4.4 below.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire only ruled over the Near East for 70 years, and the last Babylonian king Nabonidus was defeated by the Persian king Cyrus in 539. Babylonia proper did not suffer dramatically from this transition, and Cyrus did not introduce major changes in Babylonian society and the local administration.[34] Babylonia was not, however, the centre of an empire anymore, and Darius I introduced new tax-related policies aimed at channelling the flow of resources from Babylonia to the heartland of the empire.[35] A noticeable change occurred in 484 when unsuccessful revolts against Darius' successor Xerxes resulted in reprisals against the rebels and their supporters among the Babylonian urban upper class, people closely associated with Babylonian temples.[36] From our perspective, the most dramatic effect of Xerxes' actions was the end of many temple archives and private archives of the urban elite in the Northern Babylonian cities. It is likely that Xerxes removed many priestly families from their offices, and, at this time, these people sorted temple and private archives. Useless, outdated documents were disposed of and deposited together, whereas tablets with long-lasting value were kept elsewhere. It is not entirely clear what happened to these people and their valuable deeds: although obsolete tablets have been found in great numbers, the documents which people retained have not survived to us. In any case, writing in

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[31] See chapter 7.

[32] For an excellent overview, see Jursa 2014c; for painstaking analysis and representation of the available data, see Jursa 2010a.

[33] van Driel 2002, 226–273; see chapters 4, 5, and 7.

[34] Jursa 2007b.

[35] Jursa 2007b, 86–89; 2011a; Waerzeggers 2010b; Kleber 2015.

[36] Waerzeggers 2003/2004.

cuneiform continued after 484 for hundreds of years, but the number of cuneiform sources dating after 484 is small in comparison to the rich evidence from the long sixth century.[37]

Judeans and other deportees were not involved in the organisation of the revolts against Xerxes, and they were not directly affected by his reprisals. Texts from the environs of Yāhūdu attest to the continuity of Judean habitation in the local countryside before and after 484, and a significant number of Judeans are attested in the Murašû archive from the second half of the fifth century.[38] The cuneiform record on Judeans in Babylonia ends in 413, when the last Murašû tablet pertaining to Judeans was written in the Nippur countryside. The evidence of the Neirabian community in Babylonia ends in the reign of Darius I, and it appears that some Neirabians returned to their ancestral hometown in the early Persian period.[39]

1.2.2 Migration in the Ancient Near East

Migration is a common phenomenon in world history,[40] and it profoundly shaped the demographics of the ancient Near East as well. Although deportations from and to conquered regions were the fate of many, the impact of other types of migration was as – or even more – significant.

The arrival of Aramean and Chaldean population groups from the north and north-west at the turn of the second and first millennia had a profound effect on the subsequent political formation in Babylonia.[41] The tribes did not amalgamate with the urban Babylonian population but introduced a strong counterforce to the old cities and occasionally vied for the throne in Babylon. Due to the lack of sources, the actual migration process of Arameans and Chaldeans is poorly understood, but conflicts between Assyria and the Aramaic states in Syria, a lack of centralised power in Babylonia, and the fertile lands of the floodplain are among the plausible push-pull factors. In the same vein, Arabs started to find their way from the arid regions in the west to the Babylonian floodplain in the first half of the first millennium.[42]

Political stability and the thriving economy induced other types of migration to Babylonia during the long sixth century. Foreign traders found their way to the bustling quays of the large cities.[43] Soldiers of foreign origin are attested in the Babylonian army, and it is very well possible that not all of them were deportees but some were also recruited as mercenaries.[44] In general, the Near East was characterised by a high degree of connectivity in the first millennium, and people, objects, and ideas travelled from one

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[37] Geller 1997; Jursa 2005a, 1–2; Clancier 2011.

[38] See chapters 4 and 5.

[39] See chapter 7.

[40] Bellwood 2013; Manning 2013.

[41] On Arameans and Chaldeans in Babylonia, see Brinkman 1968; 1984a; Dietrich 1970; Cole 1996, 23–34; Lipiński 2000, 409–489; Fales 2007a; 2011; Beaulieu 2013a; Frame 2013; Zadok 2013; Streck 2014; Younger 2016, 670–740.

[42] Zadok 1981; Ephʿal 1982; Cole 1996, 34–42; Beaulieu 2013a, 47–51.

[43] See chapter 3.

[44] On foreign elite troops, see section 2.4; on ordinary soldiers in the land-for-service sector, see sections 4.4, 5.3, and 5.6.

region to another.[45] Deportations were far from being the sole trigger for migrations. However, as the present study is concerned with the life of deportees and their descendants in Babylonia, it is necessary to discuss the aims and practices of Babylonian deportations in closer detail.

1.2.2.1 Deportations

In this study, the term 'deportation' refers to a form of forced migration[46] in which the state transfers population groups from one region to another. In the ancient Near East, deportation was usually the consequence of a military conquest or a reprisal after an unsuccessful revolt, and it served political as well as economic interests of the dominant state. Most of the available information on deportation policies in the first millennium BCE stems from the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, since the Neo-Babylonian state archives have mostly disappeared[47] and the extant Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions primarily focus on the kings' building projects.[48] The sources from the Persian period are not abundant either: Persian sources attest to the presence of foreign workers in Susa and Persepolis, and the Greek writers occasionally refer to Persian deportations of conquered peoples. Therefore, the logical starting point for our discussion of deportation policies in the ancient Near East is the rich Neo-Assyrian evidence.

Neo-Assyrian sources on deportations are abundant, but they have to be used with caution as they tend to give an exaggerated and propagandistic picture of the Assyrian kings' treatment of their enemies.[49] Deportations were carried out as punishment for rebellion and to prevent future revolts. Selective deportations of the upper class aimed at stabilising the empire, as the old elite was unlikely to start a rebellion after resettlement in a foreign region.[50] Another form of selective deportations involved craftsmen and soldiers, who were employed to work in state projects and serve in the Assyrian army. Moreover, population groups were deported to underdeveloped or sparsely populated regions to increase agricultural output.[51] Two main trends are visible in the geographical scope of the deportations: on the one hand, deportees were settled in the core areas of the empire to increase population, but on the other hand, two-way deportations from one peripheral area to another stabilised and pacified annexed regions.[52] Deportees were not generally turned into slaves, and their socio-economic status was diverse. Professionals employed by the state could enjoy a high standard of living, whereas people working in building projects or farming land lived at a subsistence level.[53]

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[45] Wasmuth 2016. See also Versluys 2014, 12.

[46] On forced migrations, see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. (eds.) 2014. For an application of forced migration studies on the Babylonian exile of Judeans, see Ahn 2011.

[47] See section 2.3.

[48] Da Riva 2008.

[49] The standard work on Assyrian deportations is Oded 1979. See also Zehnder 2005, 120–191; Crouch 2009, 43–46; Berlejung 2012, 45–48.

[50] Oded 1979, 41–48.

[51] Oded 1979, 48–74; Zehnder 2005, 143–165.

[52] Oded 1979, 26–32; Naʾaman and Zadok 1988.

[53] Oded 1979, 75–115; Younger 1998, 219–224; Zehnder 2005, 166–191.

Owing to the lack of written sources, our knowledge of Babylonian practices of deportation is scarce.[54] Babylonian chronicles occasionally refer to kings taking prisoners during their campaigns,[55] and Nabonidus claims in one instance that he donated 2,850 prisoners of war to Babylonian temples.[56] Nebuchadnezzar II boasts that all the regions and peoples of his empire participated in the construction works of the ziggurat Etemenanki and his South Palace,[57] but this can imply payment of taxes and tributes instead of concrete corvée work in Babylon.[58] In any case, ration lists from Babylon attest that foreign professionals and exiled royalty lived in the capital and were maintained by the state administration.[59] 2 Kings 24:14–16 also supports the view that Babylonia practised selective deportations, as Judean royalty and craftsmen are explicitly mentioned among the people transferred from Jerusalem to Babylon. The bulk of the Neo-Babylonian evidence of deportations derives from settlement patterns in the Babylonian countryside where a large number of villages were named according to the geographic origin of their inhabitants.[60] Several well-known place names from Syria and the Levant are attested among these twin towns (for instance, Ashkelon, Yāhūdu, and Neirab). These communities were created in underdeveloped rural areas to the south and south-east of Babylon. The deportees were given land to cultivate in exchange for paying taxes and performing military and work service for the state.

The aims of Babylonian deportations were similar to their Assyrian counterparts. They primarily aimed at pacifying conquered regions and generating economic growth. Deportation could serve as a punishment for rebellion,[61] and foreign royalty were held hostage to prevent their relatives from revolting in the future. Soldiers, craftsmen, and other professionals were taken captive and employed in the army, crafts, building works, and the state apparatus.[62] Agriculture was of huge importance to the Babylonian economy, and a great many deportees were settled in the countryside to bring new land under cultivation. There is no evidence that the Babylonians practised Assyrian-style two-way deportations, but deportees were predominantly taken to Babylonia, especially to depopulated areas in the countryside. When it comes to the practical execution of deportations, the best available evidence relates to Judah in the early sixth century. As these events are of prime importance for the present study, they will be treated in detail below.

Before turning to the case of the Judeans, it is necessary to briefly discuss the available evidence of deportations in the Persian period.[63] There are no Persian sources

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[54] For brief summaries, see Dandamayev 1991, 268–270; Vanderhooft 1999, 110–112; Albertz 2003, 82–83.
[55] See, for example, *ABC* 3:5–9; 6:8–23.
[56] Nabonidus' stela from Babylon (Schaudig 2001, 521 ix:31'–41'). See Beaulieu 2005, 58.
[57] Langdon 1912, 146–148 cols. ii–iii; Da Riva 2013, 211 v*:21'-34'.
[58] See Beaulieu 2005; 2008, 7–8; Jursa 2010a, 661–669; Da Riva 2013, 204–205, 219–220.
[59] Weidner 1939; Pedersén 2005b. See chapter 2.
[60] Ephʿal 1978; van Driel 2002, 226–273; Dandamayev 2004; Jursa 2011a, 435–437; Pearce and Wunsch 2014. See chapters 4, 5, and 7.
[61] On the case of Judah, see section 1.2.3.
[62] On foreign hostages and professionals in Babylon, see chapter 2.
[63] See Shahbazi 1994–2011; Briant 2002, 505–507; Potts 2013; van der Spek 2014, 256–259; Silverman 2015a.

on actual deportations, but the Persepolis Fortification tablets and building inscriptions from the reign of Darius I confirm that workers from the west were present in Persepolis and Susa.[64] The Babylonian chronicle on the reign of Artaxerxes III describes the deportation of Sidonians to Babylon and Susa.[65] Moreover, Greek writers such as Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus provide us with some information on Persian deportation policies. Given the Greek writers' distrust of the Persians, these accounts are suspect in terms of being partial and propagandistic. However, as they find support in the Persian sources and mirror the practices of the preceding empires, they are hardly pure imagination or mere propaganda. According to the Greek writers, deportations were often a consequence of rebellious behaviour, and people were deported across great distances from the Mediterranean to the eastern parts of the empire, including the Persian heartland.[66] Deportations of foreign professionals are also referred to.[67] In conclusion, the aims of Persian population transfers resemble those of the Assyrians and Babylonians, including the pacification of annexed regions and the relocation of a professional and a non-professional workforce from the periphery to the core of the empire.

Continuity appears to be stronger than change in the deportation policies of the ancient Near Eastern empires. Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia used deportations as a geopolitical tool to crush rebellions, maintain stability in peripheral regions, and bring labour to the core areas of the empire. It has to be noted that both Assyria[68] and Persia[69] resettled people in Babylonia, and thus the population diversity in Southern Mesopotamia did not only result from voluntary migration and Babylonian deportations in the long sixth century. However, as discussed in section 1.4.5 below, there is no clear evidence of deportations from the region of Israel and Judah to Babylonia before Nebuchadnezzar II's expulsions in the early sixth century.

1.2.3 Deportations from Judah

Nebuchadnezzar II's deportations from Judah are undoubtedly the best-known population transfers in the ancient Near East due to their legacy in the Hebrew Bible and later Jewish and Christian traditions. Extra-biblical sources also attest to Babylonian military operations in Judah in the early sixth century BCE and to the resulting destruction of Jerusalem, population collapse, and deportations. The primary sources for these events are the Babylonian chronicle on the early years of Nebuchadnezzar II (*ABC* 5), the results of archaeological excavations and surveys in Palestine, and business, legal, and administrative documents referring to Judeans in Babylonia. The Hebrew Bible is an

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[64] For the Persepolis Fortification tablets, see Henkelman and Stolper 2009 with further literature. For Darius I's *DSf* ans *DSz* inscriptions, see Lecoq 1997, 234–237, 243–245.

[65] *ABC* 9.

[66] See, for example, Herodotus 4.200, 204, 6.18–20, 6.119; Diodorus Siculus 17.110.3–5.

[67] Diodorus Siculus 1.46.4.

[68] Luckenbill 1927, 21:41; Zadok and Zadok 2003.

[69] *ABC* 9. On possible deportations from Egypt to Babylonia in the Persian period, see Hackl and Jursa 2015, 159.

important secondary source, but its use is hampered by textual problems and inconsistent information on deportations.[70]

Palestine was located in the border zone between Egypt and the Mesopotamian empires, and struggles for the control of this area affected Judah as well. Assyria had conquered Egypt for a short period in the early seventh century, but the tables were turned at the end of the century when Egypt invaded former Assyrian territories all the way up to Carchemish on the Euphrates.[71] Judah also came under the dominion of Egypt (2 Kgs 23:28–35). After the fall of Nineveh, the Babylonian army started to advance on Syria and Palestine and push back the Egyptian troops. According to *ABC* 5, it took years to expel the Egyptian forces from Palestine,[72] but Babylonia finally managed to annex the former provinces and vassal states of Assyria by the end of the seventh century. Judah also had to submit to Babylonian rule, and the native dynasty continued to rule as vassal kings in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:1).

It was in Egypt's interest to destabilise Babylonian rule in Palestine, and Nebuchadnezzar's annual military campaigns in the west suggest that Babylonia experienced difficulties in consolidating its power in the region.[73] It is probable that Egypt was also involved in the events that resulted in the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in the spring of 597.[74] *ABC* 5 (rev. 11–13) describes how Nebuchadnezzar captured the king of Judah, took great booty from Jerusalem, and installed a new vassal king on the Judean throne in his seventh regnal year.[75] This account corresponds to the general outlines of the events described in 2 Kgs 24, according to which King Jehoiakim of Judah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar but died before the Babylonian army besieged Jerusalem. It appears that Jehoiakim hoped for Egyptian support for his revolt, but this never happened, and his son Jehoiachin chose to surrender to the Babylonians. Jehoiachin, his retinue, Jerusalemite elite, and craftsmen were deported to Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah as the vassal king in Jerusalem. Cuneiform documents from the city of Babylon confirm that Jehoiachin was held there six years later in 591.[76] Jeremiah 52:28 refers to this deportation as well.[77]

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[70] Person 1997, 80–113; Pakkala 2006; Müller et al. 2014, 109–125. Cf. Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 320–321; Holladay 1989, 439; Fischer 2005, 639–640.

[71] On Egypt's role in Palestine in the late seventh and early sixth centuries, see Naʾaman 1991; Fantalkin 2001; 2015, 235–237; Lipschits 2005, 1–97; Kahn 2008; 2015; Schipper 2010; 2011.

[72] The destruction of Ashkelon in 604 (Stager 2011) was probably a part of this process (Fantalkin 2011).

[73] *ABC* 5.

[74] 2 Kings 24:7 seems to indicate that Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, was hoping for support from Egypt. Altogether, it is very unlikely that he would have rebelled against Babylonia without any promises of Egyptian aid. See Albertz 2003, 53; Lipschits 2005, 51–52.

[75] The date of the conquest can be firmly located in the spring of 597 on the basis of the data from *ABC* 5 rev. 11–12. Jeremiah 52:28 agrees with *ABC* 5, but 2 Kgs 24:12 suggests that the conquest took place a year later in Nebuchadnezzar II's eighth regnal year. The data from the Babylonian primary source is followed here. For a discussion of the dates and number of deportations from Judah, see Albertz 2003, 74–81; Valkama 2012, 50–54.

[76] Weidner 1939. See section 2.4.

[77] However, 2 Chr 36:6–7 and Dan 1:1–2 claim that Nebuchadnezzar also deported Jehoiachin's father Jehoiakim and vessels from the temple of Yahweh to Babylon. This information is hardly trustworthy as the accounts are late and they contradict earlier sources. For similar judgements, see, for example, Albertz 2003, 75; Valkama 2012, 50.

The account of Nebuchadnezzar II's reign in *ABC* 5 breaks up after his eleventh year. As there are no other cuneiform sources on the history of Judah in the early sixth century, the reconstruction of the events following Jehoiachin's capture is primarily dependent on archaeology and biblical sources. Archaeological excavations and surveys in Judah attest to destruction and population collapse in the early sixth century. Jerusalem was destroyed, and the region recovered slowly in the Persian period. It was only in the Hellenistic period that the population finally started to grow rapidly.[78] Despite the destruction of Jerusalem and its environs, there was a noticeable continuity of settlement in the Benjamin region to the north of Jerusalem and around Ramat Raḥel to the south of Jerusalem.[79]

As *ABC* 5 (rev. 13) and 2 Kgs (24:17) claim that Nebuchadnezzar appointed a new vassal king in Jerusalem, it is unlikely that the archaeological record of destruction and population collapse in Jerusalem is primarily related to Nebuchadnezzar's military operations against Jerusalem in 597. Therefore, the accounts of Zedekiah's revolt in 2 Kgs 24–25 and Jer 34, 37, 39, and 52 provide a reasonable explanation for the archaeological record. In addition to biblical sources and archaeology, the letters from the Judean fortified town of Lachish shed light on the last days of Judah before the Babylonian conquest (see Jer 34:6–7).[80] It appears that Zedekiah also hoped to receive support from Egypt, but these hopes were in vain (Jer 37:1–10). The Babylonian troops destroyed Jerusalem and deported another group of Judeans to Babylonia perhaps in 587 or 586.[81]

In addition to the deportations in the reigns of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, Jer 52:30 refers to a third deportation from Judah in Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year. The passage does not indicate the reason for the deportation, but some scholars have connected it to the murder of Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed as the governor of Judah after Zedekiah's defeat, according to 2 Kgs 25:22–26 and Jer 40–41.[82] No extra-biblical sources, however, attest to this population transfer. Although it remains a possibility, a historical reconstruction based on two deportations seems most plausible. Yāhūdu, the village of Judah in Babylonia, and its Judean inhabitants start to appear in cuneiform sources from 572 onwards, bearing witness to the deportations.[83]

The Hebrew Bible provides information on the size of the deportations from Judah, but this information is not consistent and its historical reliability remains doubtful. When it comes to the first deportation in 597, 2 Kgs 24:14 refers to 10,000 and verse 16 to 8,000 deportees. According to Jer 52:28, the number was only 3,023 people. When it comes to the second deportation, there is a strong sense of definitiveness in the accounts found in 2 Kgs 25 and 2 Chr 36. According to 2 Kgs 25:11, 'all the rest of the population' were deported to Babylonia, although the next verse adds that the Babylonians 'left some of

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[78] Carter 1999; Lipschits 2005; Finkelstein 2008a; 2008b; 2010; Faust 2012; Valkama 2010; 2012.

[79] Valkama 2010; 2012, 55–71, 118–123, 272–275; Lipschits 2011. But cf. Faust 2012, 209–231, 243–249.

[80] Torczyner et al. 1938; Pardee 1982, 67–114; Lemaire 2004; Ussishkin 2004.

[81] 2 Kgs 25:1–21; Jer 39:1–10, 52:29. On the date of the second deportation, see Albertz 2003, 78–81; Müller et al. 2014, 114–116.

[82] Albertz 2003, 74–75; Fischer 2005, 366, 654; but cf. Lipschits 2005, 100 n. 229. See also Miller and Hayes 2006, 486.

[83] See chapter 4.

the poorest people of the land to be vinedressers and tillers of the soil'. The totality of the second deportation is emphasised in 2 Chr 36:20–21 in particular, and the land is described as being desolate during a sabbath rest of seventy years. On the contrary, Jer 52:29–30 supplies the reader with precise numbers: the second deportation was comprised of 832 Judeans, and the alleged third deportation of 745 people. The exact numbers in Jer 52:28–30 are often taken as more reliable than the round numbers in 2 Kgs 24,[84] but this matter needs to be assessed in light of archaeology and cuneiform sources as well.

Recent archaeological studies on Judah in the sixth century do not conform to the idea of desolate land depicted in 2 Chr 36, but they do not support the opposite view of strong continuity either.[85] They show that there was a significant collapse in population, especially in the Jerusalem region, but also a continuity of settlement in the north and south of the capital. The population estimations in Judah before and after the Babylonian military actions vary, but they all attest to a major disruption: the population fell from about 110,000 to 15,000–40,000.[86] Naturally this change did not result from deportations only, and two other factors are equally or even more important. First, people were killed in battles, they were executed, and the disruption of farming activities could result in severe famine. Second, many people left the land seeking refuge.[87] Given the sharp population collapse, deportations of roughly ten thousand people do not seem exaggerated and they would be large enough to explain the relatively large number of Yahwistic names in the Babylonian cuneiform documents from the sixth and fifth centuries. The transfer of a mere several hundred people to Babylonia would not adequately explain the genesis of Judean communities in Babylonia, but given the different factors accounting for the population collapse in Judah, deportations of tens of thousands of people seem unlikely.[88]

Judean revolts against Babylonia led to two conquests of Jerusalem and to two deportations to Babylonia, the first one in the reign of Jehoiachin in 597 and the second one in the reign of Zedekiah, perhaps in 587 or 586. Babylonian military operations led to a serious population collapse in Judah, but deportations were only one contributing factor. A rough estimation of 10,000 deportees appears to be plausible, given the number of Judeans attested in Babylonia in the sixth century. Part of these people were the Jerusalemite elite and educated professionals, and the existence of the village of Yāhūdu

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[84] See, for example, Holladay 1989, 443; Fischer 2005, 653; Blenkinsopp 2009, 45.

[85] For somewhat polemical arguments for strong continuity in Judah, see Barstad 1996.

[86] Lipschits 2005, 270: from 110,000 in the late seventh century to 40,000 in the Babylonian period; Faust 2012, 128–138, 169: the population in the sixth century was less than 20 per cent of the population in the seventh century; Valkama 2012, 221: 20,000–30,000 in the mid-sixth century (this follows the estimation of Broshi and Finkelstein 1992, 51–52 and Lipschits that the Iron Age population of Judah was about 110,000 people). Carter (1999, 114–118, 199–202, 246–247) estimates that the population in the province of Yehud – which was geographically smaller than the kingdom of Judah – was around 60,000 in the Iron Age and 13,350 at the turn of the sixth and fifth centuries.

[87] Faust 2011; 2012, 140–143.

[88] Estimations on the extent of the deportations from Judah vary considerably. Barstad 1996, 78–81: only the upper classes and skilled professionals were deported; Albertz 2003, 87–90: one fourth of Judeans, about 20,000, were deported; Liverani 2005, 253–254: there were no more than 20,000 deportees; Blenkinsopp 2009, 45: the number was closer to 4,600 (Jer 52:30) than 18,000 (2 Kgs 24:14–16) deportees. Faust 2011 emphasises the view that deportations were only one factor resulting in the population collapse.

in Babylonia already twenty-five years after the first deportation suggests that the group consisted of both men and women. The aims of the Babylonian deportations from Judah match the outlines of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian deportation policies described above. The deportations aimed to punish Judah for rebellion, prevent future unrest, and, as the present study will show in detail, increase agricultural output and provide the state with taxes and a work force.[89]

1.3 Babylonian Exile: Reception and Research History

Nebuchadnezzar II's deportations from Judah were only one of numerous population transfers in the ancient Near East, but their legacy is unparalleled. The catastrophe of Jerusalem's destruction and deportations is reflected throughout the Hebrew Bible, and Christian Europe learned to know Babylon as a place of splendour, decadence, and oppression. The term 'Babylonian exile' came to describe the period from the deportations until the alleged return migrations in the early Persian period. The terms 'exile' and 'exilic period' are also used in biblical scholarship, but this is problematic as the terms convey the idea of a period which had a clearly defined beginning and end.[90] The Judean presence in Babylonia did not end in a mass return to Judah in the early Persian period.[91] Moreover, the term 'exile' is loaded with images of oppression and does not do justice to the different experiences among the Judeans in Babylonia. The present chapter will use this traditional terminology to describe the reception and research history of the 'Babylonian exile', but the following chapters aim at discussing Babylonian sources in their own terms.

1.3.1 Reception History

The earliest reception history of the Babylonian exile is visible in the Hebrew Bible. It is not an exaggeration to state that most books in the Hebrew Bible react to the exile in one way or another, and that the emergence of the Hebrew Bible and Judaism were greatly influenced by the Babylonian exile.[92] Above all, the exile was a catastrophe, and it is explained in Deuteronomy, the Former Prophets, and Chronicles as the consequence of sins against Yahweh.[93] When the Israelites are still on their journey from Egypt to the land of Canaan, Moses warns them about violating the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. The consequence of transgressions would be exile from the Promised Land (Deut 28:47–68). This warning is repeated several times in the subsequent books (Josh 23:15–16; 1 Sam 12:24–25; 1 Kgs 8:46–53) and given as the reason for the fate of Israel and Judah (2 Kgs 17:5–23, 24:1–4).[94] The Latter Prophets are busy with anticipating and explaining the exile or prophesying a return to Judah and a restoration of the temple in Jerusalem.[95]

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[89] See Liverani 2005, 194–195.
[90] See Grabbe (ed.) 1998.
[91] Large Judean communities are attested in Babylonia in the late fifth century. See chapter 5.
[92] See, for example, Carr 2014, 67–140.
[93] Albertz 2003, 8–15; Sweeney 2007, 1–15; Römer 2015.
[94] Römer 2015, 264–269.
[95] See, for example, Sweeney 2005.

The continuous historical narrative from Genesis to 2 Kings begins at the creation and ends at the onset of the exile. The exile marks a break in the story and the biblical narrative continues only when the exiles return to Judah in Ezra-Nehemiah.[96] However, the exile in Babylon and Susa serves as the setting for Daniel and Esther, two literary works reflecting the Judean experience of living in diaspora. Both books feature Judean heroes who find themselves in serious danger in a foreign land but, with God's help, gain favour with foreign kings.[97] These stories imply that Judeans could prosper in exile, and optimistic voices about life in exile can also be found in Jer 29:4–7.

Despite some hopeful tones in Daniel, Jeremiah, and elsewhere, the Hebrew Bible describes the exile first and foremost as a catastrophe. The powerful language of Psalm 137 has become the most well-known expression of the exilic experience: 'By the rivers of Babylon – there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"' (verses 1–3).[98] The opening words of the psalm have even become synonymous with the exile, as can be seen in the names of recent exhibitions, books, and research projects related to it.[99]

The motif of Babylon as a place of oppression and captivity has found its way into religious language, art, and popular culture.[100] An early and important adoption of this motif can be found in the Book of Revelation (14, 16–18), in which Rome is compared to Babylon as a city of sin, decadence, and oppression.[101] Later, in his treatise *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Martin Luther employed the motif of Babylon to criticise the Roman Catholic Church.[102] In the twentieth century, the motif of Babylon has featured in reggae and pop music. For the Rastafari, Babylon symbolises the oppressive Western world and captivity there, whereas Zion represents Africa, especially Ethiopia, where the Rastafari and other Africans ought to return.[103] A famous product of this tradition is Boney M.'s disco hit *Rivers of Babylon*, originally a Jamaican song based on Psalm 137.[104]

Another important stream of tradition is the biblical story of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1–9), which has had a huge effect on European culture. For centuries, the Tower has been a major theme in visual arts, with examples extending from medieval images to

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[96] Albertz 2003, 3–4.

[97] On these stories and their relevance to the study of the exile, see section 1.5.1.

[98] On exile as suffering, see Becking 2009a. For a good overview of artistic depictions of the miserable life in exile, see Vukosavović 2015.

[99] Some recent examples include the ERC Starting Grant project 'By the Rivers of Babylon: New Perspectives on Second Temple Judaism from Cuneiform Texts' at University College London and Leiden University in 2009–2015; 'By the Rivers of Babylon', the exhibition of the tablets from Yāhūdu and its surroundings at the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem in 2015–2016; and the conference proceedings edited by Gabbay and Secunda, *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity* (2014). It must be noted, however, that these undertakings often challenge the picture of the exile given in Ps 137.

[100] On the reception history of Babylon and the Babylonian exile, see Finkel and Seymour (eds.) 2008, 102–212; Wullen et al. (eds.) 2008, 145–272; Becking et al. 2009.

[101] Seymour 2008b.

[102] See Allard 2008, 146–149, for a discussion on the use of this motif during the Reformation.

[103] Chevannes 1994, 1; Scholz 2008, 187.

[104] Scholz 2008, 186–189.

the iconic paintings of Pieter Bruegel the Elder in the sixteenth century and to Barnaby Barford's installation at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 2015.[105] Greek writers and their accounts of the Hanging Gardens and other wonders of Babylon have also greatly contributed to the legacy of the city and the empire.[106] The name Babylon and the story of its Tower also carry positive connotations in contemporary culture as the symbol of multiculturalism and multilingualism. The shopping centre, office, and apartment complex New Babylon in The Hague, several companies offering language learning services, and Art Cafe Babylon in the small Finnish town of Kirkkonummi all make use of a positive image of a culturally diverse and exotic city.

1.3.2 Research History

Research on Judeans in Babylonia has been traditionally guided by biblical sources. Indeed, the Hebrew Bible and later Jewish writings were the only source for the study of the exile until the emergence of relevant cuneiform sources in the late nineteenth century. The discovery of Judean names in cuneiform material then attracted some attention, but the scholarship on Judeans in Babylonia was dictated by the biblical material during the whole twentieth century. Since the Hebrew Bible hardly ever describes life in exile, a great deal of exegetical ingenuity was needed to distil information from the bits and pieces that were available. In recent decades, archaeological work in Israel and fresh sociological approaches to the exile have nuanced the prevailing picture, but only after the emergence of the tablets from the environs of Yāhūdu have cuneiform sources on Judeans attracted major interest among students of the exilic period. The following review of research history focuses on the use of Babylonian sources in the study of the exile in the twentieth century and on the general developments in the field during the last twenty years. The reader is advised to consult Ahn 2011 for an overview of biblical scholarship on the exile in the twentieth century.[107]

The twentieth-century scholarship on Judeans in Babylonia did not need to be informed only by biblical texts, as the first cuneiform sources on Judeans in Babylonia were unearthed and published already at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The presence of Judeans in the Murašû archive is recognised already in the first volume of text editions,[108] and Albert T. Clay discussed Yahwistic names in Babylonian sources and the importance of the Murašû archive for the study of Judeans in 1907.[109] In 1914, Erich Ebeling translated a number of Murašû texts mentioning Judeans.[110] A very early study on Judeans in the Murašû archive was Samuel Daiches' *The Jews in Babylonia in the Time of Ezra and Nehemiah according to Babylonian Inscriptions* in 1910.[111] Most of his conclusions would be contested today, but his attempt to use cuneiform documents as his main source was – and still is – exceptional. Daiches' view of Judean life in

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[105] Seymour 2008a; Brown 2015.
[106] See the essays in Rollinger et al. (eds.) 2011; Wiesehöfer et al. (eds.) 2011; Haubold et al. (eds.) 2013.
[107] Ahn 2011, 8–27.
[108] Hilprecht and Clay 1898, 26–28.
[109] Clay 1907, 235–250, 390–429.
[110] Ebeling 1914.
[111] Daiches 1910.

Babylonia is very positive: 'The Murashū documents show us that the social position of the Jews in Babylonia in the fifth century B.C.E. was a good one.… [T]he Jews seem to have been next in importance to the Babylonians and Persians. They were perhaps even more important than the Persians.'[112]

Daiches had a special interest in the naming practices of Judeans, and this interest has dominated the study of the Judeans in Babylonia ever since. The studies of Léon Gry, D. Sidersky, and Gerhard Wallis focus on an analysis of the Judean onomasticon in the Murašû archive, leaving the analysis of the texts themselves aside.[113] In the 1970s, Michael D. Coogan and Ran Zadok laid a foundation for the later research on West Semitic names and especially on the Judean onomasticon in cuneiform texts.[114] Zadok's highly productive work on Judean and West Semitic onomasticons in Babylonia has continued ever since, and his studies are foundational for the present study as well.[115] However, apart from occasional brief excursions into Judean life in Babylonia, this line of research has shown little interest in social and economic historical questions.

The Murašû archive has had relatively little influence on biblical scholarship on the exile, but Ernst F. Weidner's publication of four administrative tablets from Babylon has had considerable impact.[116] The texts are lists of oil rations which were distributed by the Babylonian royal administration to numerous recipients, many of whom were of foreign origin. King Jehoiachin of Judah and his five sons are also attested on the lists. Although the rest of this administrative archive remains unpublished,[117] the four published texts have become a standard part of scholarship on the exile. In particular, they have been discussed in connection to the accounts of Jehoiachin's exile and his amnesty in 2 Kings 24–25.[118]

The 1970s and 1980s saw a number of studies aimed at reconstructing the history of Judeans in Babylonia based on cuneiform and biblical sources.[119] The attempts of Israel Ephꜥal and Elias J. Bickerman to use Babylonian sources in a thorough and analytical manner led to some interesting observations: Ephꜥal noticed the practice of settling deportees in the Nippur countryside and naming the communities according to the ethnic or geographical origin of the deportees. Moreover, he was the first to suggest that the cuneiform tablets excavated in Neirab, Syria actually belonged to a group of Neirabian deportees who returned from Babylonia to their ancestral hometown.[120] Bickerman detected a generational difference in the naming practices among the Judeans in the Murašû archive and suggested that this was related to a religious awakening behind the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah.[121] Bustenay Oded continued this Assyriologically

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[112] Daiches 1910, 29–30.
[113] Gry 1922; 1923; Sidersky 1929; Wallis 1980. Wallis wrote his dissertation (1953) on Judeans in the Murašû archive, but unfortunately I was not able to access it.
[114] Coogan 1973; 1974; 1976a; 1976b; Zadok 1977; 1979a. Note also Stolper 1976.
[115] Zadok 1988; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2014a; 2015a; 2015b.
[116] Weidner 1939.
[117] See provisionally Pedersén 2005a; 2005b; 2009; Jursa 2007c; 2010b.
[118] See, for example, Gerhards 1998; Becking 2007, 181–182, both with further literature.
[119] Bickerman 1978; 1984; Ephꜥal 1978; 1983.
[120] Ephꜥal 1978.
[121] Bickerman 1978.

oriented research tradition in his two short articles on Israelite and Judean exiles in 1995 and 2000.[122]

The current state of scholarship on the exilic period and Judeans in Babylonia is characterised by a more precise archaeological picture of sixth-century Judah, new critical discussions of and methodological approaches to the study of the exile, and the publication of new cuneiform sources. First, the study of the exilic period has greatly benefitted from a better understanding of life in Judah in the exilic period. An important trigger for debate was Hans Barstad's 1996 book *The Myth of the Empty Land*. Barstad's main thesis is that the idea of a desolated Judah prevails in the scholarly perceptions of the exilic period, but that a careful reading of the available sources does not support this idea: 'life in Judah after 586 in all probability before long went on very much in the same way that it had done before the catastrophe'.[123] It has been questioned if such a myth has ever lived among biblical scholars,[124] and recent archaeological work has questioned Barstad's thesis of strong continuity in sixth-century Judah. The opinions of archaeologists such as Oded Lipschits, Avraham Faust, Israel Finkelstein, Charles E. Carter, and Kirsi Valkama are divided on certain issues, but the big picture of development in the Babylonian and Persian periods is clear. The Babylonian campaigns led to serious devastation in Judah in the early sixth century, even though there was evident continuity to the north and south of Jerusalem. There are no signs of any significant return migration in the early Persian period and the population started to grow more rapidly only in the Hellenistic period.[125] The renewed interest in archaeology and history of this period is also visible in the book series *Judah and the Judeans*, three parts of which focus on the sixth and fifth centuries.[126] The books offer a wide range of articles on the situation in Judah, the workings of the Babylonian and Persian Empires, and Judean communities in diaspora.

Second, new methodological approaches to and critical discussions of the exile have advanced the field in the last three decades. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher has been influential in introducing sociological approaches to the study of the exile,[127] and his work has found followers such as John J. Ahn, Tracy M. Lemos, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, and Katherine Southwood.[128] At the same time, the term 'exile', its historical framework, and its ideological dimensions have been discussed by a number of scholars, including Bob Becking, Robert P. Carroll, Lester L. Grabbe, and Jill Middlemas.[129] A lot has been written about the alleged return migrations from Babylonia, on the historicity of the accounts in Ezra-Nehemiah, and the situation in the province of Yehud in the early Persian period.[130] As a result of these developments, the interest in and the number of

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[122] Oded 1995; 2000.

[123] Barstad 1996, 42. The concept of the myth of the empty land is already formulated in Carroll 1992.

[124] Oded 2003.

[125] See Carter 1999; Lipschits 2005; 2011; Finkelstein 2008a; 2008b; 2010; Faust 2012; Valkama 2012.

[126] Lipschits and Blenkinsopp (eds.) 2003; Lipschits and Oeming (eds.) 2006; Lipschits et al. (eds.) 2011.

[127] Smith 1989; Smith-Christopher 2002.

[128] Ahn 2011; Lemos 2011; 2012; Rom-Shiloni 2013; Southwood 2012; 2015.

[129] Becking 1998; 2006; Carroll 1992; 1998; Grabbe 1998a; 2015; Middlemas 2005; 2009; 2012.

[130] See, for example, Grabbe (ed.) 1998; Pakkala 2004; 2010; Edelman 2005; Becking 2006; 2011a; Grabbe 2006; Blenkinsopp 2009; Southwood 2012; Rom-Shiloni 2013; Silverman 2015b.

methodological approaches to the study of the exile has been constantly growing, which can been seen in recent edited volumes on the topic.[131] Although the importance of cuneiform sources has been acknowledged in these studies, the historical reconstructions of Judean life in Babylonia and the exilic experience have been primarily based on biblical texts.

Third, concurrently with new approaches to the study of the exile, the recent publication of cuneiform sources has sparked new interest in the study of the exilic period. The most important text group consists of tablets written in the environs of Yāhūdu, the village of Judah in the Babylonian countryside. These tablets started to surface on the antiquities market in the early 1990s at the latest and the majority of them ended up in private collections around the world. Tablets from the collection of Shlomo Moussaieff have been published by Francis Joannès, André Lemaire, and Kathleen Abraham, and those from the collection of David Sofer by Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch.[132] Moreover, Wunsch is preparing a publication of the texts in the collection of Martin Schøyen.[133] A number of tablets seized by the Iraqi Antiquities Authority will be included in the forthcoming volume as well.[134] The study of the documents from Yāhūdu and its surroundings is still in its infancy, but a number of important articles have already been published. Pearce has analysed Judean naming practices, social structures in the environs of Yāhūdu, and the implications of the new data for the study of Judeans in Babylonia.[135] Abraham has studied marriage practices in Yāhūdu and among foreign population groups in Babylonia,[136] and Wunsch has discussed slavery in the environs of Yāhūdu (together with Rachel F. Magdalene) and the social and economic context of the documents.[137] Furthermore, Angelika Berlejung, Yigal Bloch, Johannes Hackl, and Caroline Waerzeggers have worked on the corpus and contributed to the study of Judean life in Babylonia, Babylonian chronology, scribal practices, and archival structures in the corpus.[138]

The documents from Yāhūdu and its surroundings have excited biblical scholars and the media, and Pearce's and Wunsch's publication of 103 tablets from the corpus in late 2014 was accompanied by an exhibition at the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem. Moreover, the texts have encouraged Assyriologists to engage with the materials related to Judeans in Babylonia. Bloch published and studied a dossier pertaining to Judean royal merchants in Sippar,[139] and previously published documents have received new attention in several research projects. The ERC Starting Grant project 'By the Rivers of Babylon' brought biblical scholars and Assyriologists together to study the Babylonian exile and

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[131] Becking and Human (eds.) 2009; Kelle et al. (eds.) 2011; Ahn and Middlemas (eds.) 2012; Boda et al. (eds.) 2015.

[132] Joannès and Lemaire 1996; 1999; Abraham 2005/2006; 2007; Pearce and Wunsch 2014.

[133] Wunsch (forthcoming).

[134] See Hackl 2017.

[135] Pearce 2006; 2011; 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2016c.

[136] Abraham 2005/2006; 2015.

[137] Magdalene and Wunsch 2011; Wunsch 2013.

[138] Berlejung 2017a; 2017b; Bloch 2015; Hackl 2017; Waerzeggers 2015.

[139] Bloch 2014. See also Alstola 2017.

Second Temple Judaism from interdisciplinary perspectives.[140] The CTIJ project has built an online database of Israelites and Judeans attested in cuneiform sources.[141] This renewed interest in Babylonian sources on Judeans has resulted in a number of publications during the last five years or so, and many more are expected after the full publication of the documents from Yāhūdu and its surroundings.[142] At the same time, there has been renewed interest in the study of cultural interaction in Mesopotamia and its impact on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible.[143]

The need for the present study arises from the lack of a comprehensive treatment of Judeans in Babylonia in light of the cuneiform sources. On the one hand, Judean names in Babylonian texts have attracted a lot of attention, and the present study builds upon the extensive prosopographical work of Ran Zadok and others. On the other hand, biblical scholars have focused on biblical texts, on their deconstruction and interpretation, and they have been reluctant to incorporate Babylonian material in their studies. Too often the existence of Babylonian material is acknowledged but discussed only briefly before a more detailed treatment of the biblical material.[144] In general, the references to King Jehoiachin on the ration lists from Babylon have received the attention they deserve, whereas other Babylonian evidence has been mentioned only in passing.[145] It must be emphasised that it would have been possible to conduct a detailed study of Judeans in Babylonia already before the publication of the documents from Yāhūdu and its surroundings: in 2002, Zadok listed 161 people whom he identified as Judeans in Babylonian sources.[146] The majority of these people are attested in the Murašû texts. The reluctance to study the Murašû texts has been partly connected to the traditional periodisation of biblical history: the sixth century is perceived as the exilic period, and the fifth-century evidence from the Murašû archive has been regarded as too late to shed any light on the life of the exiles.

Judeans were only one of numerous immigrant groups living in Babylonia in the sixth and fifth centuries, and migrants from Egypt, the Eastern Mediterranean, Anatolia, Syria, Iran, and the Arabian Peninsula found their way to the floodplain. Although no comprehensive social and economic history of these people has been written, there are numerous studies which deal with the subject and focus especially on the onomastic evidence. Immigrant groups which have been studied include, among others,

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[140] The principal investigator of the project was Caroline Waerzeggers. The project was hosted by University College London in 2009–2012 and by Leiden University in 2012–2015 (http://www.hum.leiden.edu/lias/rivers-of-babylon).

[141] Cuneiform Texts Mentioning Israelites, Judeans, and Related Population Groups; the project is hosted by Tel-Aviv University and the University of Leuven (http://nabucco.arts.kuleuven.be/nabucco/ctij).

[142] Cogan 2013; Waerzeggers 2014b; Stökl and Waerzeggers (eds.) 2015.

[143] See, for example, Ben-Dov 2008; Gabbay and Secunda (eds.) 2014; Popović 2014; Popović et al. (eds.) 2017; and the thematic issue of *Die Welt des Orients* (45/1, 2015) on 'Ezekiel in Its Babylonian Context'.

[144] See, for example, Albertz 2003, 73–74, 99–104.

[145] A good example is Mitchell 1991, 418–422.

[146] Zadok 2002, 27–45.

Anatolians,[147] Arabs,[148] Egyptians,[149] and Iranians.[150] The case of the Neirabians has attracted quite a bit of attention because of its relevance to the question of return migrations from Babylonia, but it is still not very well known among biblical scholars.[151] Despite the onomastic evidence gathered, only few studies have attempted to offer a bird's-eye view of the matters of integration and socio-economic status among the immigrants. In a seminal article, Israel Ephˁal focuses on immigrants attested in the Nippur countryside,[152] and Muhammad A. Dandamayev explores immigrants in two articles.[153] A recent contribution to the discussion is Kabalan Moukarzel's article on social status and the integration of foreigners in Babylonian society, but the article suffers from serious shortcomings and outdated literature.[154] The concept of ethnicity in Mesopotamia has also attracted some attention, and it was the topic of Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in 2002.[155] As noted above, the emergence of the texts from Yāhūdu and its surroundings has initiated a growing interest in the study of Judeans in Babylonia, which will probably be reflected in the study of other deportee and immigrant groups as well.

Any deeper understanding and proper contextualisation of the evidence of minorities in Babylonia would not be possible without the advancements in Neo-Babylonian studies since the late 1980s. The exceptionally large cuneiform record from the late seventh to the fifth centuries has been made more easily accessible, and it has been used to promote an understanding of the social and economic history of Babylonia. First, Babylonian primary sources are becoming more and more accessible, not only to Assyriologists but also for general historians. Numerous archive studies have made large text corpora available for historical inquiry,[156] and Michael Jursa's overview of Babylonian archives is an indispensable tool for any student of these tens of thousands of texts scattered in museums all over the world.[157] Currently, there are serious efforts to make Babylonian sources more easily available online in order to facilitate their use by non-Assyriologists as well.[158] Second, the social and economic history of Babylonia has been the subject of several studies. Two important works on economic history are Govert

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[147] Weidner 1939; Eilers 1940; Zadok 2005; Waerzeggers 2006.

[148] Zadok 1981; 1990; Ephˁal 1982; Beaulieu 2013a.

[149] Dandamayev 1992a; Zadok 1992; 2005; Bongenaar and Haring 1994; Mattila 2004; Huber 2006; Wasmuth 2011; Hackl and Jursa 2015.

[150] Dandamayev 1992b; Tavernier 2007; Zadok 2009.

[151] Dhorme 1928; Fales 1973; Ephˁal 1978; Oelsner 1989; Cagni 1990; Timm 1995; Cussini 2000; Tolini 2014; 2015.

[152] Ephˁal 1978.

[153] Dandamayev 1983; 2004.

[154] Moukarzel 2014.

[155] The proceedings are edited in van Soldt et al. (eds.) 2005.

[156] Some important archive studies from the last three decades include Joannès 1989; Wunsch 1993; 2000a; Jursa 1999; Abraham 2004; Baker 2004; Pearce and Wunsch 2014; Waerzeggers 2014a.

[157] Jursa 2005a.

[158] Three projects should be mentioned in this regard: the Achemenet Project of the Louvre, PI Pierre Briant (http://www.achemenet.com), the NaBuCCo project in Leuven, PI Kathleen Abraham (http://nabucco.arts.kuleuven.be/nabucco/), and the ERC Consolidator Grant project 'Persia and Babylonia' in Leiden, PI Caroline Waerzeggers (https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/humanities/persia-and-babylonia).

van Driel's *Elusive Silver* and Michael Jursa and his team's *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia*.[159] In addition to these general works, different aspects of the Babylonian economy have been studied in detail. These include, but are not limited to, temple economy,[160] private business,[161] labour,[162] and taxation.[163] Social historical studies have focused on topics such as dependence and slavery,[164] Babylonian urban elite,[165] housing and urbanism,[166] priesthood and temple personnel,[167] and officialdom.[168] New methodological and theoretical approaches have been tested on the historical record, including the application of social network analysis to cuneiform sources.[169]

1.4 Methods

This dissertation is a social historical study, the sources of which are primarily cuneiform tablets originating from ancient archives. As they are predominantly legal texts, they feature a host of names of protagonists, scribes, and witnesses. These very names are normally the only means to identify people of non-Babylonian origin. These aspects of the present study set guidelines for the methods used. First, any conclusions must be based on a careful reading and analysis of the available sources. This basic historical method is the backbone of this study (section 1.4.1). Second, in order to comprehend the social and economic background of a cuneiform tablet, it must be placed in its ancient archival context. This archival approach is essential in gaining a panoramic view of the interconnected texts and archives instead of the microscopic view offered by a single text alone (1.4.2). Third, social network analysis is used in chapter 4 to arrive at a deeper understanding of the underlying social structures of the protagonists of the texts from Yāhūdu and its surroundings (1.4.3). Finally, there must be a clear set of criteria for identifying Judeans and Neirabians in cuneiform sources (1.4.5). As these criteria must be defined in relation to other population groups in Babylonia, a discussion of Babylonian society and the terminology used to describe it is necessary (1.4.4).

1.4.1 Historical Method

This study builds on historical methodology which can be described as critical and source-oriented. It starts from the assumption that despite our distance to the past, it is possible to know something about past events. At the same time, it takes the postmodernist critique on historiography seriously, and it admits that historical studies can only aim at the most plausible reconstructions of past events. By taking all the available sources into account

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[159] van Driel 2002; Jursa 2010a.
[160] Jursa 1995; Da Riva 2002; Kleber 2008; Kozuh 2014.
[161] Stolper 1985; van Driel 1989; 1999; Wunsch 2007; 2010; Jursa 2009.
[162] Dandamayev 1987; Jursa 2015a.
[163] Jursa and Waerzeggers 2009; Waerzeggers 2010b; Jursa 2011a.
[164] Dandamayev 1984; Baker 2001; Kleber 2011; Wunsch and Magdalene 2014.
[165] Nielsen 2011.
[166] Baker 2007; 2015.
[167] Bongenaar 1997; Waerzeggers 2010a; 2011; Still 2016.
[168] Jursa 2011b; Jursa 2015b.
[169] Wagner et al. 2013; Waerzeggers 2014a; 2014c; Still 2016.

and studying them critically, a student of history can give reasonable answers to historical questions. All these questions and answers are dictated by the nature and limitations of the available sources and our ability to comprehend them.[170]

Sources are the backbone of any historical study and the only means to obtain information about past events. Accordingly, the choice of research questions is framed by the availability of relevant sources. Most important for a historical study are primary sources, which were created close to the time of the events they describe. Archaeological remains, letters, and legal texts are typical primary sources. Secondary and tertiary sources are chronologically more distant from the events, and they are dependent on earlier sources or oral traditions.

All sources have to be critically analysed, whatever their chronological distance to the events they describe. A royal inscription can give a propagandistic and untrustworthy account of a military campaign of the previous year, whereas later annals or chronicles may provide more reliable testimony of the same events. A text type is often indicative of its general reliability: legal and administrative texts are less suspect of ideological colouring than royal inscriptions or religious literature. The purpose of a receipt or contract of sale is to record a transaction or prove legitimate ownership, not to influence or educate its audience. Only after careful analysis of all available sources, one can make reasonable decisions about excluding sources which appear to add no historically trustworthy information to the present discussion.

When the sources are critically analysed, one can start reconstructing a historical narrative. In addition to sources, information about geography, climate, and slowly changing cultural and social structures – Fernand Braudel's *longue durée*[171] – has to be taken into account. The end result of any historical study is always a narrative, a historian's interpretation of sources, set in the framework of the *longue durée*. Some narratives are more plausible than others, and a historian has to strive for truth, like any other academic. However, writing a history is a personal undertaking, characterised by who we are, where we come from, and in which environment we carry out our research. In this regard, there are no hard facts, but as all valid arguments have to be supported by the sources, some reconstructions are more plausible than others.

Although a historian of the Neo-Babylonian period is blessed with a rich corpus of data, this corpus is far from being a mirror of ancient society.[172] Babylonian cuneiform sources from the sixth and fifth centuries are primarily focused on the activities of a certain part of society. The majority of sources originate from the huge temple archives of Eanna and Ebabbar, and the rest of the texts belong predominantly to the private archives of the urban elite. As the priesthood of Babylonian temples were members of this same elite, the keyhole[173] through which we look at Babylonian society is very narrow.[174] There is much less information about life in the countryside, and sources from rural areas also reflect the dominance of the literate upper class. In sum, the focal point of Neo-Babylonian sources is on the male members of this urban elite. Women, children,

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[170] On historical methods in ancient Near Eastern studies, see Grabbe (ed.) 1997; Van De Mieroop 1997b; 1997c; 1999; 2013; von Dassow 1999a; Liverani 2004; Grabbe 2007; Nissinen 2009.

[171] Braudel 2009.

[172] On the sources used in this study, see section 1.5.2.

[173] To use a metaphor favoured by Martti Nissinen.

[174] See section 1.4.4.

peasants, and people of foreign origin are all attested only in the margins of the extant documentation. It must also be emphasised that all Aramaic documents from Babylonia – apart from short epigraphs on cuneiform tablets – have been lost. As Aramaic was widely spoken and written, the disappearance of Aramaic documents further skews the picture in favour of the small urban upper class.

1.4.2 Archival Approach

The sources used in this study are only a tiny fraction of tens of thousands of Neo-Babylonian cuneiform documents preserved in museums and private collections. The great majority of these texts are not isolated documents, as a cuneiform tablet normally belongs to an ancient archive which connects a single text to a group of related documents. Scholars of the Neo-Babylonian period have invested a lot of time and effort in reconstructing ancient archives and developing the necessary methods to do so.[175] As most of the cuneiform tablets from the mid-first millennium have been unearthed during badly documented or illicit excavations, interconnected texts cannot be normally identified on archaeological grounds. This has forced Assyriologists to develop methods to reconstruct ancient archives from tablets dispersed in museum and private collections around the world.

The reconstruction of an ancient archive is based on two main principles.[176] First, the dispersal history of interconnected texts can be traced from excavation journals, museum catalogues, and other records documenting the journey of the tablets from their archaeological find-spot to a museum or private collection. Second, tablets can be grouped together in relation to internal criteria, especially on the basis of onomastic evidence. Private archives are normally centred around few protagonists, first and foremost the owners of the archive. A careful study of these people and their circles helps to establish the bulk of texts belonging to the archive. However, this method has obvious limitations regarding documents which do not refer to any of the protagonists. This applies especially to *retroacta*, documents which were transferred together with a property to trace its history of ownership.

The reconstruction of ancient archives has clear benefits for historical study. If studied in isolation, a cuneiform tablet cannot be placed in the right social context and its interpretation remains superficial. This applies particularly to legal and administrative texts which usually provide the reader with a small amount of rather dry information. By reading only a single promissory note or list of purchases, very little can be gleaned about the people mentioned in the document or the background of the transaction. By contrast, even a single receipt can be very informative when studied in its archival context.[177] This macro view of interconnected texts sheds light on the social status of the people mentioned in the texts, their sources of livelihood, and their social networks. Moreover, different archives are often connected to each other, which allows historical research from a yet wider angle on society.

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[175] Archive studies such as Wunsch 1993; Jursa 1999; and Baker 2004 are the most concrete outcomes of this work. See Jursa 2005a for an indispensable overview of Neo-Babylonian archives.

[176] On these methods and their application, see van Driel 1992; Baker 2004, 5–13; Jursa 2005a, 57–58; Waerzeggers 2005.

[177] On this approach, see Waerzeggers 2014b; 2014c, 208–210.

In the present study, the archival approach guides the contextualisation of all cuneiform evidence, as documents are not read in isolation but as part of archives and, even more, of interrelated archives. In particular, the texts from Yāhūdu and its surroundings are a complex corpus of related archives or archival groups. In order to fully comprehend the social setting of these texts, a careful analysis of the underlying archival structures is a necessity.

1.4.3 Social Network Analysis

Social network analysis (SNA) is a powerful set of methods to analyse the patterns of interaction between people in contemporary and past societies.[178] It builds upon mathematical graph theory and analyses human interaction as a network of connections between related actors. Actors are represented by points or nodes in a graph, and the relationship between them is represented by lines or edges. Social relationships can be visualised in beautiful graphs, but the strength of SNA lies in mathematical procedures. They can be used to analyse complex social structures and reveal patterns and characteristics which could not be noticed by a human observer alone. This is made possible by reducing the connections between actors in a given social network to matrices which a computer can analyse, giving results in a form which can be easily used by the researcher. SNA has primarily been used in social sciences, but it has recently attracted growing interest in historical studies because digitalised sources allow easy implementation of computational methods. Some possibilities of SNA have been explored in Assyriology,[179] but the full potential of this method has not yet been realised in the study of the huge text corpora from the Neo-Babylonian and other well-documented periods.

In this study, SNA is used in chapter 4 to analyse the social networks in the environs of Yāhūdu as they appear in the corpus of 155 texts available to me. The corpus is dense and big enough to benefit from the computational methods of SNA, and, unlike in any other text corpus from Babylonia, its main protagonists are Judeans. The understanding of Judeans in the Murašû archive would benefit from SNA as well, but Judeans are attested only in the fringes of this large archive. A meaningful analysis of the Judeans' role in the network would require the inclusion of all 750 texts, which is not possible in the present study due to the time-consuming process of creating the necessary prosopographical database.

1.4.4 Babylonian Society as a Subject of Study

The study of any ancient society is hampered by our inability to have a balanced view of different social groups and the interactions between them. Written sources express the perspectives of a literate minority, and the archaeological record is rarely substantial enough to fully balance this view. At the same time, finding appropriate terminology to describe an ancient society is challenging, for our modern concepts – however accurate

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[178] On the history, theoretical background, and applications of social network analysis, see Scott 2000; Scott and Carrington (eds.) 2011; Prell 2012.

[179] Waerzeggers 2014a; 2014c; Wagner et al. 2013; Still 2016.

they may be in our current societies – can be misleading. The choice of terms is not a trivial question, as language necessarily guides our research questions and analysis.

These methodological concerns have to be taken seriously in Neo-Babylonian studies: indeed, the surviving texts were written by a well-defined elite group in society, and archaeological remains cannot satisfactorily complement the picture. Some widely used terminology can also be misleading if not defined carefully. For example, Babylonia and the Babylonians are etic concepts which conform to modern perceptions of state and nation, but they do not find a counterpart in cuneiform sources from Southern Mesopotamia. There is growing concern among Assyriologists about methodological rigour in the field, which is characterised by immense numbers of unpublished texts and a very small number of academics studying them.[180] Quite understandably, methodological considerations have often been overshadowed by the justifiable aspiration to make as many new sources available as possible. This section is an attempt to briefly discuss the methodological issues raised above and sketch some characteristics of 'Babylonian' society in the mid-first millennium.

The cuneiform records from the mid-first millennium provide us with a rich source for a historical study, but a serious methodological pitfall has to be taken into account. Despite their huge number, the written sources originate from a small segment of society. Scribes did not represent the local population as a whole, but they belonged to an educated minority which had mastered both the technical skills of writing Akkadian cuneiform and the traditions and values connected to it.[181] The texts written by these scribes undoubtedly offer an emic perspective on the social structures of the literate elite, but their perceptions of other groups in society may only reflect etic conceptions of the other. This is emphasised by the fact that two languages, Akkadian and Aramaic, played a major role in Southern Mesopotamia in the mid-first millennium, but hardly anything written in Aramaic has come down to us.[182] In contrast to tens of thousands of extant clay tablets written in Akkadian cuneiform, only a small number of short Aramaic inscriptions on clay tablets and bricks have survived. Aramaic was primarily written on perishable materials such as parchment and papyrus, of which nothing is left in Southern Mesopotamia. In the same vein, texts written in other languages spoken by immigrants do not survive from Babylonia. Accordingly, the Akkadian cuneiform texts and the terminology used in them by an educated elite have come to represent the whole society. This one-sidedness must be taken into account and its effects analysed critically.

The present thesis claims to be a study of ancient Babylonia, but, from an emic perspective, the term 'Babylonia' is not without its problems. Babylonia is the later Greek name of Southern Mesopotamia, and it is never used in Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Babylonian sources to describe the region around the cities of Babylon, Borsippa, Sippar, Nippur, and Uruk, located on the alluvial plain of the Euphrates and Tigris between present-day Baghdad in the north and the Persian Gulf in the south.[183] At the same time, cuneiform

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[180] See, for example, Van De Mieroop 1997b; 2013; von Dassow 1999a; Fleming 2014; Richardson 2014. The recently established *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* is an attempt to provide a platform for such methodological discussions (see Van De Mieroop and Garfinkle 2014).

[181] Gesche 2000; Carr 2005; van der Toorn 2007; Still 2016, 233–248.

[182] Beaulieu 2007; 2013b; Jursa 2012; Hackl (forthcoming).

[183] von Dassow 1999a, 241–245; Beaulieu 2007, 209–210; Kanchan and Radner 2012.

sources make a distinction between the southern alluvial plain and, for example, the Assyrian heartland in the north. These sources refer to the floodplain as Akkad, Sumer and Akkad, or Karduniaš, the last term being attested in Kassite and occasionally in Assyrian sources.[184] Sumer and Akkad were ancient terms which originally denoted two different regions on the alluvial plain, Sumer in the south and Akkad in the north.[185] Later this distinction was no longer meaningful, and the longer form Sumer and Akkad and the shorter form Akkad could be used interchangeably to refer to the whole alluvial plain, with the name Sumer and Akkad being predominant.[186]

The ancient names Akkad, Sumer and Akkad, and Karduniaš suggest that the southern alluvial plain was perceived as a distinct entity, different from the surrounding regions. The area is indeed well defined geographically, as the plain is bordered by the Arabian Desert in the west, the Persian Gulf in the south, and the Zagros Mountains in the east. In the north, the alluvial plain begins roughly where the courses of the Euphrates and Tigris are closest to one another, near the ancient city of Sippar.[187] The interconnected waterways created a network of cities which shared many cultural and social traits and participated in a close-knit economic system.[188] The dialect of Akkadian spoken on the alluvial plain – commonly referred to as Babylonian – was different from the dialect spoken in the north (Assyrian).[189] Despite strong local identities and claims for self-governance,[190] the old cities of the alluvial plain shared a number of cultural features and social structures. These included, for example, literature,[191] scholarship,[192] and the social organisation of the elites and temple service.[193] In light of this evidence, the southern alluvial plain was not just a distinct geographical entity, as its urban literate elite shared cultural and social structures which were characteristic of the region. For the purposes of the present study, we can legitimately adopt the Greek term and call the southern alluvial plain Babylonia.

Babylonia was a distinct entity but not a state in the modern sense. The term 'Babylonia' is derived from the name of the most important city in the region, Babylon, which was also a royal seat from the late seventh to the late sixth century. The standard title of the kings from Nabopolassar to Nabonidus in royal inscriptions was 'King of (the city of) Babylon' (*šar Bābili*), and the title 'King of Sumer and Akkad' (*šar māt Šumeri u Akkadi*) was used only occasionally.[194] 'King of Babylon' was also the standard title used in the dating formula of legal and administrative texts.[195] This was an ancient and

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[184] Seux 1967, 301–303; Brinkman 1976–1980; Frame 1992, 33; von Dassow 1999a, 242.

[185] Cooper 2012, 291–293.

[186] Beaulieu 2007, 209.

[187] Adams 1981, 3.

[188] On waterways and the Babylonian economy, see Jursa 2010a, 62–140.

[189] Streck 2011.

[190] Barjamovic 2004.

[191] Southern and Northern Mesopotamia shared a literary tradition in Akkadian, but the regions also had distinctive traditions of their own. See Foster 2007.

[192] See, for example, Rochberg 2004; Ossendrijver 2008; Geller 2010; Van De Mieroop 2016.

[193] Waerzeggers 2010a; 2011; Nielsen 2011; Still 2016.

[194] Da Riva 2008, 93–107.

[195] The title 'King of Babylon' remained in use in the Persian period as well; see Rollinger 1998, 355–361, 369–373; 1999.

prestigious title, which rose to prominence already in the reign of King Hammurapi in the eighteenth century when Babylon became the political, religious, and cultural centre of southern Mesopotamia.[196] However, it has to be noted that there was no state of Babylonia which continuously existed on the alluvial plain since the reign of Hammurapi, but the region of Babylonia was sometimes a part of a larger state or empire, sometimes fragmented into numerous political entities. Babylonia was not a state, but rather a cultural entity and geographic region, as described above.[197] Accordingly, I will use the term 'state' to refer to the political entities which governed Babylonia in the sixth and fifth centuries, that is, first the Neo-Babylonian Empire and later the Persian Empire. The term 'Neo-Babylonian Empire' will be used to refer to the political entity founded by Nabopolossar in 626 and brought to an end by Cyrus in 539. Its successor, the Persian Empire, ruled over the ancient Near East from 539 until the conquests of Alexander the Great in the 330s.

In the self-identification of the rulers of the Babylonian Empire, the title 'King of Babylon' emphasised the importance of a city rather than a state. Sources from the mid-first millennium suggest that common people also identified themselves with a family, tribe, or city rather than a state. Although empires shaped the political landscape of Babylonia in the first millennium, cities still retained some autonomy and carried on the legacy of the earlier city states.[198] The term *bābilāya* ('Babylonian') in cuneiform sources does not refer to an inhabitant of the alluvial plain in general but to an inhabitant of the city of Babylon in particular. The same applies to people from other ancient cities of the alluvium, and migrants or visitors from another Babylonian city were occasionally labelled according to their place of origin.[199]

Mesopotamian sources from the first millennium do not provide us with an umbrella term to describe the inhabitants of Babylonia. Neo-Assyrian sources refer to several population groups: the Akkadians (*akkadû*), Arameans (*aramu* or *aramāya*), Chaldeans (*kaldu* or *kaldāya*), and Arabs (*urbu* or *arbāya*). In addition, the Sealand (*māt tâmti*) is mentioned as a separate entity.[200] The terms 'Chaldean' and 'Aramean' are also used in Babylonian sources before 626, but the first term disappears and the second one is rarely used after the emergence of the Neo-Babylonian Empire under Nabopolassar.[201] In the earlier sources, 'Chaldean' and 'Aramean' appear to be umbrella terms which cover a number of distinct entities. Five groups (Bīt-Amūkāni, Bīt-Dakkūri, Bīt-Yakīn, Bīt-Saʾalli, and Bīt-Silāni) are assigned under the rubric 'Chaldean', and although the term was no longer used in the sixth century, the names Bīt-Amūkāni, Bīt-Dakkūri, and Bīt-Silāni continued to be employed in Babylonian sources.[202] On the other hand, the term 'Aramean' appears to cover about forty groups, the most prominent in our sources being

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[196] Note that Hammurapi also used many other titles, which emphasised the geographical extent of his kingdom; see Charpin 2012, 75–77.
[197] See von Dassow 1999a, 241–245.
[198] Barjamovic 2004.
[199] Kessler 2004; Jursa 2010a, 72, 126–127, 136–137.
[200] Frame 1992, 32–51; 2013.
[201] Beaulieu 2007, 199–200.
[202] Lipiński 2000, 419–420; Beaulieu 2013a, 37; Frame 2013, 98–100.

Gambūlu and Puqūdu.[203] However, the situation is complex, and it is often impossible to make a neat division between the Aramean and Arabian population groups.[204]

Social entities like Bīt-Dakkūri or Puqūdu are traditionally called tribes, but this term may be misleading as it is often associated with a semi-nomadic pastoral lifestyle.[205] In particular, the Chaldeans lived in cities and cultivated land.[206] Because we do not possess any sources written by the Arameans or Chaldeans, we are dependent on the cuneiform scribes' perceptions of these population groups. Accordingly, we do not know whether these people perceived themselves as members of, for instance, both Bīt-Amūkāni and a population group called the Chaldeans. However, the designations of these groups were not linguistically Akkadian but Aramaic and Arabian, and therefore they were most likely emic terms used by the members of the group themselves, not ones imposed on them by the cuneiform scribes.[207] Moreover, the membership of a Chaldean group like Bīt-Dakkūri seems to have been grounded in the idea of shared kinship among its members.[208] Labels like 'Chaldean' or 'Aramean' may have been given by outsiders, and we should not necessarily expect that strong feelings of solidarity existed between the members of Bīt-Amūkāni and Bīt-Dakkūri.[209] However, from the etic perspective of the Assyrian cuneiform scribes the social entities Aramean and Chaldean existed, and the terminology employed by the scribes will be used in this study for the sake of convenience. Groups such as Bīt-Dakkūri will be called 'tribes' in this study, indicating primarily their social organisation, but this is not to claim that such organisation was a certain way or that their lifestyle was nomadic.

It is commonly thought that the Arameans and Chaldeans arrived in Babylonia at the turn of the second and first millennia and that they were Aramaic-speaking population groups from the north and north-west.[210] Nevertheless, they should not be regarded as outsiders in Babylonian society, as both groups exercised significant political power in Babylonia: men of Chaldean descent led numerous rebellions against the Assyrian Empire in the eight and seventh centuries and were occasionally able to claim the throne in Babylon.[211] Furthermore, it is possible that King Nabopolassar was also of Chaldean descent, and it seems probable that King Neriglissar belonged to the Puqūdu tribe and Nabonidus' mother was an Aramean from the Syrian city of Harran.[212] The political power of the Aramean and Chaldean tribes is reflected on Nebuchadnezzar II's *Hofkalender*, which lists a number of tribal leaders among the magnates of his empire.[213] Yet another testimony to the importance of Chaldean tribes in Babylonia are the Hebrew

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[203] Lipiński 2000, 422–489, Beaulieu 2013a, 45–47; Frame 2013, 90–97.

[204] Lipiński 2000, 422–489.

[205] See von Dassow 1999a, 234–241; Szuchman (ed.) 2009.

[206] Frame 2013, 102–103.

[207] According to Zadok 2013, these group names are primarily Aramaic, but Lipiński 2000, 416–489 favours an Arabian etymology of many names.

[208] Lipiński 2000, 416.

[209] On the tensions and cooperation between different Aramean and Chaldean groups in Babylonia, see Fales 2011.

[210] See section 1.2.2, but cf. Lipiński 2000, 416–489 on their possible affiliation with Arabian tribes.

[211] Frame 2013, 97–116.

[212] Jursa 2014a, 131–133.

[213] Da Riva 2013, 213 vi*:19'–32'. See Da Riva 2013, 204; Jursa 2014a, 127–130.

Bible and Greek sources, which use the word 'Chaldean' to refer to the inhabitants of Babylonia.[214]

Kinship was not only a central element of social organisation among the Arameans and Chaldeans. It appears to have been the most decisive affiliation in a person's social world among other population groups as well. This was obviously the case among cuneiform scribes, priests, and the other people in their circles, a group which Assyriologists have often called the urban elite or urban upper class.[215] There is no evidence of an emic term which was used to describe this group or its members, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that such a social group existed in antiquity and that it is not a mere modern construction. The most distinctive feature of this group is its habit of tracing family genealogies back to eponymous ancestors, resulting in such naming patterns as 'PN1 the son of PN2 the descendant of PN3'.[216] The identification of a person using his first name and his father's name was commonplace in the scribal and legal tradition of the period, but the usage of family names was confined to certain clans or lineages in each city. Many of these families were associated with temples and inherited prebends, whereas some engaged in large-scale entrepreneurial activities.[217] These families maintained the cuneiform culture, performed the rites in Babylonian temples, and exercised significant power in the old cities. The long sixth century was the golden age of these families, but their involvement in the unsuccessful revolts against King Xerxes in 484 led to changes in the Babylonian social landscape at the expense of this old elite.[218]

The urban elite comprised only a small minority of the population, but, as noted above, they are usually attested as protagonists of private archives and as scribes of any given document.[219] As a result, our perspective of the rest of the population is primarily their perspective, and a significant part of the Babylonian population is underrepresented in the available sources. This would include common people in the cities and countryside, including craftsmen, unskilled workers, slaves, farmers, herdsmen, fishermen, and, in particular, women and children.[220] Some of these people had recently arrived in Babylonia, while other families had lived in Babylonia for centuries. Some affiliated themselves with an Aramean or Chaldean tribe while others did not. Only a minority of the urban population belonged to the upper class. Babylonia experienced a period of population growth and urbanisation in the mid-first millennium,[221] and, as described above, this was accompanied by economic growth. There was a demand for hired labour and people could make their living as paid workers, for instance, in public construction projects. At the same time, Babylonia was an agricultural society, and the number of

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[214] Beaulieu 2007, 199.

[215] See, for example, Waerzeggers 2003/2004, 158; Jursa 2010a, 4.

[216] Nielsen 2011; Wunsch 2014.

[217] On the social world of Babylonian priests, see Waerzeggers 2010a; Still 2016. The most famous example of entrepreneurs is the Egibi family of Babylon, on whom see Wunsch 2007. On the urban elite in Sippar, see Waerzeggers 2014a.

[218] See section 1.2.1.

[219] According to Michael Jursa (personal communication, June 2015), 4–8 per cent of the population belonged to this group.

[220] See Jursa 2007d; 2015a on different socio-economic groups and professions in Babylonian society.

[221] Adams 1981, 178; Brinkman 1984b; Jursa 2010a, 37–42.

farmers must have exceeded the more specialised population in the same way as in other non-industrialised societies.[222] Villages appear only on the fringes of our source material, however, and little is known about their social organisation and daily life.[223] The texts discussed in this study can shed light on this issue, as the majority of them were written in rural settlements.

The urban elite should probably be included in the category of Akkadians mentioned in the Assyrian sources, but we lack information about the inclusion of the urban lower classes or peasants in this group. Because Assyrian sources focus on the political developments in Babylonia, it is conceivable that the categories of Akkadians, Chaldeans, and Arameans refer first and foremost to the power blocs, not to the three main population groups of the region.[224] In this regard, it has to be emphasised that a person's linguistically Akkadian or Aramaic name did not necessarily correspond to his affiliation with the Akkadians or Arameans.[225] There is no emic terminology that would correspond to the term 'Akkadian', and it is not to be equated with the modern usage of terms like 'Dutch' or 'Iraqi'. Nor does it correspond to the term 'Babylonian' if the latter is understood to denote the native inhabitants of Babylonia.

The term 'Babylonians' may in fact lead us to overlook the heterogeneity of the society and create imagined solidarities which did not actually exist. In this study, I aim to use more nuanced categories when possible, such as those related to socio-economic status. However, the word 'Babylonians' cannot be discarded altogether, because there is an obvious need for a general term which juxtaposes deportees with the native population of Babylonia. I use the term 'Babylonians' to refer to people who bore Akkadian or common Aramaic names and who were apparently not descendants of deportees or recent migrants to Babylonia. This group will unavoidably include deportees and other immigrants, because Akkadian names often disguise the foreign background of their bearers. At the same time, Aramaic was widely spoken in Babylonia, and Aramaic names are not indicative of a person's foreign origin.[226] As the following section shows, uncommon personal names are normally the only means to identify people of foreign origin.

Despite our inability to find an emic term that would cover the population of Babylonia as opposed to the recently arrived deportees, foreignness – in the sense of originating from a different region – was presented in cuneiform sources as a distinctive feature of certain population groups. In the texts from the Palace Archive of Nebuchadnezzar II, rations were given to sailors from Tyre, carpenters from Arwad and Byblos, and to Judean courtiers, to name but a few.[227] Moreover, the foreign origins of

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[222] On the agricultural basis of Babylonian society, see Jursa 2010a; 2014c. For estimations of people participating in agricultural production in non-industrialised societies, see Lenski 1966, 199–200; Lenski et al. 1991, 181. For urban population in Europe in 1500–1800, see de Vries 1984, 38–39, 76.

[223] On the Babylonian countryside and villages, see van Driel 2001; Richardson 2007. On the urban perceptions of the countryside, see Van De Mieroop 1997a, 42–62.

[224] On the situation in the seventh and sixth centuries, see Frame 1992, 32–51; Jursa 2014a, 126–133.

[225] See section 1.4.5.

[226] See section 1.4.5.

[227] See section 2.4.

the Egyptian temple dependants (*širku*s) in the Ebabbar archive[228] and the Carian population in Borsippa[229] are made explicit. Finally, several foreign groups were deported to the countryside of Nippur and settled in communities according to their geographic origin. Consequently, places like Judah (Yāhūdu), Ashkelon, and Neirab appear in cuneiform documents from the sixth and fifth centuries.[230] Yāhūdu is also called the Town of Judeans (*ālu ša Yāhūdāya*) and Neirab the Town of Neirabians (*ālu ša Nērebāya*), which further corroborates the view that foreign origin was perceived as a distinctive feature of the Judean and Neirabian deportees.

I will use the following terminology to refer to people of foreign origin in Babylonia. The terms 'Judean' and 'Neirabian' will be used to refer to people who or whose ancestors had arrived in Babylonia from the kingdom of Judah or the city of Neirab. The great majority of them were deported to Babylonia at the turn of the seventh and sixth centuries. The criteria for identifying these people will be discussed in the next section. Moreover, I use the terms 'deportee' and 'immigrant' to refer to people who had arrived in Babylonia after the late seventh century, excluding the population groups that had settled there earlier, such as the Chaldeans and Arameans. 'Deportee' specifically refers to people who arrived in Babylonia as a result of forced migration, whereas 'immigrant' refers to all people who had – voluntarily or involuntarily – resettled in Babylonia.

In the context of first-millennium Babylonia, it is probably most appropriate to speak of a multicultural and multilingual society in which power was divided between different actors.[231] Chaldean and Aramean tribes exercised significant political, economic, and military power, whereas the closed circle of urban families dominated the sphere of temples, science, and cuneiform culture but were also entrepreneurs and owners of capital and real estate. A significant part of the population lived in the countryside outside the scope of the preserved sources, and among them were numerous immigrants and their descendants from different parts of the Near East. The tribes and urban elite enjoyed political and cultural hegemony, but they probably did not constitute the majority of the population in quantitative terms. There was no single social entity called the Babylonians, but rather population groups that were living in Babylonia and participated in its complex society. A key feature of the region was demographic diversity.

1.4.5 Identifying Foreigners in Babylonian Sources

1.4.5.1 Naming Practices in Babylonia

Babylonian sources rarely make the ethnic or geographic origin of people explicit. There are some exceptions, like the foreign professionals in the Palace Archive of Nebuchadnezzar II or the twin towns and *haṭru*s in the Nippur region, named after the

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[228] See, for example, Bongenaar and Haring 1994.
[229] Waerzeggers 2006.
[230] See chapters, 4, 5.3.5, and 7, respectively. On this phenomenon in general, see Eph⁽al 1978; Dandamayev 2004.
[231] On this division of power, see Jursa 2014a, 126–133.

hometowns and homelands of their residents.[232] However, there are very few texts that describe an individual as Judean or Egyptian, and, in most cases, personal names are our primary means of identifying people of foreign origin in Babylonian sources.

In Neo-Babylonian legal texts, people are normally referred to by their name and patronymic. The standard formula in Babylonian cuneiform is PN a-*šú šá* PN2 ('PN, son of PN2'), abbreviated in this study as PN/PN2. There are two notable exceptions: cases when no patronymic is given and cases when a family name is given in addition to a name and patronymic. The first exception applies to slaves and royal officials, who usually appear without a patronymic. Their owner's name or their official title is often given instead.[233] People working in or aiming for a career in the royal administration can often be identified by the so-called *Beamtennamen*, which include the element *šarru* ('king').[234] Three-tier genealogies involving a name, patronymic, and family name were borne by the members of the Babylonian urban upper class, the boundaries of which were partially defined by the use of these family names.[235] This group was exclusive, and families of deportees are not found among its ranks, even though women of foreign origin were occasionally able to marry into these families.[236]

Personal names are difficult markers of a person's origin as they do not simply express ethnicity, religious attitudes, or cultural background. A person may choose a new name when he migrates to a new country in order to help his integration, but the practice of renaming slaves was also well known in Babylonia.[237] Moreover, Aramaic was commonly spoken in Babylonia, and Aramaic names were not indicative of a person's non-Babylonian origin.[238] Consequently, people bearing Babylonian or Aramaic names and patronymics may have been native Babylonians but also immigrants of foreign origin. In some cases, there is also evidence of double-naming or fluidity in a person's name. Some royal officials were apparently renamed when they entered their office, yet they still retained their original name.[239] A rather interesting case is that of Bēl-šar-uṣur/Nubâ, who worked as a minor official in Yāhūdu in the mid-sixth century. He is twice named as Bēl-šar-uṣur (C2, 3, 'Bēl, protect the king!') but once as Yāhû-šar-uṣur (C4, 'Yahweh, protect the king!').[240] Nicknames were also used in Babylonia and long personal names abbreviated.[241]

Despite the caveats described above, name-giving is not an arbitrary process. It is influenced by traditions, current trends, and practical considerations. Names of a certain

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[232] On twin towns and *haṭru*s in the Nippur region, see Dandamayev 2004; Stolper 1985, 72–79, respectively.

[233] Baker 2001, 22; Jursa 2011b, 159.

[234] Stamm 1939, 118, 315–317; Bloch 2014, 135–141; Jursa 2015b.

[235] PN a-*šú šá* PN2 a PN3 ('PN, son of PN2, descendant of PN3'), abbreviated in this study as PN/PN2/PN3 or PN//PN3. On family names and their bearers, see Nielsen 2011; Wunsch 2014; Still 2016.

[236] See section 3.3. On the family name Miṣirāya ('Egyptian'), see Hackl and Jursa 2015, 158.

[237] Baker 2001, 22.

[238] Beaulieu 2007; 2013b; Hackl and Jursa 2015, 158; Hackl (forthcoming).

[239] Jursa 2011b, 165. See also Baker 2002, 4–6.

[240] For a more detailed discussion of this person and his name, see section 4.4.

[241] Names such as Rīmūt-Ninurta could be abbreviated as Rīmūt or names such as Arad-Gula as Ardia. See Tallqvist 1905, xvi–xix; Streck 2001, 110–111. In contrast to abbreviated names, real nicknames could be quite different from their bearer's official name. For some examples, see Wunsch 1993 vol. a, 15 + n. 64.

type and language are usually favoured in a certain region, and names given in Egypt were rather different from the names given in Babylonia. The local pantheon had an effect on name-giving, and there are significant onomastic differences between Babylonian cities.[242] Ancient Semitic names were often theophoric, that is to say, nominal or verbal clauses with the name of a deity as their subject. To cite an Akkadian and Hebrew example: Nabû-šum-iddin ('Nabû has given a son') and Zekaryāh(û) ('Yahweh has remembered'). Despite the regional differences, the worship of a deity was not confined to a certain city or region, and theophoric names are often unreliable indicators of ethnic or geographic origin.

Practical considerations of a child's parents also play a central role in name-giving: a name can give its bearer an advantage or disadvantage in social life, work, or education. The attractiveness of a certain name is closely related to power relations between different population groups. The names of a politically or economically stronger party are often attractive for a weaker one, whereas the stronger does not borrow names from the weaker. There is no evidence that any other population group borrowed Judean names, but foreign names of higher status, including Persian, Egyptian, and later Greek names, were attractive to other population groups as well.[243]

Accordingly, a Babylonian or Aramaic personal name or patronymic alone tells nothing about the ethnic origin of its bearer in Babylonia in the mid-first millennium. He or she might have been a native Babylonian or foreign deportee. Family names form an exception to this rule, for they indicate that the family in question had resided in Babylonia for a longer time. Iranian and Egyptian names are also complicated, as they are often indicative of their bearer's Iranian or Egyptian origin, but sometimes they were borne by other people as well.

1.4.5.2 Yahwistic Names as the Criterion for Identifying Judeans

Yahwistic names – that is, names with the divine name Yahweh – are the main criterion for identifying people of Judean origin in Babylonian sources.[244] They can be rather easily discerned from other names used in Babylonia and they appear to be indicative of a person's Judean origin in Babylonia in the mid-first millennium. This section discusses the main features of Yahwistic names, their connection to the people living in ancient Israel and Judah, and their usability as a criterion for identifying Judeans in Babylonian cuneiform sources.

The cult of Yahweh originated in the area south and east of the Dead Sea, but Israel and Judah became the centres of his worship in the first millennium.[245] This is reflected in Yahwistic names, which are not only found in the Hebrew Bible but are well attested

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[242] Baker 2002, 1–3.
[243] Boiy 2005; Hackl and Jursa 2015, 172.
[244] On Yahwistic names and the identification of Judeans in cuneiform sources, see Zadok 1979a; 2002; 2015b; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 14–29; Pearce 2015.
[245] van der Toorn 1995, 1711–1717; Sweeney 2013, 153–156.

in epigraphic finds from Israel[246] and Judah.[247] In a similar vein, Assyrian royal inscriptions refer to the kings of Israel and Judah who bore Yahwistic names.[248] The Assyrian and Babylonian deportations from Israel and Judah in the eighth to sixth centuries resulted in the emergence of Yahwistic names in legal and administrative texts in Mesopotamia.[249] Yahwistic names are also attested at Elephantine in Southern Egypt in the fifth century; a part of the soldiers there were of Judean origin.[250] This evidence indicates a strong connection between a person's Israelite or Judean origin and their use of Yahwistic names. However, there are some cases which appear to indicate that Yahweh was also worshipped by other population groups, and thus Yahwistic personal names would not necessarily indicate their bearers' Israelite or Judean origin. Before turning to these cases, it is worthwhile to investigate how the Yahwistic theophoric element is written in West Semitic and Akkadian sources.

The pronunciation of the name Yahweh is a modern scientific reconstruction, as the religious prohibition against saying the name led to eventual ignorance of its original vocalisation. Only the consonants *yhwh* remain to us, vocalised in a deliberately wrong way in the Hebrew Bible to prevent the reader from voicing the name unintentionally.[251] In personal names, abbreviated forms of the name were used.[252] The form *yw* appears to be Israelite, whereas *yhw* and later *yh* were predominantly used in Judah.[253] The Neo-Assyrian spelling of the Yahwistic element in initial position is usually *Ia-u-* and in final position similarly *-ia-(a-)u*, both with minor variations.[254] There is no major difference between the initial and final element, and the Israelite and Judean forms of the name Yahweh cannot be distinguished. The spellings are different in Babylonian cuneiform: the Yahwistic element is predominantly written as *Ia-hu-ú-* in initial position and as *-ia-a-ma* in final position, both with orthographical variation.[255] However, the initial element

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[246] 'Israel' refers here to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and 'Israelite' to its inhabitants and their descendants.

[247] Donner and Röllig 2002; Aḥituv 2008.

[248] Cogan 2008.

[249] Zadok 2002; 2015b; Pearce and Wunsch 2014.

[250] On the term 'Judean' in the Elephantine papyri, see below. On the Judeans of Elephantine, see Porten 1968; Granerød 2016, the latter with an up-to-date bibliography.

[251] van der Toorn 1995, 1711; Sweeney 2013, 153.

[252] Fowler 1988, 32–38, 371, 380.

[253] van der Toorn 1995, 1711–1712; Weippert 2007, 380–381; Sweeney 2013, 153. Weippert argues that *yhw* is a Judean form, but van der Toorn and Sweeney point out that it was used in Israel as well.

[254] Zadok 2015b, 159–160, gives the forms *Ia-u-* and A+A-*u-* in initial position and *-ia/iá-(a-)u/ú, -(C)i-a-u, -(C)i-A+A-ú,* and *-i-u/ú* in final position ('C' stands here for consonant). It should be noted that the Yahwistic element is never spelled as *-ia-a* in final position (cf. Zadok 2015b, 160). The name of the Judean king Hezekiah is always spelled with *u/ú* as the final sign, which is made clear by the recent edition of Sennacherib's inscriptions (RINAP 3/1 and 3/2). RINAP 3/2 44:21 reads ᵐ*ha-za-qi-a-a-ú*; cf. Luckenbill 1924, 77:21; PNA 2/I, 469; Zadok 2015b, 160. The name of a certain Hilqī-Yau is spelled once as ᵐ*hi-il-qi-ia* (ND 2443 iv:4), but as other occurrences of his name on the same tablet end in *u* (ND 2621 i:3'; ND 2443 ii:6), this abnormal spelling obviously results from a lack of space at the end of the line (ND 2443+2621 is edited in Parker 1961, 27–28; see Zadok 1979a, 99–100; Younger 2002, 213; PNA 2/I, 472).

[255] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 19–20 list all the known orthographies of these two elements. The spellings of the initial element Yāhû are *Ia-(a)-hu-(u/ú)-, E-hu-ú-, I-hu-ú, Hu-ú-, Ia-ku-ú-, Ia-a-, Ia-ʾ-,* and *Ia-ʾ-ú-*. The final element Yāma has numerous different spellings; only the major variants are given here: *-ia/iá-(a)-ma, -Ca/Ci/Cu-a-ma, -Ca/Ci/Cu-ia-(a)-ma, -Ca/Ci-ʾ-a-ma, -(Ce)-e-ma, -(a)-a-ma,* and *-a-am*.

is occasionally written as *Ia-(a)-mu-* and the final element as *-ia-hu-ú*, both with orthographical variation.[256] There are also abbreviated forms of the final element.[257] The peculiar spelling *ia-a-ma* results from the Neo-Babylonian orthography, in which *m* represents also *w*.[258] There is consensus that both *ia-hu-ú* and *ia-a-ma* represent the Yahwistic theophoric element, but pronunciation of the element *ia-a-ma* and its relation to *ia-hu-u* and to the alphabetic spellings of the divine name are disputed.[259]

The previous overview of orthographic practices helps one to evaluate possible attestations of Yahwistic theophoric names outside the Israelite and Judean onomasticon. It should first be noted that the ending *-ia* in cuneiform does not represent the Yahwistic theophoric element but is a common hypocoristic in personal names.[260] Accordingly, names such as Bānia and Zabdia are not Yahwistic, although it is possible that they are occasionally hypocoristics of Yahwistic names.[261] The alleged attestations of the Yahwistic theophoric element in the Eblaite[262] and Amorite[263] onomastica and in documents from the Sealand and Nippur in the second millennium[264] need to be refuted as they are not supported by a closer linguistic analysis of the evidence. A reference to *yw* in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle (KTU 1.1 iv:14) does not bear evidence to the worship of Yahweh in Ugarit.[265]

In addition to the Israelites and Judeans, it has been suggested that Yahweh was worshipped in the first millennium by the Arameans, Philistines, Phoenicians, Nabateans, and Syrians. According to Jeaneane D. Fowler, identification of Judeans in Babylonian sources is difficult because Arameans tended to add new gods, including Yahweh, to their pantheon.[266] Fowler claims that this is suggested by the Aramaic Yahwistic names in the Murašû archive and by the usage of Yahwistic names by 'Arameans' at Elephantine. First, the fact that a name is linguistically Aramaic does not mean that its bearer was ethnically 'Aramean'. Aramaic was very widely spoken in the Near East and Babylonia in the late fifth century,[267] and thus the use of Aramaic names was not confined to a certain population group.[268] Judeans undoubtedly spoke Aramaic in Babylonia as well, and the distinction between Hebrew and Aramaic Yahwistic names does not reflect ethnic divisions among the population in the Murašû archive. Second, the situation at

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[256] *Ia-(a)-mu-* and *Ia-ma-ʾ'*(BU)- for the initial element and *-iá-a-hu-ú*, *-Ca/Ci-ia-hu-ú*, *-Cu-ia/iá-a-hu-ú*, and *-Cu-i-hu-ú* for the final element (Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 19–20).

[257] *-Ca-a-a*, *-Ce-e-ia-a-ʾ*, *-Ci-ia-a-ʾ*, *-Cu-ia*, *-ia-[a]-ʾ*, and *-ia-a-ʾ* (Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 20).

[258] von Soden 1969 § 21, 31. See also Coogan 1973, 189–190; Tropper 2001, 81–82.

[259] See Coogan 1973; Zadok 1979a, 7–22; Tropper 2001; Millard 2013.

[260] Lipiński 2001, 229–230.

[261] Cf. Ahn 2011, 52–53, who suggests that names such as Ardia and Zabdia are Yahwistic. See Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 41, 92. Hypocoristics could naturally be formed from Yahwistic names as well; see the case of Hananī and Hanan-Yāma in BE 9 69; BE10 7, 84; PBS 2/1 107, and the (somewhat unclear) case of Bānia and Banā-Yāma in J9 and C84 (Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 43).

[262] See the claims in Pettinato 1980. On their refutation, see Müller 1980; van der Toorn 1995, 1712–1713; Chavalas 2002, 40–41.

[263] See the discussion of this question and an overview of earlier scholarship in Streck 1999.

[264] Suggested by Dalley 2013, 182–184; Keetman 2017; refuted by Zadok 2014b, 229–232.

[265] Smith 1994, 151–152; van der Toorn 1995, 1713.

[266] Fowler 1988, 212, 319–333.

[267] Beaulieu 2007; 2013b; Hackl (forthcoming).

[268] See Hackl and Jursa 2015, 158.

Elephantine is far more complicated than Fowler assumes. It is true that some people bearing Yahwistic names are explicitly called 'Aramean', but, surprisingly, some of them are referred to as 'Judean' on another occasion.[269] This shows that the terms 'Judean' and 'Aramean' were not mutually exclusive and they did not simply demarcate the divisions between population groups.[270] The worship of Yahweh and the use of Yahwistic names appear to be linked to the Judean origin of a part of the population at Elephantine.[271]

There is no evidence that Yahweh was worshipped by Philistines, Phoenicians, or Nabateans either. Niels Peter Lemche's suggestion that Ṣidqâ, the king of Ashkelon attested in Assyrian sources,[272] had a Yahwistic name was effectively disproven by K. Lawson Younger, Jr.[273] The spelling of the king's name (*Ṣi-id-qa-a*) does not conform to the Assyrian conventions of writing the Yahwistic element, and it is actually a hypocoristic of a longer personal name. The single reference to the god Ιευώ in Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* 1.9.21 does not confirm that Yahweh was worshipped by the Phoenicians,[274] and the word *ʾhyw* in Nabatean personal names cannot be identified as the Yahwistic theophoric element.[275]

Finally, one needs to consider Stephanie M. Dalley's suggestion that Yahweh was worshipped in Syria in the eighth century.[276] Her thesis is based on three names, Azri-Yau, Yau-biʾdi, and Joram, the first two being attested in Assyrian royal inscriptions and the latter one in the Hebrew Bible. The first of these people, Azri-Yau (*Az-ri-a-ú*; *Az-ri-ia-a-ú*), was a rebel in the area of Hamath, defeated by Tiglath-pileser III in 738.[277] He should not be identified as the Judean king Azariah,[278] but his name appears to be undeniably Yahwistic in light of the Assyrian spellings surveyed above. It has been suggested that this Azri-Yau was of Israelite origin,[279] the son of an Israelite princess and a Hamathean ruler,[280] or a local Syrian ruler with a Yahwistic name.[281] If Azri-Yau was of Syrian origin, one would expect the Aramean spelling *ʿdr* of the first element instead of the Canaanite form *ʿzr* found in the cuneiform.[282] These linguistic considerations point towards Azri-Yau's Israelite or Judean origin, but it cannot be excluded either that he was a native of Northern Syria who worshipped Yahweh.

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[269] Kratz 2011, 421–424; van der Toorn 2016a.

[270] van der Toorn 2016a.

[271] However, I am hesitant to follow van der Toorn (2016a) in translating the Aramaic word *yhwdyʾ* as 'Jews' rather than 'Judeans'. In this period, the designation seems to be primarily related to ethnicity and geographic origin, not so much to religious beliefs or practices. See Becking 2011b.

[272] Lemche 2000, 189 n. 66.

[273] Younger 2002, 207–216.

[274] van der Toorn 1995, 1712.

[275] Knauf 1984.

[276] Dalley 1990.

[277] RINAP 1, Tiglath-pileser III 13:2, 31:7.

[278] Naʾaman 1974, 36–39.

[279] van der Toorn 1992, 90; Weippert 2007, 383–387.

[280] Zadok 2015b, 160 n. 3; see also Weippert 2007, 387.

[281] Naʾaman 1974, 39; 1978, 229–239; Dalley 1990, 26–29. See also the discussion in Lipiński 2000, 313–315.

[282] Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 166; Weippert 2007, 385. Cf. Dalley 1990, 28. See also Abraham 2007, 215–216; Zadok 2015d.

The second person with a possibly Yahwistic name was Yau-biʾdi or Ilu-biʾdi, a Hamathean rebel in the beginning of the reign of Sargon II. His name is spelled two different ways in cuneiform, ᵈ*Ia-(ú)-bi-ʾ-di* and *I-lu-(ú)-bi-ʾ-di*, both with small variations.[283] The first name appears to be Yahwistic, but the second one replaces the divine name with the general word for 'god' (*ilu*). Dalley suggests, 'The Assyrians thought of Yahweh as El…, and give a variant of Yau-biʾdi's name as El-biʾdi.'[284] It is too far-fetched to assume that the Assyrians had such ideas about Yahweh and El, but it may be possible that the Yahwistic theophoric element was occasionally replaced with *ilu* in cuneiform, and the spelling Ilu-biʾdi does not exclude taking Yau-biʾdi as a Yahwistic name.[285]

The third person listed by Dalley is Joram, the son of the king of Hamath, who brings gifts to King David in 2 Sam 8:9–11. His name is given as Hadoram in 1 Chr 18:9–11 and Ιεδδουραν in the Septuagint (2 Kgdms 8:9–11). The account may not be based on any real historical event,[286] but the idea of a Hamathean prince with a Yahwistic name is noteworthy in any case. Apart from these three names there is no other evidence of native worship of Yahweh in Syria, and it is difficult to accept Dalley's conclusion that there were 'several cities in Syria where people worshipped Yahweh as a major god in the 8th century BC'.[287] In the 730s and 720s something prompted the use of Yahwistic names among the rebel leaders in the region of Hamath, but the geographic origins of Azri-Yau and Yau-biʾdi remain unclear. Azri-Yau's non-Aramaic name may indicate that he was a foreigner from Israel or Judah, and Sargon's inscriptions make clear that Yau-biʾdi was not the legitimate heir to the throne.[288] This evidence indicates that none of the rebels belonged to the local ruling dynasties. Prince Joram of Hamath is, first and foremost, a character in the narratives surrounding the mythical kingdom of David. It cannot be excluded that the Yahwistic names of the Syrian rebels of the late eighth century are reflected in the name of this literary character as well. Accordingly, the available evidence does not support the conclusion that Yahweh was worshipped among the native population of Syria in the eighth century or later.

In light of the previous discussion, the use of Yahwistic names was generally indicative of a person's Judean or Israelite origin in the first millennium. The cult of Yahweh is well attested within the geographical boundaries of these two kingdoms, and Yahwistic names start to appear in Assyria after the deportations from Israel and Judah in the late eighth century.[289] In Babylonia, Yahwistic names appear in cuneiform sources after the deportations in the early sixth century.[290] Moreover, there are several instances

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[283] PNA 2/1, 497, 526; Fuchs 1994, 410. Note that the Ilu-biʾdi mentioned in SAA 1 171 is not identical with the homonymous rebel in Sargon's inscriptions (see PNA 2/1, 526).
[284] Dalley 1990, 31.
[285] See the doubts expressed in Lipiński 1971 (but see Lipiński 2000, 314 n. 430); van der Toorn 1992, 89–90.
[286] See the criticism in van der Toorn 1992, 90.
[287] Dalley 1990, 32.
[288] *Prunkinschrift* 33 (Fuchs 1994, 200–201, 345).
[289] Zadok 2015b, 160. On the possibility that Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II had Judean wives, see Dalley 1998; but cf. Younger 2002, 216–218.
[290] Zadok 2002, 27–28; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, xxxviii (see C1, the earliest document from Yāhūdu). A certain *Gir-re-e-ma* is mentioned in the accession year of Sîn-šum-līšir (626 BCE; BE 8 141) – he is the

that make the connection between a Yahwistic name and a person's origin explicit. The correct identification of the Yahwistic element in cuneiform sources is confirmed by references to the kings of Israel and Judah in Assyrian royal inscriptions[291] and by the presence of King Jehoiachin and other Judeans on the ration lists from Babylon.[292] Yahwistic names are attested among a group of Samarian charioteers at Kalhu,[293] and, finally, there is a great number of Yahwistic names in the village of Yāhūdu in the Babylonian countryside.[294] The same applies to Elephantine, where people characterised as 'Judeans' bore Yahwistic names.

In Babylonia in the sixth and fifth centuries, Yahwistic names indicated a person's Judean origin. It is of course possible that some people of Israelite origin found their way to Babylonia or that some people in close contact with Judeans adopted Yahwistic names. However, these scenarios cannot involve a large number of people. Babylonian deportations from Judah and the advent of Yahwistic names in Babylonia are chronologically very closely related, and the majority of Yahwistic names can be found in rural communities where deportees were resettled. It is possible that some descendants of Israelite or Judean deportees migrated from Assyria to Babylonia after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, and that some people from the territory of the former kingdom of Israel were deported to Babylonia.[295] However, the evidence remains inconclusive, and it can hardly explain the emergence of Yahwistic names in Babylonian cuneiform sources.

When it comes to the adoption of Yahwistic names, it is highly unlikely that the native population or other immigrants had any reason to do this. Immigrants can benefit from the adoption of local names, but others do not have an incentive to use the names of an unimportant minority. The situation is different when it comes to the names of a dominant minority: Iranian and perhaps Egyptian names were attractive to outsiders in Achaemenid Babylonia.[296] However, Yahwistic names did not have such status. Admittedly, friendship, marriage, or business relationships may have affected the naming practices of a certain family and led to the adoption of Yahwistic names by non-Judeans, but there is no reason to assume that this was a common phenomenon. It should be also noted that the linguistic and socio-economic environment of Yahwistic names in Babylonia was peculiar: they are typically not found in the social sphere of temples or priestly families but in multicultural contexts where other West Semitic names also occur.

At the same time, we need to realise that a great number – perhaps even the majority – of Judeans cannot be identified in Babylonian sources. Only some Judeans bore Yahwistic names, and those with Babylonian and non-Yahwistic West Semitic names can only be identified as Judeans if they had relatives with Yahwistic names. Consequently, the picture is skewed in favour of those families which retained the practice of using

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single person who possibly bore a Yahwistic name in Babylonia before the early sixth century. See Zadok 2002, 27; Da Riva 2001; section 6.2.

[291] Cogan 2008.

[292] See section 2.4.

[293] Dalley and Postgate 1984 99 ii:16–23; see also Dalley 1985.

[294] See chapter 4.

[295] See Zadok 2015b, 175–176.

[296] Hackl and Jursa 2015, 172. See Boiy 2005 on the practice of using Greek names in Hellenistic Babylonia.

Yahwistic names. This has important consequences for the study of identity and integration.

There are also some other names that have been regarded as being indicative of their bearer's Judean origin. Hoshea (*A-mu-še-e* or *Ú-še-eh* in Babylonian cuneiform),[297] Nubâ (*Nu-ba-a* or *Nu-ba-ú-a*), [298] and Šillimu (*ši-li-im*, *še-li-im-mu*, etc.)[299] were indeed used predominantly, if not exclusively, by Judeans in Babylonia in the mid-first millennium. The name Šabbatāya (*Šá-ab-ba-ta-a-a* and other forms with minor differences in spelling) is not common in Mesopotamian sources[300] and it was used by Judeans, but it cannot be shown that the name was exclusively Judean.[301] The same applies to Haggâ (*ha-ag-ga-a*, *ha-ga-a*).[302] It cannot be confirmed that the name Minyamin (*Mi-in-ia-a-me-en*, etc.) was used by Judeans at all.[303]

In this study, people bearing Yahwistic names are identified as Judeans. Logically, their blood relatives can be identified as Judeans as well, regardless of their names. The business partners, acquaintances, debtors, or creditors of Judeans are identified as Judeans only if they or their family members had Yahwistic names. Names such as Hoshea, Nubâ, and Šabbatāya may have been exclusively Judean, but as this cannot be confirmed, these names will not be used as indicators of a person's Judean origin. Using this set of criteria, 287 people can be identified as Judeans in Babylonian documents written in 591–413 BCE. This number does not include persons who are referred to only as patronymics and who do not play an active role in any document. My corpus of texts is primarily based on the list presented in Zadok 2002,[304] the documents published in Pearce and Wunsch 2014, and nos. 1–42 in Wunsch (forthcoming).

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[297] Only three different individuals used the name, and two of them had blood relatives with Yahwistic names: Amušê (*Nbn* 1), Amušê/Arih (from a Judean family of royal merchants; see section 3.3), and Mattan-Yāma/Amušê (EE 113; written as *Ú-še-eh* in PBS 2/1 60). See Zadok 1979a, 26–27; Bloch 2014, 145–146; but cf. Zadok 2014a, 112. See the Neo-Assyrian attestations of this name in PNA 1/I, 238; PNA 3/II, 1421.

[298] The name is not attested in cuneiform sources apart from the documents from Yāhūdu and its surroundings. Except for Bānia/Nubâ in J9, people with this name always had blood relatives with Yahwistic names. Moreover, it is possible that the Bānia in J9 is identical with Banā-Yāma/Nubâ in C84 (see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 42–43, 287). On the name Nubâ and its attestations in the environs of Yāhūdu, see Joannès and Lemaire 1999, 29; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 75, 287.

[299] The name is not attested in Tallqvist 1905, and it is borne only by Judeans in the documents published in Pearce and Wunsch 2014, BE 9 (except for Natunu/Šillimu whose Judean origin cannot be confirmed in BE 9 45), EE, and IMT.

[300] It is not attested, for example, in Tallqvist 1905 or PNA.

[301] See the attestations and discussion in Coogan 1976a, 34–35, 84; Zadok 1979a, 22–24; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 81, 291; Pearce 2015, 21–22. The name is also attested in Elephantine, on which see Granerød 2016, 196–204. Although some people bearing this name had blood relatives with Yahwistic names, there are several cases where their Judean background is unclear or improbable. Pearce and Wunsch (2014) analyse Šabbatāya as a Hebrew name, whereas Coogan, Zadok (2014a, 112), and Granerød do not regard it as exclusively Judean. Pearce (2015, 22) suggests that the name 'can, in fact, identify Judeans'.

[302] Coogan 1976a, 23, 73; Zadok 1979a, 23–24; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 52–53, 271.

[303] The name is attested in the Murašû archive, but not in the environs of Yāhūdu. None of the people with this name had blood relatives with Yahwistic names. The name is analysed and the pertinent evidence is surveyed in Coogan 1976a, 28–29, 77; Zadok 1979a, 24–26, but they perceive the name as more typically Judean or Hebrew than I do.

[304] However, as my criteria for identifying Judeans are stricter than those of Zadok, several people from Zadok's list are omitted. The main difference is that Zadok includes people who used names like Šabbatāya

Unlike Judeans, people of Neirabian origin can be identified only in a single group of 27 texts, excavated in Neirab, near Aleppo, Syria. As explained in detail in chapter 7, these texts were written in the twin town of Neirab in Babylonia, and when the descendants of Neirabian deportees returned to their ancestral hometown in Syria, they took the texts along. Although a significant proportion of inhabitants in the twin town of Neirab must have been of Neirabian origin, the example of Yāhūdu shows that other people also found their way to these settlements. Therefore, personal names are again the main criterion for identifying persons of Neirabian origin in this small corpus, a remarkable feature of which is the abundance of Sîn and Nusku names. Nusku, the son of the moon god Sîn/Sahr, is rarely attested in the Neo-Babylonian onomasticon,[305] but worship of the moon god, his consort, and his son was very popular in Northern Syria.[306] Although Sîn or Nusku names are not reliable identifiers of Neirabians in the Babylonian text corpus in general, in this particular group of texts the families which used these theophoric elements and West Semitic names can be identified as Neirabian.[307]

1.5 Sources

There are rich sources for the study of immigrants in Babylonia in the mid-first millennium, but these sources have been used very sporadically in historical research. The Hebrew Bible has served as the main source for the study of Judeans, whereas cuneiform sources have been used more often for onomastic than historical studies. As discussed above, the present study builds on standard historical methodology, according to which historical investigation must start with an evaluation of the available sources. Primacy must be given to sources that are contemporary with the events studied, and later accounts can be given only a secondary place as historical witnesses. Regardless of their age, the reliability of each source must be assessed individually. The following discussion will offer an overview and evaluation of sources for the present study.

1.5.1 The Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible is an important but also problematic source for the study of history in the sixth and fifth centuries. The historical reconstruction of the fall of Judah and the early Second Temple period is largely dependent on biblical sources. At the same time, the Babylonian exile itself constitutes a gap in the biblical narrative, even though theological reflection on the exile characterises many parts of the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, although the accounts on the fall of Judah and deportations to Babylonia undeniably refer to historical events, they are not primary sources written at the time of the events they describe. Biblical texts are secondary sources at best, and books like the Chronicles fall into the category of tertiary sources. The Hebrew Bible should not be excluded out of

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or were co-debtors or colleagues of Judeans (see, for example, persons 106–108 and 111 in Zadok 2002, 41).

[305] Tallqvist 1905, 170.
[306] Lipiński 2000, 620–623.
[307] Tolini 2015, 69–73.

hand from a methodologically responsible historical study, but its information must be critically evaluated, like any other source.

When it comes to the fall of Judah and deportations to Babylonia, the Hebrew Bible is an important source for a historical reconstruction of the events. The general picture of destruction and deportation in 2 Kings 24–25 is corroborated by archaeology and cuneiform sources.[308] In the same vein, the lists of Babylonian officials in conquered Jerusalem in Jer 39 appear to be based on correct information of contemporary office holders.[309] At the same time, however, biblical books provide contradictory information on the number, date, and extent of the deportations to Babylonia.[310] The use of this information is further complicated by the unstable textual traditions of these passages.[311] 2 Kings 25:27–30 can be seen as an epilogue to the fall of Judah: the Babylonian king Evil-merodach (Amēl-Marduk) releases King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison and raises him above other kings at Evil-merodach's table. Cuneiform sources confirm that Jehoiachin was indeed taken to Babylon and received food rations, along with other Judeans. The account of Jehoiachin's amnesty will be discussed together with the pertinent cuneiform sources in section 2.5.

The Hebrew Bible provides us with a historical narrative which ends at the onset of the exile and begins again at the fall of the Babylonian Empire. Numerous biblical books resonate with the trauma of the exile, but life in exile is not the subject of these theological reflections. The exile serves as the setting for the prophecies in the Book of Ezekiel and for the narratives in Daniel and Esther, but, as the following discussion reveals, none of these books are particularly useful as a source for historical enquiry. The same applies to Jeremiah, Psalm 137, and Ezra-Nehemiah. All these accounts may shed light on the exilic experience and perceptions of life in exile,[312] but they are of little help in writing a social history of Judeans in Babylonia.

The Book of Ezekiel is situated in the context of the Babylonian exile, and the prophet is depicted as a Judean exile living in sixth-century Babylonia. The authors of the book certainly had information about Mesopotamian culture[313] and Babylonian geography, including the Kabaru canal (the river Chebar in Ezek 1:1, 3:15, etc.),[314] which is also referred to in a text from the environs of Yāhūdu (J7). It may well be that the references to the elders of Judah (8:1) and Israel (14:1),[315] as well as to the Judean settlement at Tel-abib (3:15), reflect historical reality, but the focal points of the book are Ezekiel's prophetic visions and oracles. Apart from mentioning the river Chebar, Tel-abib, and the elders of Judah and Israel, the Book of Ezekiel contains hardly any information about Judean exiles in Babylonia.

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[308] See section 1.2.3.
[309] Jursa 2008; 2010b, 85–88; Becking 2009b.
[310] 2 Kgs 24–25; 2 Chr 36; Jer 39, 52:28–30; Dan 1:1–2.
[311] See section 1.2.3.
[312] See, for example, Smith 1989; Rom-Shiloni 2013.
[313] Nissinen 2015 and other articles in the thematic issue of *Die Welt des Orients* (45/1, 2015).
[314] Vanderhooft 2012. On the location of the Kabaru canal, see Waerzeggers 2010b, 790, 804; Tolini 2011 vol. 1, 491–498.
[315] Ephʿal 1978, 76–80.

Another prophetic book closely related to the exile is Jeremiah. However, the focus of the book is on early sixth-century Judah, and events in Babylonia are referred to only in chapter 29, which describes the correspondence between the prophet Jeremiah and the Babylonian exiles. The historicity of the episode is disputed,[316] and even if it contained a kernel of truth, it is not very informative for our purposes. Two things can be noted: the chapter takes for granted that it was possible to send letters from Judah to Babylon and back, and, like the Book of Ezekiel, it suggests that prophets were active among the Judeans in Babylonia.

Psalm 137 has become a strong symbol, as its opening words are commonly used as a reference to the Babylonian exile of Judeans.[317] The psalm is a piece of powerful poetry which delicately expresses the trauma of being uprooted and placed in a foreign country. Many deportees of today can undoubtedly share the despair reflected in its verses, but one must be careful not to claim that the psalm represents the experience of every Judean in Babylonia.[318] Its message must be taken seriously, but it should not be used as a backdrop to the present study.

The Books of Daniel and Esther share several common themes, including their setting at a foreign court and the motif of Judeans who trust their God and gain favour with the king. The Book of Daniel has two main parts, the stories at the Babylonian court in chapters 1–6 and the apocalyptic visions in chapters 7–12. It is widely held that the latter part of the book reflects the historical situation in the 160s BCE, when the actions of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes resulted in the Maccabean revolt.[319] The stories in chapters 1–6 are probably of older origin, and some of their motifs – such as the renaming of Judean youth and the presence of foreign specialists at the Babylonian court[320] – are historically accurate or plausible.[321] However, accidental historical accuracy does not mean that Dan 1–6 can be used as a source for writing a history of Judeans in Babylonia. The stories are full of miracles, fantastic scenes, and thrilling adventures, which do not lend much support to historical reliability. It is also noteworthy that the authors of Dan 1–6 were unaware of or did not care about the correct chronology of Babylonian and Persian kings: King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 1–4) is succeeded by his son Belshazzar (5), and Darius the Mede seizes power after Belshazzar is killed (5:30–6:29). Finally, Cyrus the Persian ascends the throne after Darius (6:29). Given all these characteristics of literary fiction, the Book of Daniel cannot be used as a source for the present study.

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[316] Holladay 1989, 131–144; McKane 1996, 742; and Lundbom 2004, 342–367 suggest that the letters in Jer 29 are not a mere literary creation, whereas Carroll 1986, 566–568; and Fischer 2005, 88 doubt their historicity.

[317] See, for example, the exhibition of the tablets from Yāhūdu and its surroundings at the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem (Vukosavović 2015) and recent edited books on the Babylonian exile (Ahn and Middlemas (eds.) 2012; Gabbay and Secunda (eds.) 2014).

[318] See Becking 2009a.

[319] On the composition and dating of the Book of Daniel, see, for example, Hartman and Di Lella 1978, 3–71; Collins 1993, 25–71.

[320] On the renaming of officials, see section 1.4.5.1. See section 2.4 on foreign professionals at the court of Nebuchadnezzar II.

[321] On these issues, see the essays in Collins et al. 2001.

The Book of Esther is not set in Babylonia but in the Persian capital of Susa. Nevertheless, the book suggests that Nebuchadnezzar's deportations from Jerusalem led to the emergence of a Judean exilic community in Susa (2:6). Unlike the separate stories in Daniel, the Book of Esther narrates one coherent story about two Judeans, Esther and Mordecai, and their success in preventing the genocide of Judeans in the Persian Empire. The story has some features which are historically accurate or plausible, the most important being the Judean presence in Susa in the early fifth century BCE confirmed by cuneiform sources.[322] However, the story is clearly a literary fiction, and it resembles the Greek accounts which ridicule the Persian court life.[323] The Book of Esther is a reflection of life in diaspora, but it cannot be used as a source for a study of Judeans in Babylonia.

Finally, the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are not concerned with the Babylonian exile, but they narrate the story of the alleged return migrations to Judah and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem in the early Persian period. Although the use of these books is hampered by complex textual traditions and their historicity is debated,[324] they have been widely used – due to the scarcity of other sources – to reconstruct the history of Yehud in the early Persian period and social conflicts between the returned exiles and the rest of the population in Yehud.[325] Yet, as the present study is concerned with life in Babylonia, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah must be excluded from its sources.

This short overview has shown that although the Hebrew Bible is an important source for the study of the fall of Judah, very few biblical books explicitly describe the life of Judeans in Babylonia. The Books of Daniel and Esther narrate life in exile, but they are both widely regarded as literary fiction. The Book of Ezekiel does not focus on life in Babylonia but on prophecy, and Ezra-Nehemiah, Jeremiah 29, and Psalm 137 contribute very little to the question at hand. Accordingly, the study of Judeans in Babylonia must primarily rely on Babylonian cuneiform sources.

1.5.2 Cuneiform Sources

As the previous discussion reveals, the Hebrew Bible is an important source for the reconstruction of the events leading to the Babylonian exile, but it offers relatively little information on Judean life in Babylonia. On the contrary, hundreds of clay tablets written in Babylonian cuneiform shed light on the everyday lives of Judean deportees,[326] although only a single chronicle relates to Nebuchadnezzar II's campaigns in the Levant.[327] Babylonian legal and administrative texts from private and temple archives from the sixth and fifth centuries are a treasure trove for a student of social and economic history, and tens of thousands of such tablets are preserved in museums and private collections.[328] At

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[322] Bloch 2014, text no. 7.
[323] See, for example, Berlin 2001; Fox 2010, 131–140; Stern 2010.
[324] See Becking 1998; 2011a; Grabbe 1998b; 2015; Pakkala 2004; Fried (ed.) 2011.
[325] For some recent examples, see Blenkinsopp 2009; Southwood 2012; Rom-Shiloni 2013.
[326] For an overview of these sources, see Pearce 2016b.
[327] This is the Babylonian chronicle on the early years of Nebuchadnezzar II (*ABC* 5).
[328] For an overview, see Jursa 2005a.

the same time, Babylonian state archives have almost completely disappeared,[329] and Babylonian royal inscriptions are less interested in describing political events than their Assyrian counterparts.[330] Babylonian legal and administrative texts also have their limitations, the most significant being their origin. As noted above, these texts were written by members of the urban elite and they predominantly belong to temple archives and private archives of this same elite. The great majority of the population – women, peasants, children, and foreigners – are usually seen only in the margins of the text corpora. In any case, Babylonian sources are well-suited for the purposes of this study, as they are contemporary sources which originated in the course of everyday transactions and thus are not suspect of ideological colouring.

1.5.2.1 Ethics and Unprovenanced Artefacts

Before proceeding to a discussion of different text groups, an ethical and methodological problem related to ancient artefacts must be addressed. Especially after the failure of the Iraqi and Syrian states to protect their cultural heritage, a large number of looted cuneiform tablets and other ancient Mesopotamian artefacts have entered the antiquities market and found their way to private collections in the West.[331] The export of antiquities from their country of origin without the permission of local authorities has been banned by the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property,[332] but states have not been able or willing to enforce the statutes of the convention to their full extent. As a result, growing concern about the trade of looted cultural artefacts has prompted several scholarly organisations to ban the publication of unprovenanced artefacts in their publications and conferences. These organisations include the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR),[333] the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA),[334] and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL).[335]

The measures taken by the scholarly organisations are aimed at preventing the negative effects of looting and illicit trade in antiquities:[336] unprovenanced artefacts lack information about their archaeological context, which is permanently lost during uncontrolled and undocumented excavations. As a result, the artefacts lose most of their value as sources for scientific enquiry. At the same time, the trade of looted artefacts is a criminal activity which has disastrous effects on archaeological sites and cultural heritage, but which greatly benefits the dealers at the top of the trafficking hierarchy. The scientific publication of unprovenanced artefacts further encourages illicit trade in antiquities as publicity and the authentication of artefacts increases their value. Moreover, the

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[329] See section 2.3.
[330] Da Riva 2008.
[331] Emberling and Hanson (eds.) 2008; Stone 2008; Brodie 2011; Casana 2015.
[332] UNESCO 1970.
[333] ASOR 2015.
[334] Norman 2005; AIA 2016.
[335] SBL 2016.
[336] For a number of recent studies, see Brodie and Renfrew 2005; Brodie et al. (eds.) 2006; Brodie et al. 2013; Rutz and Kersel (eds.) 2014, all with further literature.

antiquities trade also creates a market for skilful forgeries, and this further complicates the professional study of history.

However, some scholars have questioned the negative impacts of publishing unprovenanced inscriptions and criticised the restrictions set by the scholarly organisations.[337] The primary arguments for publishing inscriptions are that they can convey historical information even without a known archaeological context and, accordingly, that their contents must be made available to the public and academic community because of their great value for studying ancient history. When it comes to publishing unprovenanced cuneiform tablets, the ASOR Policy on Professional Conduct – followed by the SBL – is indeed somewhat more permissive,[338] because

> a. in zones of conflict since the early-1990s, most prominently in Iraq and Syria but also elsewhere, looting of cuneiform tablets has occurred on a *truly massive scale*;
> b. cuneiform texts may be authenticated *more readily* than other categories of epigraphic archaeological heritage;
> c. the content of a cuneiform text can provide information *independent* of archaeological provenience.[339]

However, the policy demands that any cuneiform tablets published in ASOR journals or conferences must be returned to their country of origin or, if this is not possible, their title must be ceded to this country or 'some other publicly-accessible repository'. As this is not appealing to collectors and other channels exist to publish texts, the ASOR policy has effectively worked as a ban on publishing unprovenanced cuneiform tablets in ASOR journals and conferences.[340]

The ethical questions related to unprovenanced artefacts are highly relevant to the present study. Although the majority of text groups originate from controlled excavations (section 1.5.2.2), the largest and most important source for the study of Judeans in Babylonia is of unprovenanced origin. At least 200 texts from the environs of Yāhūdu (chapter 4) have found their way to private collections, including those of David Sofer, Martin Schøyen, and Shlomo Moussaieff. The contents of these tablets reveal that they were written in the Babylonian countryside, but nothing is known about their find-spot and very little about their modern ownership history. It is regrettable that Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch, the editors of 103 Yāhūdu texts from the collection of David Sofer,[341] do not discuss the origin of the tablets or the ethical problems involved.[342] They merely treat the unprovenanced origin of the tablets as a methodological problem complicating our attempts to localise the villages mentioned in the archive and to identify which texts were kept together in antiquity.[343]

According to a newspaper article, David Sofer has claimed that he bought the tablets in the United States in the 1990s and that their previous owner had bought them in public

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[337] Cross 2005; Owen 2009; Westenholz 2010.
[338] On this issue overall, see Cherry 2014; Gerstenblith 2014.
[339] ASOR 2015.
[340] Gerstenblith 2014, 223–224.
[341] Pearce and Wunsch 2014.
[342] See Waerzeggers 2015, 187–188; Alstola 2016, 327.
[343] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 3–9.

auctions in the 1970s.[344] However, this information is not repeated in Pearce and Wunsch 2014 or in any other source, and it is probable that the tablets are a more recent find. Given their exceptional contents, it is unlikely that the tablets have been in the hands of collectors for decades. For instance, the existence of the town of Judah in Babylonia was announced in the publication of the first tablet from the Moussaieff collection only in 1999.[345] On the contrary, there is reason to suspect that the tablets appeared on the antiquities market in the early 1990s. First, Joannès and Lemaire published a group of Bīt-Abī-râm tablets – a subgroup of tablets from the environs of Yāhūdu – from the Moussaieff collection in 1996.[346] Second, it appears that Schøyen obtained (part of) his lot of tablets in the 1990s as well, because Wunsch studied them some time before 2003–2004.[347] Third, Pearce announced the existence of a larger corpus of texts from the environs of Yāhūdu in a conference presentation in 2003 and in print in 2006.[348] These are the tablets belonging to the Sofer collection. Most importantly, the Iraqi Antiquities Authority recently confiscated a number of tablets belonging to the corpus.[349] This indicates that the tablets have been available on the antiquities market in recent years and that new tablets are perhaps still being illicitly excavated somewhere in Iraq. In conclusion, there is little reason to believe that the tablets in the private collections were exported legally from Iraq and sold in public auctions already in the 1970s. It is more probable that they originate from illicit excavations in Iraq in the early 1990s or later.[350]

The dubious and possibly illicit origin of the tablets from Yāhūdu and its surroundings leaves us with ethical problems surrounding their publication and study. It must be admitted that these unique tablets are of exceptional historical importance and that they profoundly affect our understanding of Judeans in Babylonia and life in exile. One can argue that their information must be made available because of their importance and that the academic community has a responsibility to preserve this data for future generations. As the tablets have already been removed from their archaeological context and the damage cannot be undone, there is no reason to leave them unpublished.

However, their publication also has negative consequences. First, the tablets are not a group of ordinary promissory notes and sales documents from Babylonia. Their historical and monetary value derives from the fact that they feature a community of Judean deportees living in Babylonia during the exilic period. It is beyond doubt that professional authentication of the tablets, their inclusion in high-quality publications, and their exhibition at the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem have significantly increased their monetary value. Second, one cannot deny the causality between trade on the antiquities market and the illicit digging and destruction of archaeological sites. If there were not a market for cuneiform tablets, large-scale looting and smuggling in Iraq and Syria would not take place. It can be concluded that professional involvement in the authentication, publication, and exhibition of the tablets not only benefits the academic community and public but also the financial interests of the collectors. This in turn encourages antiquities

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[344] Estrin 2015.
[345] Joannès and Lemaire 1999.
[346] Joannès and Lemaire 1996.
[347] Waerzeggers 2003/2004, 157 n. 38.
[348] Pearce 2006; Lipschits and Oeming (eds.) 2006, ix.
[349] Hackl 2017.
[350] As already suggested in Jursa 2005a, 151.

dealers to find similar artefacts for their stock. Given these circumstances, academic publication and the collectors' continued possession of the tablets do not appear to be an ethically acceptable solution. It would have been advisable to follow the ASOR guidelines and publish the tablets under the condition that the objects be repatriated back into the hands of the Iraqi Antiquities Authority.

Finally, it must be asked how the tablets from Yāhūdu and its surroundings should be treated in this study. The policies of the AIA, ASOR, and SBL are concerned with the first publication of unprovenanced artefacts, and they do not take a stand on subsequent studies on the published materials. Yet the basic ethical problem remains the same: new studies open fresh insights into unprovenanced tablets and establish their place among the standard sources of an academic study of history. New studies also serve as a further authentication of the tablets as genuine ancient artefacts. At the same time, however, the present circumstances emphasise the need for critical scholarship on these tablets: they cannot simply remain on the pages of primary publications and in the exhibition halls of the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem.

In this thesis, I have decided to discuss and analyse the available material from Yāhūdu and its surroundings. I am aware of the ethical problems concerned with the publication and further scholarly treatment of these tablets, but I perceive that it is necessary to study them critically, highlighting their unprovenanced origin and the problems involved. This needs to be done, especially because these issues are not highlighted in the first publications of the texts. I hope that my decision will lead to further critical discussion of these tablets and the study of unprovenanced artefacts at large by the academic community and professional societies in biblical and Near Eastern studies.

1.5.2.2 Text Groups

The sources of this thesis comprise 289 Babylonian cuneiform texts which were written in the sixth and fifth centuries and which pertain to Judeans, Neirabians, and other people in their immediate surroundings. The majority of the texts belong to dossiers or archives, which helps to place them into a broader historical and social context. The following text groups can be identified; it has to noted that only a part of texts in certain groups relate to Judeans or Neirabians.

The Palace Archive of Nebuchadnezzar II was unearthed in Babylon during the German excavations in the early twentieth century (chapter 2). The tablets, excavated in three different find-spots but relating to the same administrative procedures, are the only surviving remnants of the state archives of Babylonia. The 346 tablets document the delivery of barley, dates, and other commodities to Babylon and their distribution to various recipients in the city during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II in the early sixth century. A number of long ration lists document the distribution of sesame seed oil to numerous individuals and professional groups, many of which were of foreign origin. The tablets are important for the present study, as some of them mention King Jehoiachin of Judah, five Judean princes, and other Judeans as recipients of oil rations. Only four ration lists have been published by Ernst F. Weidner in 1939, but Olof Pedersén's recent work has shed more light on the archive as a whole.[351] Although the references to King

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[351] Weidner 1939; Pedersén 2005a; 2005b; 2009.

Jehoiachin have made these tablets famous, they are an elusive source. The texts themselves are not very informative, and the incomplete publication of the archive seriously hinders its study.

Six tablets pertaining to a Judean family of royal merchants were written in Sippar in 546–503 BCE (chapter 3). The tablets primarily originate from Hormuzd Rassam's excavations and belong to the collections of the British Museum.[352] The texts pertain to the descendants of Arih, who traded with the Ebabbar temple and were well-integrated in the local mercantile community. Four texts shed light on the economic activities of the family, whereas two marriage agreements show that a granddaughter of Arih married into a Babylonian family. As the majority of Judeans are attested in a rural context, the descendants of Arih serve as a noteworthy reminder about the socio-economic diversity of immigrants in Babylonia. The documents have been published and discussed by Martha T. Roth, Michael Jursa, and Yigal Bloch,[353] but they still need to be placed in their proper socio-economic context. In addition, I discuss three more texts that relate to Judeans involved in long-distance trade.

The most important source for the study of Judeans in Babylonia is formed by texts from Yāhūdu, Našar, and their surroundings (chapter 4). Yāhūdu, '(the town of) Judah', was a village located in the Babylonian countryside and named after the geographic origin of its inhabitants. Written in 572–477 BCE, the texts are centred around three main protagonists: Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma, Ahīqar/Rīmūt, and Zababa-šar-uṣur/Nabû-zēr-iddin. Both Ahīqam and Ahīqar were of Judean descent, and thus the text corpus is unique in allowing us a glimpse inside Judean communities, rather than merely describing Judeans on the fringes, as is the case with most Babylonian archives. The whole corpus consists of 250 or more texts, 113 of which have been published thus far.[354] Cornelia Wunsch kindly allowed me to use 42 unpublished texts in the present study,[355] making a total of 155 available texts. The tablets were bought from the antiquities market, and their provenance and the number of excavated tablets are unknown.[356] These legal texts originated in the framework of the land-for-service sector of Babylonian agriculture, and they mostly document tax payments and credit operations relating to the cultivation of dates and barley. The texts have aroused significant interest among biblical scholars, Assyriologists, and the general public, especially in Israel, and a vast array of studies on them is expected in the near future.

The texts from the environs of Yāhūdu are not the first ones to document Judean life in the land-for-service sector in the Babylonian countryside. The 750 texts of the Murašû archive were unearthed in Nippur in 1893, and the bulk of them were published already in 1898–1912 (chapter 5).[357] After a gap of seventy years, most of the remaining tablets were finally published in 1985 and 1997.[358] The archive documents the business activities of a Babylonian family, the Murašûs, in the environs of Nippur in 454–414

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[352] See section 3.3.1.
[353] Roth 1989, 92–95; Jursa 2001; 2007a; Bloch 2014.
[354] Joannès and Lemaire 1996; 1999; Abraham 2005/2006; 2007; Pearce and Wunsch 2014. For a detailed discussion, see section 4.1.
[355] These texts will be published in Wunsch (forthcoming).
[356] See the detailed discussion in section 1.5.2.1.
[357] Hilprecht and Clay 1898; Clay 1904; 1912.
[358] Stolper 1985; Donbaz and Stolper 1997.

BCE, with a handful of related documents extending until 404 BCE. The Murašûs were agricultural entrepreneurs working in the land-for-service sector, and the promissory notes, receipts, leases, and other legal texts in the archive relate to their dealings with landholders and the state administration. The archive reveals that numerous communities of foreign origin lived in the Nippur countryside. Judeans also appear in the fringes of the archive, most often as farmers dealing with the Murašûs. Some Judean minor officials are attested as well. After the texts from Yāhūdu and its surroundings, the Murašû archive is the single most important source for an investigation of Judeans in Babylonia. However, it has generally been overlooked in previous studies.

A group of texts from Neirab resemble the two afore-mentioned archives, as they also relate to the Babylonian land-for–service sector (chapter 7). The texts were found in Neirab, near Aleppo, Syria, in 1926–1927, and they were published by Édouard Dhorme in 1928.[359] Despite their find-spot in Syria, the twenty-seven tablets were obviously written in Babylonia, where a group of Neirabians was deported in the Neo-Babylonian period. The deportees were settled in the twin town of Neirab in the Babylonian countryside, but eventually some of their descendants returned to the original Neirab in Syria and took a bunch of their tablets along. The text group is relevant for the study of Judeans in two ways: first, it sheds some light on the problem of return migrations from Babylonia. Second, the texts are a significant point of comparison for documents relating to Judeans in the Babylonian countryside. The texts primarily concern the Nusku-gabbē family, whose activities can be compared with those of Ahīqam and Ahīqar in Yāhūdu and Našar.

In addition to the main groups discussed above, there are a number of single texts pertaining to Judeans (chapter 6).[360] These originate from different geographical and socio-economic locations, and they bear witness to the diversity among the Judeans in Babylonia. Although they only provide us with glimpses of the life of a given Judean, these texts can usually be contextualised by placing them in a wider archival context.

1.5.3 Archaeology and the Longue Durée

Apart from clay tablets, there are no other artefacts or archaeological remains that bear witness to the presence of Judeans in Babylonia. Of the four main texts groups, only the Palace Archive of Nebuchadnezzar II (the 'Palace Archive') and the Murašû archive have a documented find-spot, whereas the tablets pertaining to the descendants of Arih primarily originate from Rassam's badly documented excavations in Sippar. Most unfortunate is the fact that the tablets from the environs of Yāhūdu were acquired from the antiquities market and their provenance is thus completely unknown. Nor are the find-spots of the Palace and Murašû archives informative about Judean life in Babylonia: although the administrative office which produced the Palace Archive was probably situated in the South Palace of Babylon, this does not necessarily mean that Judeans resided on the same premises. In the same vein, texts from the Murašû archive make clear

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[359] Dhorme 1928.
[360] These texts have been collected in various publications by Zadok (1979a; 2002; 2004; 2014a), and they are predominantly transliterated at CTIJ.

that the Murašûs themselves lived in Nippur where the archive was unearthed, but their Judean clients inhabited the surrounding countryside. The provenance of the Neirabian archive from a funerary context has important implications for the value of the tablets for their owners, but because the tablets were excavated in Syria but written in Babylonia, the find-spot does not shed any light on the nature of Neirabian life in Babylonia.[361] However, all major Babylonian cities have been partially excavated and regional surveys have been carried out. Material aspects of urban life are thus known to us,[362] and there are informative studies about settlement patterns and ancient water courses in the region.[363] Unfortunately, the scope of the data is limited due to the lack of general treatments of Neo-Babylonian material culture.[364]

When it comes to long-term historical processes, the *longue durée*,[365] it is essential to keep in mind that Babylonia was an agricultural society. The great majority of texts which have been preserved were written in cities, and they misleadingly emphasise the urban outlook of society. The focal point of these texts is the urban elite, city-dwellers *par excellence*, while farmers, villages, and the countryside appear only in the margins of their social world. That said, the majority of the population, including deportees, was involved in farming, herding, fishing, and other types of food production.[366]

Agriculture in Babylonia was wholly dependent on irrigation and thus vulnerable to floods, drought, and salinization.[367] The Euphrates was the main source of water and an important waterway, and shifts in its course also changed urban settlement patterns over time.[368] Access to water was a prerequisite for a farmer's livelihood, and continuous work was necessary to maintain irrigation infrastructures on a local and regional scale.[369] Barley and date palm were the main crops, and the annual cycle of their cultivation dictated the work and leisure of a farmer's family.[370] Animal husbandry played an important role in the rural economy as well.[371]

Another permanent feature which affected Babylonia was its location in a fertile but resource-poor region. As discussed above, the floodplain has attracted migrants for millennia, and the Judean deportees who settled in the countryside were yet another foreign group tilling the Babylonian soil. At the same time, Babylonia was dependent on trade and tribute, as wood, metal, and luxury items had to be imported. As a result, Babylonia had been a multicultural society for millennia. The importance of family and clan prevailed, and there was no concept of 'Babylonia' or 'Babylonians' in the modern sense of the term.

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[361] See chapter 7.

[362] Miglus 1999; Marzahn et al. (eds.) 2008; Baker 2014; 2015.

[363] For example, Adams 1981; Brinkman 1984b; Cole and Gasche 1998.

[364] For a recent overview of the archaeology of the Neo-Babylonian period, see Baker 2012.

[365] On the long-term processes affecting the Neo-Babylonian economy, see Jursa 2010a, 26–61.

[366] See section 1.4.4.

[367] Adams 1981; Cole and Gasche 1998; Altaweel 2013.

[368] Brinkman 1984b, 175–176. For the case of Nippur, see Cole 1996, 5–22.

[369] van Driel 1988; Joannès 2002.

[370] van Driel 1988; 1990; Widell et al. 2013.

[371] van Driel 1993; 1995.