# Judeans in Babylonia : a study of deportees in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BCE

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# 4 TEXTS FROM YĀHŪDU, NAŠAR, AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

## *4.1 Introduction*

The texts from Yāhūdu,[626] Našar, and their surroundings are the most important source for the study of Judeans in Babylonia. The uniqueness of these texts is not only related to the fact that some of them were written in the 'Town of Judah', Yāhūdu, but they constitute the only large corpus of texts to feature Judeans among its main protagonists. The tablets are of unprovenanced origin and they have found their way into several private collections, including those of Shlomo Moussaieff, Martin Schøyen, and David Sofer.[627] Eleven tablets from the Moussaieff collection were published in 1996–2007. In 1996, Francis Joannès and André Lemaire published seven tablets relating to a place called Bīt-Abī-râm and to a certain Zababa-šar-uṣur, a steward (*rab bīti*) of the crown prince's estate somewhere in the Babylonian countryside.[628] The village of Yāhūdu itself was first attested in a text published by Joannès and Lemaire in 1999, along with a text from Našar.[629] A little more light was shed on Yāhūdu when Kathleen Abraham published two texts originating from the village and featuring a large number of Yahwistic personal names.[630]

Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch published the texts belonging to the Sofer collection in 2014.[631] The volume includes 103 texts, which are divided into three groups: texts relating primarily to Yāhūdu (group 1), texts relating primarily to Našar (group 2), and texts relating primarily to Bīt-Abī-râm (group 3). Groups 1 and 2 are of roughly the same size, with the former consisting of 54 and the latter of 47 texts in the authors' classification. Only two texts belong to group 3, and they are assumed to be connected to the Bīt-Abī-râm texts published by Joannès and Lemaire.

The publication of the texts in the Schøyen collection is scheduled for the near future,[632] but Cornelia Wunsch kindly granted me access to the preliminary edition of all group 1 (17 texts) and group 2 (25 texts) documents of the collection. The bulk of this forthcoming volume consists of 55 texts belonging to group 3. Not all tablets found their way into the collections of Moussaieff, Sofer, and Schøyen, however. Pearce and Wunsch refer ambiguously to 'other collections' where the tablets are kept,[633] and the Iraqi Antiquities Authority has confiscated about 40 texts relating to Bīt-Abī-râm. The tablets

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[626] Although the name has been usually transcribed as Āl-Yāhūdu ('town of Judah'), a more accurate transcription of uru *ia-hu-du* might simply be 'Yāhūdu'. The sign 'uru' probably represents the determinative for towns and is not an independent word. See Waerzeggers 2015, 179; Zadok 2015d, 142.

[627] On the origin of these tablets and the ethical problems involved, see section 1.5.2.1.

[628] Joannès and Lemaire 1996. In the following, references to these texts are abbreviated as J1–7.

[629] Joannès and Lemaire 1999. In the following, references to these texts are abbreviated as J8–9.

[630] Abraham 2005/2006; 2007. In the following, references to these texts are abbreviated as A1 and A2, respectively.

[631] Pearce and Wunsch 2014. References to these texts are abbreviated as C + text number.

[632] Wunsch (forthcoming). References to these texts are abbreviated as B + text number.

[633] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, vii.

in Iraq will be edited by A. F. Al-Bayati and published in the *Babylonische Archive* series.[634] Thus, the number of known texts in the corpus is circa 250, but because the tablets most likely originate from illicit excavations, and they have been and may still be circulating on the antiquities market, even more texts may surface in the future.[635]

In several articles, Pearce and Wunsch have discussed Judean naming practices, general characteristics of the corpus, and the relevance of the corpus for the study of the exile.[636] Different aspects of the corpus – such as marriage, scribal practices, and archival structures – have been studied in a further number of articles.[637] Yāhūdu and the texts from its surroundings have aroused great interest, especially among biblical scholars, but no comprehensive studies have yet been published.[638]

The current state of affairs provides opportunities and challenges for the study of the text corpus. On the one hand, very little has been written about the texts and most of the key research questions are still to be asked and answered. Moreover, access to the unpublished texts from groups 1 and 2 has allowed me to study the majority of documents relating to Judeans, because very few Yahwistic names are attested in the texts from group 3.[639] On the other hand, the lack of information about the origin of the tablets and the inaccessibility of a hundred or so Bīt-Abī-râm texts hinder any attempt to study the overall archival structures of the entire corpus. Accordingly, the following discussion can only focus on the texts assigned to groups 1 and 2, and its results will inevitably be preliminary until the rest of the tablets are published. A total of 155 texts were accessible to me and are treated in this chapter.[640] If not otherwise indicated, the statistics presented below are based on my own database, which contains detailed information about these 155 texts and general information about texts 43–97 in Wunsch (forthcoming) as presented in Pearce and Wunsch 2014.[641]

This chapter is structured as follows. First, I explore the geographical and economic environment of the texts. Second, I discuss the archival structures of the present material and evaluate Pearce and Wunsch's division of the tablets into three neat groups. This discussion is intertwined with a study of the main protagonists of the texts, namely, Ahīqar, son of Rīmūt, Ahīqam, son of Rapā-Yāma, and people in their circles. Finally, I address the questions of the identity, integration, and socio-economic status of Judeans in these texts.

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[634] Hackl 2017, 126 n. 5; personal communication with Cornelia Wunsch and Angelika Berlejung in October and November 2015.
[635] See section 1.5.2.1.
[636] Pearce 2006; 2011; 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; Magdalene and Wunsch 2011; Wunsch 2013.
[637] Abraham 2005/2006; 2015; Lemos 2010, 237–244; Bloch 2015; Waerzeggers 2015; Zadok 2015c; 2015d; Cousin and Watai 2016, 22–24; Berlejung 2017a; 2017b; Hackl 2017.
[638] Short overviews of this material include Granerød 2015, 364–370; Kratz 2015, 147–153.
[639] This conclusion is based on the prosopographical index of Pearce and Wunsch 2014 and on the nine group 3 texts published in Joannès and Lemaire 1996 and Pearce and Wunsch 2014.
[640] In the figure above, the three pairs of duplicates (C16AB, C71AB, and C45||A2) are counted as one text each.
[641] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, xxxviii–xlii, 257–314.

### *4.2 Geographical and Economic Environment*

#### *4.2.1 The Location of Yāhūdu and Našar*

Texts from Yāhūdu, Našar, and their surroundings were not recovered from controlled excavations, and thus they lack any archaeological context which would help us to locate them geographically. As shown below, the texts do not belong to one ancient archive but several groups, some of which are closely connected to each other, while others exhibit only a few weak ties with the other groups.[642] However, because it appears that the texts have been traded as a group on the antiquities market and some linkage exits between the groups, it is highly probable that the texts were unearthed at a single spot somewhere in Iraq.[643] Accordingly, we can legitimately speak of a corpus of texts.

Despite the lack of archaeological context, the chronological span and the geographical origin of the corpus can be studied, thanks to the Babylonian practice of recording the date and place of writing on the clay tablet. The two earliest texts of the corpus were written in a place called Ālu ša Yāhūdāya (C1, 20-I-33 Nbk, 572 BCE) or Āl-Yāhūdāya (B1, 7-IX-38 Nbk, 567 BCE), the 'Town of the Judeans'. Already in the last years of Nebuchadnezzar (C2), the name of the village had changed to Yāhūdu, (the town of) 'Judah', and this name was still in use in 9 Xer (477 BCE) when the last surviving document of the corpus (C53) was written. It is beyond doubt that the village was named after the geographic origin of its inhabitants: 33 per cent of people bear Yahwistic names in the documents written in Yāhūdu and an additional 7 per cent were related to someone bearing such a name. The practice of naming new settlements according to the geographic origin of their inhabitants is well attested in rural Babylonia, where place names such as Ashkelon, Sidon, and Neirab appear.[644] The state settled foreign deportees in these twin towns in order to bring new lands under cultivation.[645]

A place called Ālu ša Našar ('Town of Našar') or Bīt Našar ('House of Našar') was located in the vicinity of Yāhūdu.[646] A substitute of the *dēkû* of Yāhūdu collected a tax payment in Našar (C83), and a promissory note written in Našar stipulates that commodities are to be delivered in Yāhūdu (C84). Moreover, two people are attested in both places.[647] Unlike Yāhūdu, Našar was not a twin town. It was both a village and an administrative estate originally held or managed by a certain Našar. This is suggested by the following evidence. First, it is clear that the toponym was named after an individual called Našar: the name is usually preceded by the determinative for masculine personal names.[648] Second, the practice of governing the land-for-service sector through estates or administrative centres is well attested in the Murašû archive and other texts of the present

[642] See Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 7–9; Waerzeggers 2015, 182–186.
[643] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 9.
[644] Ephʿal 1978; Dandamayev 2004.
[645] Jursa 2011a, 435.
[646] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 6.
[647] Bēl-upehhir/Arad-Gula is usually attested in Našar but once in Yāhūdu (C32), and Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma is normally attested in Yāhūdu but once in Našar (C13).
[648] Našar is a West Semitic name meaning 'eagle' (Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 73).

corpus.[649] Bīt Šinqāma (C18), Ālu-ša-Ṭūb-Yāma (C8), and Bīt-Bāba-ēreš (C80) are good examples of this phenomenon in the vicinity of Yāhūdu and Našar.

Third, the toponym itself is written in several different ways which not only exhibit differences in orthography but also differences in usage and meaning.[650] The most common form of the name is uru *šá* $^{I}$*na-šar* (Ālu ša Našar, 'Town of Našar'), which is attested – with its by-forms – 38 times, 33 times written by Arad-Gula. With two exceptions, the name refers to the place where the tablets were written.[651] The second most common form of the name is é $^{I}$*na-šar* (Bīt Našar, 'House of Našar'), which is attested twelve times, exclusively on tablets written by Arad-Gula and only as the place where agricultural produce was to be delivered.[652] Eight tablets exhibit a place name that combines features from the two previous forms, uru é *na-šar* (Āl bīt Našar, 'Town of the house of Našar') or the like.[653] This form is used by five different scribes and it always refers to the place of writing the tablet. The Canal of Našar (íd *šá* $^{I}$*na-šar-ri*) is attested once in C64.

An interesting pattern emerges when we look at the place names referring to Našar. There is no change over time, but Arad-Gula made a clear distinction between the place names Ālu ša Našar and Bīt Našar. This can be seen in the documents in which both names are used: Bīt Našar is always the place where agricultural produce is to be delivered, while the tablets were always written in Ālu ša Našar.[654] Accordingly, Bīt Našar appears to be an estate or local administrative centre surrounded by a village that was named after it. The deliveries of agricultural produce took place at the estate, whereas the documents were written in the village.[655]

The presence of twin towns in the Nippur countryside suggests that Yāhūdu and Našar may also have been located in the region.[656] However, there is no conclusive evidence to confirm this suggestion. None of the texts in the corpus were written in Nippur; furthermore, only one document may refer to the city, but the reading is

[649] On estates in the Murašû archive, see sections 5.3 and 5.4.

[650] The following statistics account for the instances when the place name is readable with reasonable certainty.

[651] The form uru *šá* $^{I}$*na-šar* is attested 33 times, 7 Cyr – 3 Dar, always written by Arad-gula/Nabû-šum-ukīn/Amēl-Ea except for one tablet by Niqūdu/Ṣillâ/Aškāpu and one by Lâbâši-Marduk/Arad-Nabû/Sîn-imitti. There are several by-forms of this place name. Uru *šá na-šar* (B35, written by Nabû-ittannu/Nabû-šum-ukīn) and uru *na-šar* (B37, written by Arad-Gula) both refer to the place where agricultural produce was to be delivered. Other three by-forms refer to the place of writing. These tablets were written by Arad-Gula, Nabû-ittannu, and Šamaš-iddin/Enlil-mukīn-apli.

[652] The tablets were written in 0 Camb – 3 Dar. C90 exhibits a small orthographical difference, é $^{I}$*na-aš-ri*. Eleven texts were written by Arad-Gula. The name of the scribe is broken in C85, but it is probably Arad-Gula.

[653] There are small variations in orthography but not in meaning. The tablets were written in 12 Nbn – 3 Dar by five different scribes: Arad-Gula, Niqūdu, Mukīn-apli/Zēria, Rīmūt/Nabû-zēr-ibni, and Šamaš-zēr-ibni/Gimillu.

[654] B38; C65, 70, 74, 81, 89, 93. Ālu ša Našar is also the place of delivery in B36; C85, 87, 88, 90, but the place of writing is partially or fully broken.

[655] Cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 202, who suggest that the variation in the place name results from its novelty. Moreover, they seem to cautiously suggest that Našar, the father of Kalbâ in C8, gave his name to the homonymous village. This is speculative, as the person is not attested in any other texts.

[656] Cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 6–7.

uncertain.[657] Moreover, people attested in the corpus cannot be linked to external texts and their personal names do not favour deities such as Enlil or Ninurta of Nippur. Several texts were written in Babylon, but because of the city's role as an administrative and economic centre of Babylonia, this is not an indication of proximity.[658] Uruk and Sippar are not referred to in the corpus, but Borsippa is attested once as a place where Zababa-šar-uṣur bought a house.[659] Našar or Bīt-Našar is referred to in external sources as well, and they seem to point towards a location in the vicinity of Borsippa.[660]

Pearce and Wunsch locate Yāhūdu and Našar in 'the region to the east and southeast of Babylon, beyond the city of Nippur, delimited to the east by the river Tigris and to the south by the marshlands'.[661] This suggestion is supported by several geographic names attested in the corpus. The towns of Kēš and Karkara can be located with reasonable certainty somewhere between Nippur, Uruk, and the Tigris,[662] and the Kabaru canal connected Babylon and Borsippa to south-east towards Nippur and Susa.[663] Bīt-Amūkāni was the territory of the homonymous Chaldean tribe in Southern Babylonia.[664] Joannès and Lemaire propose that Bīt-Abī-râm, one of the three main sites of the corpus, is to be located in the region south-east of Babylon.[665] Moreover, the Sîn canal is well attested in the Murašû archive and located in the Nippur region; a homonymous canal is referred to in B47.[666] Finally, two twin towns or related *haṭru*s, named after the cities of Gaza and Hamath, are mentioned both in the texts from the vicinity of Yāhūdu and in the Murašû archive.[667]

Even though there is no evidence connecting the present corpus with the cities of Nippur or Uruk, the countryside surrounding these two cities is the most probable geographical setting for our texts. A single attestation of Borsippa and several documents

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[657] The beginning of line 16 in C82 reads *ú-ìl-tì*.meš *šá*, but the remaining signs on this line are not very clear. Pearce and Wunsch read *ina* en.líl(!)$^{ki}$ and transliterate the following line as *e-ṭir*(!)-*ʾ*, translating the sentence as 'The debt notes in Nippur are paid.' However, Waerzeggers (2015, 190–191) suggests that the signs on lines 16–17 should be better read as *ú-ìl-tì*.meš *šá hal-li-qa e-la-aʾ* ('the debt notes that were lost have turned up').

[658] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 6.

[659] Personal communication with Cornelia Wunsch in October 2015; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 313–314.

[660] Zadok 1985, 98; Waerzeggers 1999/2000, 192.

[661] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 7.

[662] The town of *ki-e-šú* is attested in C12. According to Pearce and Wunsch (2014, 7 n. 19, 114), unpublished documents from Kēš confirm that this syllabic spelling refers to Kēš instead of Kiš. Karkara is referred to in four unpublished documents: B59, 85, 89, 97 (Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 314). For the location of these two cities, see Adams and Nissen 1972, 52–53; Powell 1980; Zadok 1985, 195; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 6–7 n. 18–19.

[663] J7. Tolini 2011 vol. 1, 491–498.

[664] B30 and probably B25 and B31 as well. Zadok 1985, 80–81; Frame 1992, 39.

[665] Joannès and Lemaire 1996, 52–53.

[666] Zadok 1985, 381–382.

[667] Hazatu (C101: *ha-za-tu*$_4$; BE 10 9: *ha-za-tú*) is to be identified as a twin town of Gaza which is written as *ha-za-ti*, *ha-az-za-ti*, etc. in the cuneiform texts. See Falkner 1971; Zadok 1985, 158 for the references to Gaza in the Assyrian and Babylonian sources. Ephʿal (1978, 80–82 + n. 18) is somewhat vague in his discussion of Hazatu in the Nippur region and its connections to the Philistine city. *Ha-mat* is attested in C55–56; *ha-mat-ta* in B21; and *haṭru ša šušānê ša Bīt-Hamatāya* is attested, for example, in the Murašû text BE 10 16. See Ephʿal 1978, 80 + n. 17; Stolper 1985, 76; Zadok 1985, 149–150; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 190.

referring to Babylon do not imply that Yāhūdu and Našar were located in Northern Babylonia; references to Kēš, Karkara, Bīt-Amūkāni, the Sîn canal, Hamat, and Hazatu suggest a location in Central or Southern Babylonia. Našar itself poses a problem, because the texts published by Waerzeggers indicate proximity to Borsippa rather than to Nippur or Uruk. However, it is possible that two homonymous villages existed in different parts of Babylonia. The close linkage between twin towns and the land-for-service sector of the Babylonian agriculture is apparent both in the present corpus and the Murašû archive. This does not mean that these phenomena were not found elsewhere in Babylonia, but, as regards their content, the texts from Yāhūdu and Našar fit well into the countryside of Central or Southern Babylonia.

### *4.2.2 The Land-for-Service Sector – Economic Environment of the Texts*

The texts from Yāhūdu and Našar bear witness to the land-for-service sector of the Babylonian economy.[668] The system existed already in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II and its most elaborate form is known from the Murašû archive in the second half of the fifth century BCE.[669] In short, royal land was granted to individual landholders who in exchange had to pay taxes and perform military or corvée service.[670] 'Taxes' are to be understood here in the widest sense of the term: they also encompassed rent-like *sūtu* and *imittu* payments in kind or silver.[671] The basic unit of the system was 'bow land' (*bīt qašti*), which was a plot cultivated by one or more landholders and their families.[672] The size of bow lands varied greatly, but the term clearly referred to a certain type of landholding burdened with service obligations.[673] Ideally, the holder of a bow land was obliged to submit an archer for royal service, in the same manner as holders of 'horse land' (*bīt sīsê*) and 'chariot land' (*bīt narkabti*) were obliged to provide a horseman or war chariot, respectively.[674] However, the obligations also varied, depending on the size of the landholding in question.

In the Murašû archive, bow lands were grouped together in larger administrative units called *haṭru*s.[675] A *haṭru* consisted of several bow lands and landholders, who often shared a common ethnic or geographic background or were members of the same military or professional unit.[676] Each *haṭru* had a foreman called a *šaknu* and his subordinates,

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[668] For studies of the land-for-service sector in Babylonia, see Stolper 1985, 24–27, 52–103; van Driel 1989; 2002, 226-273; Jursa 2011a, esp. 435–437. The following discussion of the general features of the land-for-service sector is based on these studies.

[669] The earliest attestation of *bīt qašti* ('bow land') is from 35 Nbk (Jursa 1998b) and *bīt azanni* ('quiver land') from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (C2). On the Murašû archive, see chapter 5.

[670] 'Landholder' does not denote here the owners of the land but people to whom the state granted lands encumbered with service obligations.

[671] A *sūtu* rent was fixed in advance, whereas an *imittu* rent was assessed only before the harvest (Stolper 1985, 38).

[672] *Bīt qašti* has a rare by-form *bīt azanni* ('quiver land'). See van Driel 2002, 237–245 (add C2, for which see section 4.3.6.2).

[673] On the size of bow lands and the number of people holding them, see section 5.3.

[674] van Driel 2002, 232–245. UCP 9/3 is an important example that these designations were not arbitrary but corresponded to concrete service obligations. See section 5.3.2.

[675] See Stolper 1985, 70–103; section 5.3.2.

[676] For a list of *haṭru*s in the Murašû archive, see Stolper 1985, 72–79.

who ensured that the unit fulfilled its joint responsibilities and produced the required tax revenue. The word *haṭru* is not mentioned in the documents from the environs of Yāhūdu, but this is not surprising, because the term starts to appear in Babylonian sources only in the mid-fifth century BCE.[677] However, the related term *kiṣru* is mentioned in C23,[678] and other *haṭru*-like structures appear in the corpus.[679] Two documents from the fifth year of Darius I (C14 and C15), both written in Yāhūdu, list *imittu* rents which were owed by men bearing primarily Yahwistic names. Even though ten landholders are listed in C14 and twenty in C15, only one and two men are referred to as the nominal debtors, respectively. The nominal debtors seem to appear on the list of landholders as well, which suggests that the landholders were grouped in units of ten, represented by one of their peers.

Each of the farmers in C14 and C15 held a bow land or a fraction of such, and, according to the lists, the *imittu* payments originated from the fields of *šušānu*s. In the Persian period, *šušānu*s were semi-free persons who often held bow lands and, in the Murašû archive, were incorporated in *haṭru*s. Their legal status was different from slaves, but they were apparently not free to leave the lands they held.[680] The term *šušānu* starts to appear in the texts from Yāhūdu and its surroundings in the reign of Darius I, when it becomes a common keyword in texts referring to the royal lands cultivated by Judeans.[681] The expression 'fields of the Judean *šušānu*s' clearly refers to collective lands, which were managed within an administrative unit. These lands fell under the authority of several officials, such as the *rab urâti* and the governor of Across-the-River (C18–19), and the *rab ṣāb kutalli* (C24–25).[682]

The presence of Judean *šušānu*s and their collective fields points towards the existence of *haṭru*-like structures in the present corpus. Moreover, *dēkû*s ('tax summoners') are attested in the environs of Yāhūdu. A Judean *dēkû* is mentioned in two documents (C12; J9), and the *dēkû* of Yāhūdu in C83. In the Murašû archive, *dēkû*s collected tax payments in *haṭru* organisations.[683] Finally, the Murašû texts make clear that there was a direct connection between several *haṭru*s and homonymous towns or villages; some of these were named after the geographic origin of their inhabitants.[684] Yāhūdu would qualify as one of the villages where the settlement of deportees and the organisation of agricultural production intertwined. In sum, it is likely that Judeans in Yāhūdu were organised in one or more *haṭru*-like administrative units supervised by several high officials and their subordinates.

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[677] Stolper 1985, 71.
[678] On *kiṣru*, see van Driel 2002, 308–310.
[679] On the question of *haṭru*s in Yāhūdu and its surroundings, see Pearce 2011, 271–274.
[680] The use of the term *šušānu* developed in the sixth and fifth centuries. Originally, it referred to people working with horses, but already in the Neo-Babylonian period, the word started to designate social status in addition to a profession. Only in the Persian period is the connection to a subordinate social status in the land-for-service sector apparent. See CAD Š/3: 378–380; Dandamayev 1984, 626–642; Stolper 1985, 79–82; van Driel 2002, 210–211, 232 n. 28; MacGinnis 2012, 13–14.
[681] See, for example, C15, 18–20.
[682] These administrative structures are discussed in section 4.3.6.4.
[683] Stolper 1985, 83. See also Pearce 2011, 273–274.
[684] See the list of *haṭru* names and corresponding villages in Stolper 1985, 72–79.

## *4.3 Text Groups and Their Protagonists*

### *4.3.1 Three or More Groups?*

Pearce and Wunsch (2014) divide the 103 texts into three separate groups centred around different localities. The texts in group 1 originate primarily from Yāhūdu, group 2 primarily Našar, and group 3 primarily Bīt-Abī-râm. As far as I see, the same division is followed in Wunsch's forthcoming volume. It is undeniable that the geographical origins of the texts roughly follow this division, but the classification does not do justice to the more complicated structures of the text corpus.[685] Moreover, the division in three groups draws attention only to three protagonists – Ahīqar, Ahīqam, and Zababa-šar-uṣur[686] – even though the roles of certain other individuals, like the scribe Arad-Gula, are central in the corpus.

Although the provenance of the tablets is unknown, it is highly likely that they all derive from the same find-spot. There are prosopographical connections between the texts written in Yāhūdu and Našar, but the texts from Bīt-Abī-râm also show faint links to the other groups.[687] Moreover, the economic framework of all the texts is the same, namely, the land-for-service sector of the Babylonian agriculture. It is also significant that texts from all three key localities have found their way into the collections of Moussaieff, Schøyen, and Sofer. In the following discussion, I use the term 'corpus' to refer to the whole lot of 250 texts and the terms 'group' and 'archive' to refer to smaller units of texts within the corpus.

In this section, I offer a redivision of the texts in group 1 and 2 and briefly discuss the published texts relating to Zababa-šar-uṣur. I argue that the texts do not belong to three ancient archives which were later brought together, but the present corpus comprises several groups of texts and a number of isolated texts.[688] All the texts came into being as a result of administrative practices in the land-for-service sector and they originally belonged to several independent archives, the exact number of which cannot be reconstructed. During administrative changes or after the death of archive-holding protagonists, the texts were sorted and some of them deposited in a larger administrative archive. The present corpus consists of remnants of this archive, being documents which were disposed of when they were no longer needed.[689]

My division of the texts into groups or dossiers does not imply that each of the groups comprises the remnants of an ancient archive. The division is based primarily on prosopographical criteria. The groups discussed under headings 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.4, 4.3.6.3, 4.3.7, 4.3.8, as well as the texts pertaining to Ṣidqī-Yāma/Šillimu and Rapā-Yāma/Samak-Yāma under heading 4.3.6.2, are centred around one or two protagonists

[685] Waerzeggers 2015, 182–186.
[686] Cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 7–9.
[687] The connections between the texts from Yāhūdu and Našar are discussed below. For the connections between Bīt-Abī-râm and the rest of the corpus, see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 9. Note, however, that the information provided by Pearce and Wunsch appears to be partially incorrect, because the presence of Arad-Gula and Ahīqam in Karkara is not supported by the indices in Pearce and Wunsch 2014.
[688] On the archival division of the tablets, see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 7–9; Waerzeggers 2015.
[689] Cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 9.

and, in some cases, their families. By 'protagonists', I refer to persons whose activities are documented in these texts. Texts which originate from the village where a protagonist worked are not included in the group if there is no direct connection between the protagonist and the text. Accordingly, the earliest and latest documents from Yāhūdu are not included in the Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma group, although the majority of other documents from Yāhūdu indeed pertain to Ahīqam or his family members. Some of my findings are based on social network analysis of the texts performed with UCINET software.[690]

### *4.3.2 Texts Pertaining to Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde and Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma*

Texts relating to Rīmūt, son of Abī-ul-īde, and his namesake Rīmūt, son of Samak-Yāma, constitute a well-defined, small subgroup. The twelve texts were written between 7 Nbn (548 BCE) and 4 Cyr (534 BCE) and they are assigned to group 2 by Pearce and Wunsch. This classification seems to be based on the fact that both men were connected to Ahīqar, son of Rīmūt, the main protagonist of group 2.

Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde is first attested with his sons Ah-immê and Ahīqam in Hamat in 7 Nbn (C55) and for the last time in the very same town in 4 Cyr with his son Ah-iqmê (B21).[691] Five out of seven texts relating to him (B20, 22; C55, 57, 58) concern debts in silver owed by Rīmūt alone or by him and his sons to several creditors in Hamat, Bāb-ṣubbāti, Šamahunu, and Bīt-Dibušiti. The earliest of these documents (C55) concerns a *harrānu* venture, which, together with the predominance of silver debts in this file, suggests that Rīmūt was involved in the world of business.[692] This view is further corroborated by the two documents featuring his son Ah-immê alone: C59 (2 Cyr) shows that Ah-immê was involved in fish trade in Himuru,[693] and C61 (3 Cyr) reveals that he was a partner in a *harrānu* venture in Babylon. The *harrānu* ventures of the father and son had to do with barley, and together with C59 this indicates that they were engaged in trade in staples. The size of the two ventures was not negligible, as C55 pertains to 25 shekels of silver and C61 to 75 *kurru* of barley and 30 shekels of silver. The retail of agricultural produce in cities was an important commercial activity in Babylonia, and it has also left traces in other texts of this corpus.[694] Rīmūt and Ah-immê did not work alone, and the frequent creditors, debtors, and witnesses of their documents were most likely their business partners.[695]

Several details in Rīmūt's and Ah-immê's documents suggest that the land-for-service sector was the economic framework of their activities. The village of Hamat (B21; C55, 56) was most probably a settlement of deportees from the Syrian city of Hamath,[696] and Bitqa-ša-Anu-ibni (C55) was likely an estate named after its owner or the official in

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[690] Borgatti et al. 2002.

[691] Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde is attested in B20–22; C55, 57, 58, 83. It is possible that Ah-iqmê was the same son as Ah-immê or Ahīqam, and the spelling $^{\text{I}}$šeš-*iq-me-*$^{\text{?}}$ is a scribal mistake. See Wunsch (forthcoming), 68.

[692] See Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 192. *Harrānu* was a common type of business partnership in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian period, which, in its most basic form, involved an investor and an agent running the business. See Jursa 2009, 53–68; 2010a, 206–214.

[693] Himuru is not attested elsewhere in the corpus.

[694] See section 4.3.6.3.

[695] Aqria/Mannu-likīn (B22; C57, 59), Dannâ/Šalti-il (C57, 58, 61), and Bēl-īpuš/Dannia (C58, 59, 61).

[696] Waerzeggers 2015, 190. For an account of Nebuchadnezzar II's conquest of Hamath, see *ABC* 5: obv. 6–8.

charge of it. A few Judeans are another example of deportees in these documents (C61, 83). Moreover, people associated with the royal administration were present when documents B20 and B22 were drafted; this is suggested by the *šarru* names of two witnesses and a scribe.

There is a possibility that Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde was the father of Ahīqar/Rīmūt, the main protagonist of the texts from Našar: he witnessed Ahīqar's tax payment to the agent of the tax-summoner (*dēkû*) of Yāhūdu in a text written in Našar in 1 Cyr (C83). Moreover, both men were active in a place called Bāb-ṣubbāti (B22–23; C60), and Ahīqar and Rīmūt's son Ah-immê were both involved in fish trade (B23; C59). However, there are no other prosopographical connections that would corroborate the family relationship between Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde and Ahīqar/Rīmūt.

The suggestion that Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde was the father of Ahīqar is seriously complicated by the presence of a certain Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma in three texts from Hamat and Bāb-ṣubbāti in 7(?) Nbn – 3 Cyr.[697] Judging by the Yahwistic name of Samak-Yāma, he was of Judean descent. The first text, C56, pertains to the voiding of a promissory note in Hamat owed by Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma. The date of the text is broken, but it is from the reign of Nabonidus and written by a scribe named Marduk-šum-uṣur/Ṭābia. This is peculiar because Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde is attested in Hamat in 7 Nbn in a document written by Marduk-šum-uṣur/Ṭābia/Dābibī (C55), who must be identical with the scribe in C56. Both texts pertain to debts in silver, but they do not have parties or witnesses in common.

The next attestation of Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma is found in Bāb-ṣubbāti in 11 Nbn (B19). He owed a little over 3 *kurru* of barley to Nabû-lēʾi/Nabû-ah-iddin, who is attested as the creditor of Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde and Ah-iqmê in B21. Nabû-lēʾi is not attested in any other text of the corpus. Moreover, in B19 the barley is to be delivered to Bitqa ša Anu-ibni, which is the place where two sons of Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde had to deliver their barley in C55. Another connection to C55 is the name Amurru-bēl-šamê: a certain Amurru-bēl-šamê/Dūrlāya is the investor of venture capital in C55 (7 Nbn) and Bulṭâ/Amurru-bēl-šamê is the first witness in B19 (11 Nbn). The name Amurru-bēl-šamê is not attested elsewhere in the corpus, and it is very well possible that these two people were a father and son. Finally, the toponym Bāb-ṣubbāti connects B19 to B22, with the latter text featuring Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde and his son Ah-immê.

The last attestation of Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma is C60, a promissory note for 52 or 53 shekels of silver owed by Ibni-ilu/Kīnâ and Ahīqar/Rīmūt to Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma in 3 Cyr. The text specifies that the silver is the price of oxen; later texts reveal that Ahīqar frequently bought oxen to form plough teams with his business partners.[698] Except for Rīmūt and Ahīqar, the other people in the text are not attested elsewhere in the corpus. This text was also written in Bāb-ṣubbāti, which emphasises the geographical proximity of the activities of Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma and Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde.

Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma and Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde operated in the environs of Hamat and Bāb-ṣubbāti in the reign of Nabonidus and during the first years of Cyrus. They are never attested in the same document, but they knew the same people, including Ahīqar, son of Rīmūt. What is more, they disappeared at the same time, some years before the well-documented period of Ahīqar's business activities in 7 Cyr – 3 Dar. Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde had

[697] B19; C56, 60.
[698] Section 4.3.3.

at least two sons, Ah-immê and Ahīqam, whereas there is no direct evidence of the sons of Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma. Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde and his son Ah-immê traded in staples, but the activities of Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma are more elusive. The texts pertain to debts in silver and barley and to a sale of oxen. As oxen were rather expensive animals, it is apparent that Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma did not have only a small plot of his own but participated in the farming of larger tracts of land.

The texts pertaining to Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma and Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde are like a prelude to the group of texts featuring Ahīqar/Rīmūt, who is frequently attested from 7 Cyr onwards but together with the two Rīmūts already in 1 and 3 Cyr. The localities where the two namesakes worked vary significantly from the geographical environment of the Ahīqar texts, although Hamat and Bāb-ṣubbāti could not be located far away from Našar, the centre of Ahīqar's activities. Two early texts (B23; C60) show that Ahīqar was also active in Bāb-ṣubbāti, but the focal point of his activites shifted quickly away from this region after 7 Cyr. Other texts in the whole corpus do not pertain to the localities attested in this group.

Ahīqar helps to connect these texts to the rest of the corpus, and it is possible that either Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma or Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde was his father. This question cannot be settled on the grounds of the available evidence,[699] and it cannot be ruled out that the two Rīmūts were not just namesakes but one and the same individual whose father was known by two different names. This suggestion remains speculative, and it is safer to assume that we are dealing with two different men who were both working in the same region and with the same people. On the archival context of these texts, see sections 4.3.4 and 4.3.10.

### *4.3.3 Texts Pertaining to Ahīqar, Son of Rīmūt*

Ahīqar, son of Rīmūt, is attested in 54 texts of the corpus.[700] He was of Judean descent, which becomes apparent in the Yahwistic name of his son Nīr-Yāma, attested in only two documents (B27, 88).[701] The focal point of Ahīqar's activities was the village of Našar, located in proximity to Yāhūdu. Ahīqar was attached to the Judean community of Yāhūdu, at least from an administrative perspective, as he was liable for paying taxes to the *dēkû* official of that village (C83). His tax payments to *dēkû*s (C83; J9) also suggest that he held a bow land or a similar landholding, but the bulk of the texts show him actively expanding his activities into agricultural management. This business took place outside the Judean community, and very few texts pertain to his interaction with other Judeans.[702]

The evidence of Ahīqar spans over twenty-three years, from the first year of Cyrus (538 BCE) until the seventh year of Darius I (515 BCE). However, the chronological

[699] Cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 191, who suggest that Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma was Ahīqar's father. Judging by the name of Ahīqar's son Nīr-Yāma, Ahīqar was of Judean descent, but this does not necessarily mean that his grandfather bore a Yahwistic name.

[700] The relevant texts are B23–25, 27–40; C60, 62, 63, 66–79, 81–83, 85–100; J9.

[701] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 9, 287.

[702] Other Judeans than Ahīqar's family members are certainly attested only in seven documents: B29, 34; C76–77, 83, 96; J9. If *Šá-ʾ-me-eh* is a hypocoristic of Šamā-Yāma (see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 83), we should add C62–63.

distribution of the preserved documents is not even: after two stray texts in 1 and 3 Cyr, 24 texts are dated in 7 Cyr – 5 Camb. As is the case in the whole corpus, no texts survive from 6–7 Camb, but a significant number of 25 texts can be assigned to 0 Bar – 3 Dar. After a break of three years, one stray text is dated in 7 Dar. The chronological distribution of these texts is shown in Figure 4.1.[703]

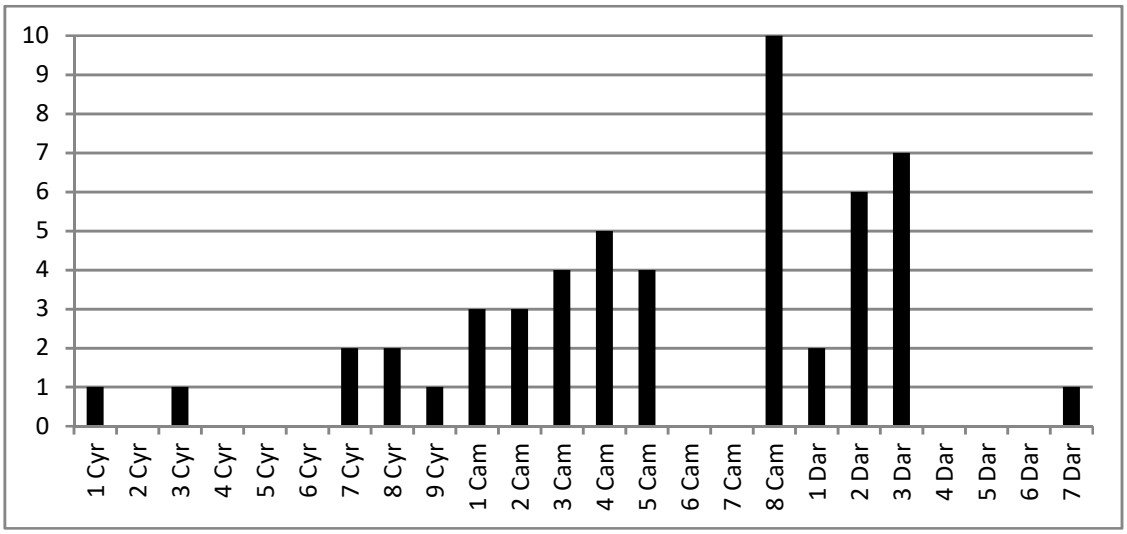



**Figure 4.1 Documents pertaining to Ahīqar**

Ahīqar's business activities resulted in three major types of documents: promissory notes, leases of land, and contracts related to cattle and plough teams. They bear witness to the main features of his business portfolio, namely, granting credit and agricultural management. His clients were farmers in the land-for-service sector, often of non-Babylonian origin, who were in need of credit or who wanted to outsource some of their tax and service obligations. Contracts or business transactions between Ahīqar and royal officials are absent from the corpus, but this does not necessarily mean that Ahīqar ran his business without the blessing of the local authorities.

More than half of the texts pertaining to Ahīqar are promissory notes, but the origin of the debts is hardly ever made explicit.[704] They are evenly distributed over time, and the debts are almost always owed to Ahīqar, who sometimes has co-creditors. The debts are mostly in barley and dates, and several times they include a silver component as well. The produce was normally obtained from the fields and gardens of the debtors, and the due date for the debts was either in the second month after the barley harvest or in the seventh month after the date harvest. Unlike the documents pertaining to Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma (see section 4.3.6.3), these promissory notes cannot be directly connected to leases or subleases of royal lands. There is only one uncertain attestation of an *imittu* rent (C68), and in all extant four leases of land, Ahīqar was the lessee. Therefore, it appears that the

[703] The table shows 52 tablets that can be dated to a certain year. C85 is likely to be dated in 1–5 Camb and B32 in the reign of Cambyses or Bardiya.
[704] There are 32 promissory notes owed by or to Ahīqar: B23, 30–39; C60, 63, 66, 68, 70–74, 81–82, 85–94.

promissory notes reflect real credit granting and agricultural management instead of rent farming.

There is strong evidence that Ahīqar granted credit to landholders in order to help them pay their taxes. Three promissory notes for dates and barley from the troubled early years of Darius I explicitly refer to the underlying reason for the debt: Ahīqar had lent landowners silver for their *ṣāb šarri* tax payments, and the repayment was to be made in staples after the harvest.[705] We may suppose that the circumstances behind some other promissory notes for dates and barley were similar, even though the reason for the debt is not made explicit. It is noteworthy that all the three *ṣāb šarri* payments were made during a period of political instability in 522–520 BCE, when Bardiya, Darius, and Nebuchadnezzar III and IV fought over the throne of Babylon.[706] Moreover, the number of documents pertaining to Ahīqar in general peaks between 1 Bar and 3 Dar. When we analyse all the debts owed to Ahīqar, we notice that over a third of the promissory notes (14) refer to outstanding debts and six to property that was pledged to secure the repayment.[707] The abundance of promissory notes in the creditor's archive indicates that they were unpaid, bad debts.[708]

The large number of bad debts indicates that local farmers in Našar had difficulties in managing the tax burden, especially during the accession wars after the death of Cambyses. Ahīqar was able to provide landholders with a service that was important for them for two reasons. On the one hand, Ahīqar had the necessary capital already available when the farmers were still waiting for the next harvest; on the other hand, Ahīqar had access to silver that was needed for tax payments. Even though there is no direct evidence of beer brewing or retail of produce in Ahīqar's archive, such activities were a necessity to convert the payments in staples into silver.[709] In 3 Dar, Ahīqar invested 32 shekels of silver in a *harrānu* venture, but the nature of this business enterprise remains unknown (C97).

Occasionally, the strained economic situation of small farmers allowed Ahīqar to gain control of their landholdings. Plots were pledged to secure debts or they were leased to Ahīqar on terms that were disadvantageous to the landholders. Three documents pertaining to Aqria and Rīmūt, sons of Ammu, exemplify this side of Ahīqar's business. In 5-VIII-3 Camb, the scribe Arad-Gula wrote a promissory note and two leases in Našar. Promissory note C66 concerns a significant debt of 8 *kurru* of barley and 20 *kurru* of dates owed by Aqria to Ahīqar. It was supplemented by a stipulation that Aqria's share in a jointly held bow land be pledged to secure the payment. This information helps us to put the leases of bow lands (B24 and C67) in their proper context. Even though Ahīqar

[705] The relevant documents are C73 (0 Dar), C86 (1 Nbk IV), and C91 (2 Dar). The term *ṣāb šarri* ('troops of the king') refers to a military or service obligation and its compensation in silver. See van Driel 2002, 245–246.

[706] On this turbulent period, see Briant 2002, 107–128; Lorenz 2008; Beaulieu 2014; Bloch 2015.

[707] Previous, unpaid debts: B32–33, 35, 38–39; C63, 70–74, 82, 92–93; pledged property: C66, 70–73, 92.

[708] In Babylonia, promissory notes were to be destroyed or given to the debtor after the debt was settled. Accordingly, the large number of promissory notes in the creditor's archive may indicate bad debts, even though creditors are also known to have preserved copies of settled debts (Wunsch 2002: 222; Jursa 2005a: 42). In the case of Ahīqar, nothing suggests that the promissory notes were mere copies instead of unsettled, bad debts.

[709] Jursa 2010a (216–224) gives examples of this phenomenon in other contemporary archives.

acted formally as a lessee in these documents and the produce was to be shared equally between the lessee and the lessors (Aqria in B24 and Rīmūt in C67), it is unlikely that the sons of Ammu entered into these contracts voluntarily. To pay back his outstanding debts, Aqria had to lease his bow land to Ahīqar, who probably enjoyed his half-share of the produce when the landholder himself still had to work on the field. It is likely that Rīmūt's decision to lease his landholding to Ahīqar was dictated by similar circumstances.

Pledges and leases of land formed another crucial aspect of Ahīqar's economic activities, namely, agricultural management. Tax payments and service obligations were not the sole economic challenge which landholders faced: they also had to cope with the high costs of setting up plough teams to cultivate their fields efficiently.[710] This offered business opportunities for entrepreneurs who had the capital to buy oxen and equipment. Several documents in Ahīqar's archive relate to oxen and to the formation of plough teams, suggesting that this type of agricultural management played an important role in his work.[711] By acquiring land through pledges and leases, Ahīqar was able to control more extensive landholdings and take full advantage of the plough teams at his disposal.

The economic framework of Ahīqar's activities is relatively clear. He can be characterised as a businessman profiting from the opportunities offered by the land-for-service sector of the Babylonian agriculture: he granted credit to small landholders to help them pay their taxes or hire a substitute to perform service obligations. The landholders did not always manage to pay back the debts, which is demonstrated by the large number of promissory notes – unpaid, bad debts – in Ahīqar's file. If a landholding had been pledged to secure the bad debt, Ahīqar was able to profit from the landholder's bankruptcy and take possession of the pledged property. By pooling pledged and rented plots and forming plough teams, Ahīqar was able to efficiently cultivate large tracts of land. The activities of Ahīqar are similar to the business model of the Murašû family from fifth-century Nippur, although on a smaller scale. Landholders had to pledge their fields and gardens to secure the debts issued by the Murašûs, and if they did not manage to pay back their debts, they ended up cultivating their own plots as tenants of their creditor.[712]

Ahīqar did not work alone, as a number of colleagues regularly appear in his transactions. For example, Milkâ, son of Šalāmān, is attested in twelve documents, covering the whole period of Ahīqar's high activity (7 Cyr – 3 Dar).[713] He features as Ahīqar's co-creditor and co-lessee, surety, and witness to his transactions. His closeness to Ahīqar is corroborated by social network analysis of the 54 texts pertaining to Ahīqar: he has the third highest degree and betweenness centrality scores after Ahīqar and the

[710] On tax burdens and credit in the land-for-service sector, see Stolper 1985, 104–107; van Driel 1999, 219–220; Jursa 2011a, 435–437. On the costs of plough teams and oxen, see Stolper 1985, 125–143; Wunsch 2013, 254–257, the latter with a discussion of some relevant Yāhūdu texts as well.

[711] B25, 27–29; C60, 75–79. See also B26, a contract for sharing two heifers, which can be connected to the rest of the corpus only via Našar, where it was written. As suggested by Wunsch (forthcoming, 80), this document may have ended up in the corpus as a result of Ahīqar's later purchase of these animals.

[712] See chapter 5.

[713] B23, 30–31, 35; C62–63, 74, 77–78, 82, 90, 97. Wunsch (forthcoming, 90–91) suggests that Milkâ might have been a son of Šalāmān, the brother of Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma. However, this suggestion is not corroborated by any direct evidence.

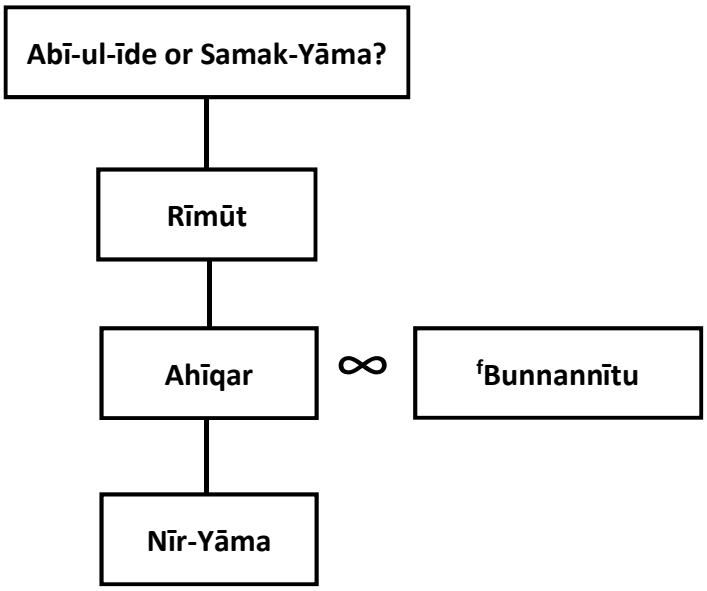
scribe Arad-Gula.[714] Šīli/Aia-abī witnessed Ahīqar's transactions five times (B27; C70, 87–88, 90) and is once attested as his debtor (C94); his centrality is evident in the results of social network analysis as well.[715] Šalāmān/Bušêa formed a plough team together with Ahīqar and a third partner in C75, and only three months later he owed over 22 *kurru* of barley and 14 *kurru* of dates to Ahīqar and Milkâ (C74). Taking these two transactions together, it seems to me that he was more likely a colleague than a client or tenant of Ahīqar.[716]

Ahīqar's family plays a small role in the extant documents: his wife Bunnannītu is attested only once in the seventh year of Cyrus (J9), when she paid her husband's *ilku* tax to a Judean tax-summoner (*dēkû*). Ahīqar's son Nīr-Yāma features in two documents. A judicial document from the second year of Darius I (B27) relates to litigation over oxen. Because Nabû-bēl-ilī/Naʾid-ilu charged both Ahīqar and Nīr-Yāma in the lawsuit, it is obvious that the father and son had a shared interest in the oxen. Accordingly, Nīr-Yāma played a role in his father's business, but no more evidence of this collaboration survives. Nīr-Yāma is attested without his father in 25 Dar (B88); this tablet connects him to the entourage of the royal official Zababa-šar-uṣur.[717] In addition to Ahīqar's wife and son, his father may be attested in the corpus as well. As discussed in section 4.3.2, Ahīqar was possibly the son of Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde or Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma.

Ahīqar's family tree (fig. 4.2) bears witness to the fluidity of the name-giving practices of this Judean family. Even though Ahīqar's own name was non-Yahwistic and his father and wife bore Akkadian names, he chose to give a Yahwistic name to his son. This is an important reminder that names are notoriously difficult markers of identity and, in many cases, West Semitic and Babylonian names hide the Judean background of their bearer.

[714] Milkâ's normalised degree centrality score in the texts pertaining to Ahīqar (54 texts) is 0.26 – considerably lower than Arad-Gula's (0.64), but representative of his role in Ahīqar's activities.
[715] Both his degree and (Freeman) betweenness centrality scores are the fourth highest in the Ahīqar group; the normalised degree centrality is 0.12.
[716] Cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 216.
[717] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, xli, 287. On Nīr-Yāma's connection to Zababa-šar-uṣur, see section 4.3.8.

**Figure 4.2 The family of Ahīqar, son of Rīmūt**



### *4.3.4 Texts Pertaining to Bēl-ahhē-erība, Son of Nūr-Šamaš*

All of the documents written in Našar cannot be connected to Ahīqar, and three documents (C64–65, 84) pertaining to the activities of Bēl-ahhē-erība, son of Nūr-Šamaš, comprise a small, distinct dossier.[718] The documents were written in Našar between 3 Cyr and 3 Camb by the scribe Arad-gula/Nabû-šum-ukīn/Amēl-Ea, and their contents resemble the Ahīqar texts. Two texts are promissory notes for small amounts of agricultural produce: one is issued by Bēl-ahhē-erība (C65) and another is issued by his brother Bēl-uṣuršu and witnessed by him (C84). Finally, in C64 Bēl-ahhē-erība leases the landholding of a certain Ahu-lētī to a third man. The lessee was supposed to work on the field and the landholder of the field to fulfil the *ilku* (tax or service) obligations and maintain the dam of the field. It appears that Bēl-ahhē-erība held the plot at his disposal and was able to lease it out under conditions that were favourable to him but disadvantageous to the landholder. Given the promissory notes issued by Bēl-ahhē-erība and his brother, it is very well possible that Bēl-ahhē-erība held the land as a pledge.

### *4.3.5 Scribes and Royal Administration in Našar*

The dossiers of Bēl-ahhē-erība and Ahīqar are similar: both men worked in Našar, issued credit to landholders, and managed pledged landholdings. Like many such documents in the Ahīqar dossier, the two promissory notes issued by Bēl-ahhē-erība and his brother may represent unpaid, bad debts. Moreover, the two men had clients in common. Šum-iddin/Ṣillâ, Bēl-ahhē-erība's debtor in C65, is Ahīqar's debtor in C90 and witness to another promissory note C89. Bēl-uṣuršu's debtor Banā-Yāma/Nubâ (C84) may be attested as a witness to Ahīqar's *ilku* payment in J9.[719] However, Bēl-ahhē-erība and Ahīqar are never attested together and nothing suggests that they were business partners or members of the same family.

In addition to the documents pertaining to Ahīqar and Bēl-ahhē-erība, five more texts written in Našar belong to the corpus. Two of them (B42; C13) can be linked to the family of Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma. A contract for sharing cows (B26, 4 Camb) probably entered the corpus as a *retroacta* – that is to say, a text that documents the ownership history of a piece of property. Because Ahīqar regularly acquired oxen to form plough teams, this document probably relates to his businesses.[720] Two documents can be connected to the corpus only via the scribes who wrote them. B41 (7 Cyr) is a receipt of a house rental payment from the scribe Niqūdu to a certain Ubārāia/Nabû-dalā. Although Ubārāia was Ahīqar's debtor ten years later in C86 (1 Nbk IV), it does not seem likely that the receipt belongs to the Ahīqar dossier. B18 (12 Nbn) is a receipt for 6½ shekels of silver, supplied perhaps as provisions.[721] The scribe Rīmūt/Nabû-zēr-ibni is probably

[718] Waerzeggers 2015, 184–185.
[719] The second witness in J9 is Bānia/Nubâ. The name is perhaps a hypocoristicon of Banā-Yāma. See Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 43, 230; Pearce 2015, 22–23.
[720] Wunsch (forthcoming), 80.
[721] *Ina šu-ṣú-bu-ut-ti*(!)*-šú.* See Wunsch (forthcoming), 62.

attested in B22 (8 Nbn), a text pertaining to Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde.[722] However, the text seems to be unconnected to Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde's activities.

The most important connection between Ahīqar and Bēl-ahhē-erība is the scribe Arad-gula/Nabû-šum-ukīn/Amēl-Ea.[723] He wrote all the documents pertaining to Bēl-ahhē-erība and 38 out of 54 (70%) documents pertaining to Ahīqar. Four of the Ahīqar texts were written by Niqūdu/Ṣillâ/Aškāpu and each of the rest of the documents by a different scribe.[724] The earliest attestation of Arad-Gula is in the Bēl-ahhē-erība text C64 (3 Cyr); after a gap of four years, he is attested again in two documents pertaining to Ahīqar (B23; J9) and in a document pertaining to Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma, the central figure of the texts from Yāhūdu (C13). From then on, Arad-Gula and Ahīqar are attested together for the whole active period of the latter's career until 3 Dar. After Arad-Gula wrote his last document for Ahīqar in 10-XI-3 Dar (C97), both men are attested only once. The last text pertaining to Ahīqar was written by Niqūdu/Ṣillâ/Aškāpu, probably in Našar in 7 Cyr (C94). Arad-Gula features for the last time in Babylon in 4 Dar, together with Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma (B5).

Arad-Gula wrote almost all of his documents to three men: Ahīqar, Bēl-ahhē-erība, and Ahīqam. A single text pertains to Ahīqam's brother Šalāmān (C80, Bīt-Bāba-ēreš, 2 Dar) and another text to the slave woman Nanâ-bihī, who was later acquired by Ahīqam (B42, Našar, 5? Camb).[725] According to the available texts, Ahīqar, Ahīqam, and Bēl-ahhē-erība never dealt with each other, but Arad-Gula wrote documents for all of them. Moreover, Arad-Gula's son Bēl-upehhir was connected to all the three men. He witnessed the transactions of Ahīqar (C75–76, 92, 97), Bēl-ahhē-erība (C65, 84), Ahīqam (C13), and Ahīqam's son Nīr-Yāma (C32).

Arad-Gula's activity was centred in Našar, where he wrote all his documents except for three texts written in Bīt-Bāba-ēreš (B34, 39; C80) and one in Babylon (B5). The scribe Niqūdu also wrote his documents for Ahīqar in Našar, and only four Ahīqar documents were written in Našar by a scribe other than Arad-Gula or Niqūdu. When Ahīqar travelled outside Našar, the documents were predominantly written by other scribes.

Before drawing any conclusions about Arad-Gula's role in Našar, it is necessary to focus on the scribe Niqūdu/Ṣillâ/Aškāpu. He wrote only five documents in Našar, but the chronological distribution is very different from the texts written by Arad-Gula: Niqūdu wrote both the first and the last tablet pertaining to Ahīqar in 3 Cyr and 7 Dar (C83, 94). In between, he wrote two tablets for Ahīqar in the fifth year of Cambyses (B29; C99), as well as an additional fifth tablet (B41, 7 Cyr) which records Niqūdu's house rental payment to a certain Ubārāia/Nabû-dalā, Ahīqar's debtor in C86 (1 Nbk IV). All tablets written by Niqūdu were drafted in Našar,[726] but, except for Ahīqar, no one is attested more than once in these five texts. Whereas the majority of documents written by Arad-Gula are promissory notes, Niqūdu wrote a variety of different text types. They include a

[722] Wunsch (forthcoming), 63.
[723] Waerzeggers 2015, 184–185.
[724] The name of the scribe is broken in C85 and the text is not included in the numbers above. However, it was probably written by Arad-Gula as well. See Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 231.
[725] The text probably came into the disposal of Ahīqam when he later bought the slave woman. She is listed among the business assets in the inheritance division C45||A2. See Wunsch (forthcoming), 116.
[726] One should most probably restore 'Našar' in C94 (Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 240).

promissory note (C94), two receipts of house rental payments (B41; C99), a sale of an ox (B29), and a receipt of tax payment (C83).

Arad-Gula's central role in the text group is further emphasised by the observation that the break in Ahīqar texts after 3 Dar and Arad-Gula's disappearance after 4 Dar seem to be related. The break does not result from Ahīqar's death or retirement, because he is still attested in a single text in 7 Dar as a creditor of his business partner Šīli/Aia-abī (C94). It is also unlikely that Ahīqar or his son Nīr-Yāma sorted out the archive and disposed of useless tablets after 3 Dar: some recently bought oxen were still alive and thus the promissory notes for unpaid debts were still valuable. The break after 3 Dar seems to be related to administrative changes in the land-for-service sector. Arad-Gula is attested for the last time in 4 Dar, together with Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma in Babylon. Ahīqam's peak activity in the environs of Yāhūdu started immediately after this, but his dossier attests to a very different organisational landscape and administrative structures in the land-for-service sector than any previous documents of the corpus (section 4.3.6.3). This linkage between Ahīqar, Ahīqam, Arad-Gula, and administrative changes suggests that it was not only private business activity which connected the three men.[727]

As I argued in section 4.2.1, the way Arad-Gula uses the place names Bīt Našar and Ālu ša Našar relates to a distinction between an administrative estate and the village surrounding it. It is noteworthy that the deliveries of produce owed to Ahīqar systematically took place at the estate, often specifically at the gate of the storehouse. Even if the produce ended up in Ahīqar's hands and he was a businessman in the sense that he worked for his own profit, it appears that his transactions were supervised by the local administration. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Arad-Gula was also a part of the administrative bureau at Bīt Našar rather than just a scribe who offered his services to local farmers and businessmen.[728] This is supported by Arad-Gula's structural role in the corpus and by his strong presence in the texts pertaining to Ahīqar. Arad-Gula works as a hinge between the Ahīqar and Bēl-ahhē-erība dossiers, on the one hand, and the Ahīqar and Ahīqam dossiers on the other. During his active career in Našar, Arad-Gula recorded and supervised Ahīqar's transactions with farmers in the land-for-service sector. Although five different scribes wrote documents relating to Ahīqar in Našar, their role was different from that of Arad-Gula: four scribes each wrote only a single document relating to Ahīqar.[729] The scribe Niqūdu wrote texts in Našar before and after Arad-Gula, but the text types are different from those written by Arad-Gula. The single promissory note written by Niqūdu to Ahīqar in 7 Dar post-dates all Arad-Gula texts, and the three other documents which he wrote to Ahīqar comprise receipts for tax and house rent payments (C83, 99) and the sale of an ox (B29). The three latter texts pertain to Ahīqar's business transactions but not to his dealings with farmers in the land-for-service sector. Although other scribes were present in Našar, Arad-Gula had a special administrative role in the village and estate.

The texts from Našar are something more complex than the remnants of the private business archive of Ahīqar. The Bēl-ahhē-erība dossier does not look like an annex to Ahīqar's archive, a number of texts which found their way into the main archive through

[727] This discussion on the archival structures of the text corpus will be elaborated in section 4.3.10.
[728] Waerzeggers 2015, 187.
[729] B35, 40; C63, 86.

marriage or a business partnership. Although the business profiles of the two men are similar, they are not connected by a family relationship or by common business partners but by the scribe Arad-Gula and his son Bēl-upehhir. The relationship between Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde and Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma is equally complicated: there is no direct connection between the two and it is hard to imagine how the texts would comprise a single private archive. At the same time, the two men knew the same people and worked in the same villages. It is striking that the scribe Nabû-ēṭir/Niqūdu, who wrote two tablets for Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde and his son Ah-immê in Bīt-Dibušiti in 14 Nbn (C57–58), travelled together with Ah-immê to Babylon in 3 Cyr (C61). It appears that scribes from rural villages were often present when businessmen from the countryside travelled to Babylon.

Ahīqar's transactions highlight only one side of his activities, namely, his interaction with landholders and business partners. However, the state administration supervised and authorised his undertakings, although this is not immediately visible: official titles and explicit administrative structures are absent from the texts. In any case, Ahīqar was working in the land-for-service sector, which was primarily designed to serve the economic interests of the state. He was among the people who were needed to keep the land-for-service sector running, fields cultivated, and tax payments flowing to the coffers of the empire. It may well be that Ahīqar was working for his own profit, but within the limits of royal control. Ahīqar's clients had to deliver their produce at the estate of Našar, and it seems that Arad-Gula not only wrote documents for Ahīqar but actually supervised his and his clients' activities. This is suggested by Arad-Gula's omnipresence in Našar and his structural role as a link between several dossiers of the text corpus from Yāhūdu, Našar, and their surroundings. At the same time that Arad-Gula disappears from the corpus in 4 Dar, the recorded activity of Ahīqar ceases and the focal point of the corpus turns to Yāhūdu and to a completely different administrative landscape.

The personal history of Ahīqar's son Nīr-Yāma further emphasises the importance of the state administration in the genesis of the present text corpus. He is attested only twice, for the first time together with his father in 2 Dar (B27) and for the last time in 25 Dar (B88). The latter document relates to the entourage of the royal official Zababa-šar-uṣur, the key figure in Pearce and Wunsch's group 3.[730]

The dossiers pertaining to Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde, Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma, Ahīqar, and Bēl-ahhē-erība do not easily fit into a single private archive. Even if one of the two Rīmūts was Ahīqar's father, the texts pertaining to another Rīmūt and Bēl-ahhē-erība would remain strangely unconnected to the protagonists of the archive. All these texts originate, however, in the context of the land-for-service sector. The recording of transactions was an efficient means of controlling farmers and businessmen in the land-for-service sector, and it is probable that the origins of the present corpus are to be found in the workings of the local administration. I will return to these questions in section 4.3.10.

[730] See section 4.3.8.

### *4.3.6 Texts Relating to Yāhūdu*

#### *4.3.6.1 General Remarks*

The village of Yāhūdu ('Judah') is attested from the thirty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar II (572 BCE) until the ninth year of Xerxes (477 BCE). The texts written in the village can be chronologically divided into two groups. The earlier one covers the years 33 Nbk – 5 Cyr, whereas the main group concerns 4–15 Dar, followed by a small number of related documents. The majority of the texts pertain to the activities of three generations of a Judean family. Rapā-Yāma/Samak-Yāma, his son Ahīqam, and his five grandsons are attested in Yāhūdu and its surroundings from the first year of Amēl-Marduk until the thirty-fourth year of Darius I (561–488 BCE). Rapā-Yāma is frequently attested in the early Yāhūdu group, whereas Ahīqam and his sons are central figures in the main Yāhūdu group. Figure 4.3 shows the chronological distribution of the texts pertaining to Rapā-Yāma, Ahīqam, and Ahīqam's sons.[731]

Despite the centrality of Ahīqam's family, the texts from Yāhūdu cannot simply be characterised as their private archive. Although part of the documents may fit this description, a number of texts from the reign of Darius I appear to belong to an administrative archive. Moreover, a number of other texts written in Yāhūdu, including the two earliest documents from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and the latest document from the reign of Xerxes, are difficult to connect to the family of Ahīqam.

[731] The table only includes those documents which can be dated to a certain year. C46, in which Nīr-Yāma/Ahīqam rents a house in Yāhūdu, should be perhaps dated roughly to 25 Dar, and C39, a promissory note owed by Haggâ/Ahīqam, to 32 Dar. For the date of C39, see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 162. There are three documents in which both Ahīqam and one or more of his sons are attested together. Of these texts, C25 and C29 are classified as Ahīqam texts and C30 as a text pertaining to his sons.

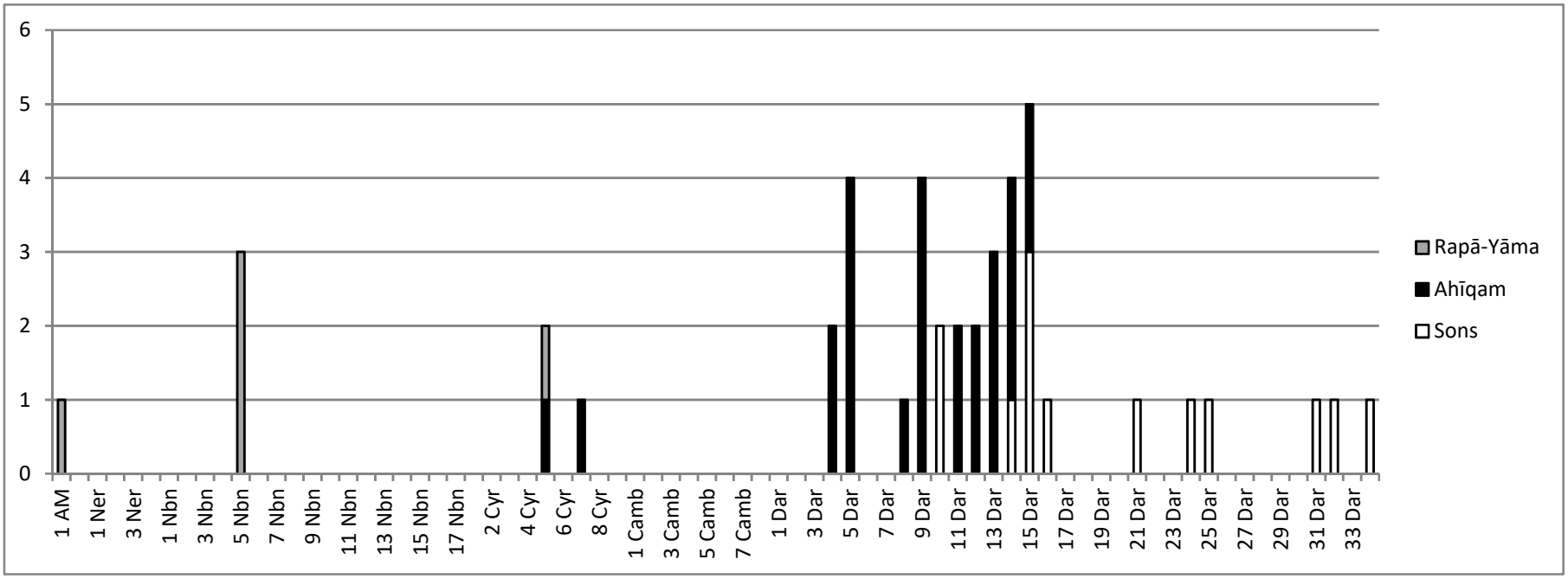



**Figure 4.3 Documents pertaining to Rapā-Yāma, Ahīqam, and Ahīqam's sons**

#### *4.3.6.2 Early Texts Relating to Yāhūdu*

The earliest texts from and relating to Yāhūdu do not constitute a homogenous group. Instead, they can be classified into two categories. First, the majority of the documents pertain to two Judeans, Rapā-Yāma/Samak-Yāma and Ṣidqī-Yāma/Šillimu, who lived and worked in Yāhūdu in the late Neo-Babylonian and early Persian periods. They were colleagues or relatives who held plots of land in the land-for-service sector, and many texts document their interactions with state officials. Second, four documents are not related to these two Judeans, but they originate from Yāhūdu. Two texts can be connected to the rest of the corpus via the scribe Nabû-naʾid or Nabû-nāṣir, son of Nabû-zēr-iqīša, but the remaining two are difficult to link to any other text. Two early attestations of Ahīqam in 5 and 7 Cyr are discussed in section 4.3.6.3, together with other tablets pertaining to him.

The two earliest texts of the corpus, C1 and B1 (33 and 38 Nbk, 572 and 567 BCE, respectively), were written in the village while it was still called Āl-Yāhūdāya ('the Town of the Judeans'). The name Āl-Yāhūdāya and the wealth of Yahwistic names borne by its population testify to the origin of the village as a settlement of Judean deportees. Given the existence of the village already in 33 Nbk, it is likely that the deportees were settled in the countryside right after Nebuchadnezzar's deportations in the early sixth century. The characteristic structures of the land-for-service sector were also present from early on: C2 (42? Nbk) refers to the *bīt azanni* of Ṣidqī-Yāma/Šillimu. *Bīt azanni* ('quiver land') is a rare by-form of *bīt qašti* ('bow land').[732]

The text C1 pertains to the delivery of barley and perhaps some other agricultural produce in 33 Nbk. It is an administrative document rather than a private transaction, as the obliged person Šum(?)-[…]/Giddâ bears the title *sēpiru*. Although the title is commonly translated as 'alphabetic scribe', the available sources make clear that *sēpiru*s were not mere scribes but officials of various ranks.[733] Despite frequent attestations of *sēpiru*s in the Murašû archive, C1 is the only tablet in the present corpus which refers to these officials. The recipients Nergal-iddin and Nabû-zēr-ukīn in C1 were perhaps officials as well. They bear Babylonian names and their patronymics are not mentioned, implying that they were so well known in Yāhūdu that more specific identification was not needed. The administrative nature of the document is also corroborated by its relationship to the rest of the corpus. The protagonists or witnesses are not attested in other documents, but the scribe Nabû-naʾid/Nabû-zēr-iqīša also wrote the texts C3, C4, and C10 under the name Nabû-nāṣir. He presumably changed his name upon the accession of King Nabonidus (Nabû-naʾid) in order to avoid using the name of the new monarch.[734]

B1 is a promissory note for 10 *kurru* of barley, owed by Pigla(?)-Yāma/Šullumu to Nubâ/Šalam-Yāma in 38 Nbk. The document looks like a private transaction, and both parties were of Judean descent. Except for being written in Yāhūdu, B1 cannot be

[732] van Driel 2002, 237–245.
[733] Stolper 1985, 22; Pearce 1999; Jursa 2012; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 98–99. See also section 5.3.2.
[734] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 99.

connected to any other text in the corpus. There is a possibility that the creditor Nubâ/Šalam-Yāma was the father of Bēl- (or Yāhû-)šar-uṣur/Nubâ, who is attested as a creditor in several early texts from Yāhūdu, but this remains uncertain.[735]

A peculiar similarity between C1 and B1 is the presence of non-cuneiform signs on the edges of both tablets. In C1, they resemble the Aramaic letter *sin* or *shin*, and in B1 there is a short alphabetic inscription, as yet undeciphered.[736] Several other tablets of the corpus bear Aramaic inscriptions, including the last tablet from the ninth year of Xerxes (C53). Similar alphabetic inscriptions are found on other Late Babylonian cuneiform tablets, and they testify to the importance of Aramaic in Babylonia in the mid-first millennium.[737]

The majority of early texts from Yāhūdu pertain to Ṣidqī-Yāma/Šillimu and Rapā-Yāma/Samak-Yāma, who were landholders in the land-for-service sector. Ṣidqī-Yāma held a *bīt azanni* already in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (C2), and Rapā-Yāma is once said (C7) to owe barley belonging to the property of the king (*makkūr šarri*). An *ilku* tax payment by his son Ahīqam (C12) further supports this view. Rapā-Yāma is attested in five documents (C6–9, 11) from the first year of Amēl-Marduk until the fifth year of Cyrus (561–533 BCE) and Ṣidqī-Yāma in six documents (C2–6, 9) from the late reign of Nebuchadnezzar II until the eighth year of Nabonidus (c. 563–548 BCE).

All documents featuring Rapā-Yāma and Ṣidqī-Yāma pertain to their debts in barley and silver, and also once in dates. The amounts are not very large, ranging from 1;1.1.3 *kurru* of barley to 15 shekels of silver. The debtor is always either Rapā-Yāma or Ṣidqī-Yāma, and the latter acts once as a witness (C6) and once as a surety (C9) for the former. Ṣidqī-Yāma also had close contact with Rapā-Yāma's two brothers: Mī-kā-Yāma witnessed promissory note C2 and Yāma-kīn is among the witnesses in C5. Nothing in the documents suggests that these Judeans played any major role in the administration of the local land-for-service sector or that they were running a substantial business. Ṣidqī-Yāma's tie to the sons of Samak-Yāma more likely resulted from friendship or a family relationship than a business partnership.

Ṣidqī-Yāma was the holder of a quiver land who occasionally needed credit to pay his taxes (C2) or to acquire seed grain for sowing (C4). The two early debts owed by him are small (C2–3), but the two latter ones are somewhat larger: 7;2.3 and 9 *kurru* of barley (C4–5). All these documents were written in Yāhūdu. C2 reveals that Ṣidqī-Yāma's quiver land was pledged to secure his debt, and again, in C5, he has to pledge his slave in order to secure the repayment of his debt, the interest of which was paid off with the work of the slave.[738] In three cases, his creditor was Bēl-šar-uṣur or Yāhû-šar-uṣur, son of Nubâ, who was apparently an official responsible for the lands allotted to Ṣidqī-Yāma.[739] Thus, Ṣidqī-Yāma is to be seen as a landholder in the land-for-service sector, whose possible involvement in business or administrative duties is not indicated by the present texts.

The picture emerging from the texts pertaining to Rapā-Yāma is not very different from that in the Ṣidqī-Yāma texts. Rapā-Yāma is also attested only as a debtor, and two

[735] See Wunsch (forthcoming), 2.
[736] Wunsch (forthcoming), 4.
[737] Aramaic inscriptions on clay tablets from Babylonia in the mid-first millennium will be studied in Rieneke Sonnevelt's (Leiden) forthcoming dissertation.
[738] See the discussion in Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 104–106.
[739] The peculiar double name of the creditor is discussed in section 4.4.

of his debts are small (C9, 11) whereas two are larger (C6: 15 shekels of silver; C8: 6;0.5 *kurru* of dates and 5 *kurru* of barley). The amount of barley is broken in C7, but the document bears witness to Rapā-Yāma's role in the land-for-service sector. The barley was property of the king (*makkūr šarri*), being the rental income (*sūtu*) of a certain Enlil-šar-uṣur, son of Itti-Šamaš-balāṭu. This property was further managed by Ninurta-ana-bītišu, son of Rihētu, but it ultimately belonged to a high Babylonian military officer: Rapā-Yāma was obliged to deliver the barley to the estate of the *rab mūgi*.[740] Enlil-šar-uṣur was not necessarily the *rab mūgi* himself but perhaps an official in charge of the *rab mūgi*'s estate and landholdings in the vicinity of Yāhūdu. The *šarru* element in his name corroborates his ties to the royal administration.[741] As noted by Pearce and Wunsch, Rapā-Yāma's role in the transaction is not completely clear, and the barley could originate from his own field or from the lands he managed.[742]

Promissory note C8 sheds some light on Rapā-Yāma's social status: he owed dates and barley to a certain Ṭūb-Yāma, son of Mukkêa, and the document was written in Ālu-ša-Ṭūb-Yāma, which was evidently named after the creditor.[743] This also appears to be a sort of administrative estate, like that of the *rab mūgi*, and implies that Rapā-Yāma had obligations towards different functionaries in the region. The document also bears rare witness to the role of women in the Judean community in Babylonia. The delivery of staples was guaranteed by Rapā-Yāma's wife Yapa-Yāhû, who was thus competent to engage in economic activities in the public sphere. Promissory note C9, written in Adabilu, shows that Rapā-Yāma's activities were not confined to Yāhūdu.

Did Ṣidqī-Yāma and Rapā-Yāma only cultivate plots of their own or did they participate in agricultural management? On the one hand, Rapā-Yāma moved around the countryside surrounding Yāhūdu and was responsible for delivering commodities to two different administrative centres in the region. If the administrative structures did not change over time or Rapā-Yāma did not hold several plots of land, he may have managed plots held by other people.[744] On the other hand, the transactions themselves do not corroborate the idea that he managed other plots than his own. Moreover, his son Ahīqam almost certainly held a parcel of royal land, and these landholdings are known to have been hereditary.[745] Thus, we may conclude that both Ṣidqī-Yāma and Rapā-Yāma held plots of royal land in the Yāhūdu countryside, but there is no conclusive evidence of their involvement in the management of other landholdings.

In addition to the two earliest texts from Yāhūdu, documents C10 and A1 were written in Yāhūdu during the active period of Ṣidqī-Yāma and Rapā-Yāma, but they do not relate to the activities of these two men. C10 is a promissory note for barley, owed by Šalam-Yāma/Nadab-Yāma to Gummulu/Bi-hamê (6 Nbn). The document was written in Yāhūdu, but the barley was to be delivered in Adabilu, where Gummulu issued a

[740] On the *rab mūgi*, see Jursa 2010b, 85–86.
[741] See section 1.4.5.1.
[742] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 109. However, they favour the option that Rapā-Yāma managed royal lands because his son Ahīqam was involved in such activities.
[743] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 110.
[744] Pearce and Wunsch (2014, 109) favour this option.
[745] See Ahīqam's *ilku* tax payment in C12. On the hereditary nature of the landholdings in the land-for-service sector, see van Driel 2002, 226–229.

promissory note for Rapā-Yāma in 5 Nbn (C9). Although the creditor connects this text to Rapā-Yāma, it is difficult to explain why it would belong to the private archive of Ṣidqī-Yāma or Rapā-Yāma. It is more likely that the text is connected to the corpus via its scribe Nabû-nāṣir/Nabû-zēr-iqīša, who also wrote documents C1, C3, and C4. He thus links two isolated documents (C1, 10) to two documents pertaining to Ṣidqī-Yāma (C3, 4), which suggests that scribal practices shaped the early Yāhūdu group at least to some extent. C10 also bears an alphabetic inscription referring to the debtor of the document.[746]

The single marriage agreement from Yāhūdu (A1, 5 Cyr) pertains to people we know very little about.[747] Only two witnesses of the document, Šilim-Yāma/Nadab-Yāma and Ṣidqī-Yāma/Natīn, are perhaps attested in C10 and B3, respectively. The bride Nanâ-kanāta was given in marriage to the groom Nabû-bān-ahi/Kīnâ by her mother Dibbî/Dannâ,[748] and the agreement was concluded in the presence of her brother Mušallam. The groom and his father bore Akkadian names, but the bride and her brother had West Semitic names.[749] None of the bride's or husband's family members had a typically Judean name, and although the majority of witnesses bore Yahwistic names and the document was drafted in Yāhūdu, one should be careful not to conclude that the bride's family was of Judean descent.[750] In any case, their names point towards foreign origin. The husband's family was not necessarily Babylonian either, as their Akkadian names may disguise their foreign descent. The text hardly fits the private archive of Ṣidqī-Yāma or Rapā-Yāma, nor is the scribe attested in any other text of the corpus. The text remains as an isolate.

Nanâ-kanāta and Nabû-bān-ahi's marriage agreement conforms to the general outline of such documents.[751] It contains stipulations about divorce and adultery, and Marduk, Zarpanītu, and Nabû are named in the curse section. However, Nanâ-kanāta's family could not obviously afford to provide their daughter with a dowry, and an uncommon stipulation states that the groom was to provide the bride's mother with a garment worth five shekels of silver. Gifts from the groom's family are rare in contemporary Babylonian marriage agreements, although such a custom is well attested in Old Babylonian and Middle Assyrian law.[752] If the payment was actually an indirect dowry and not a mere gift to the bride's mother, it finds a parallel in the Aramaic marriage agreements from Elephantine. The exceptional wording of the divorce clause also echoes the Elephantine marriage agreements, which may indicate that Nanâ-kanāta's marriage agreement was influenced by non-Babylonian customs and legal tradition.[753]

An important point of comparison is a contemporary marriage agreement from Ālu-ša-banê (YOS 6 188, 27-IX-14 Nbn), which pertains to a bride and groom of foreign

[746] Pearce and Wunsch (2014, 112) analyse the inscription as being written in Paleo-Hebrew, but according to Rieneke Sonnevelt (personal communication), this is not certain at all. See section 8.6.
[747] The document has been discussed in Abraham 2005/2006; 2015; Lemos 2010, 237–244.
[748] A certain Dannâ/Šalti-il is attested in three texts (C57–58, 61) belonging to the Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde group, but he was hardly identical with the Dannâ in the marriage agreement.
[749] Abraham 2005/2006, 216.
[750] Cf. Abraham 2015, 36.
[751] Roth 1989, 1–28; Abraham 2005/2006, 202–206.
[752] Roth 1989, 11–12; Waerzeggers 2001; Abraham 2015, 50–52.
[753] Abraham 2015, 52–56.

origin.[754] The place name Ālu-ša-banê is not attested elsewhere,[755] and the most probable geographical context of the marriage is a rural village at some distance from the bigger cities.[756] The groom Nabû-ah-uṣur was of Judean descent, judging by the name of his father, Hatā-Yāma.[757] The bride Tallâ-Uruk, her brother Il-natan, and her father Barā-il bore West Semitic names;[758] her mother Bānītu had an Akkadian name. The list of witnesses is a mixture of Akkadian and West Semitic names, which further corroborates the assumption that the agreement was concluded in a rural settlement of foreign population. Although numerous mistakes in the text betray that the scribe was not very competent,[759] the text closely follows the general structure of Babylonian marriage agreements. The single deviation from the standard formulas is the splitting of the divorce clause in two, although this does not seem to alter its meaning in any significant way.[760] It is noteworthy that both A1 and YOS 6 188 contain the 'iron dagger' clause, which was characteristic of marriage agreements outside the urban upper class.[761]

Although both marriage agreements discussed above were written in the countryside and involved parties of foreign origin, they generally comply with the structure of other Babylonian marriage agreements. In any case, there are some peculiarities, especially in the marriage agreement from Yāhūdu. Kathleen Abraham has been able to trace similar non-standard stipulations in other marriage agreements involving non-Babylonian parties, and she argues that this reflects the way in which the two parties negotiated the terms of the marriage.[762] According to her, the parties had their say in the wording of an agreement and it was not dictated only by the Neo-Babylonian legal and scribal traditions.

Despite some links between the documents A1, B1, C1, and C10 and other early texts from Yāhūdu, the isolated texts do not fit into a hypothetical private archive of Ṣidqī-Yāma or Rapā-Yāma. Because two of the texts feature the scribe Nabû-nāṣir/Nabû-zēr-iqīša, it is conceivable that administrative practices brought these diverse texts together. For now, it is necessary to remain open to the possibility that the texts pertaining to Ṣidqī-Yāma and Rapā-Yāma were also a part of the same administrative archive. The main group of texts from Yāhūdu, which I will discuss below, sheds more light on this issue.

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[754] The document is edited as no. 17 in Roth 1989, 69–71. See also Abraham 2005/2006, 206–211; 2015, 40, 44–50; Lemos 2010, 242–244.
[755] Zadok 1985, 13.
[756] Abraham 2015, 47.
[757] Zadok (1979a, 20; 1988, 30, 174, 305) and Oded (2000, 102) analyse the name as Yahwistic, but cf. Abraham 2015, 40.
[758] Zadok 1977, 78, 83–84, 86.
[759] Roth 1989, 69–70.
[760] Roth 1989, 12–15; Abraham 2015, 46, 53.
[761] See section 3.3.1.
[762] Abraham 2015, 42–50, 56–57.

#### *4.3.6.3 Texts Pertaining to Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma and His Sons*

The bulk of the texts from Yāhūdu are related to the activities of Rapā-Yāma's son Ahīqam and grandsons Nīr-Yāma, Haggâ, and Yāhû-izrī.[763] Two early texts (C12–13) pertaining to Ahīqam originate from the fifth and seventh years of Cyrus (533–531 BCE), but the rest of his documents are dated between the fourth and fifteenth years of Darius I (518–507 BCE).[764] Ahīqam died soon after his last documented transaction, and his business assets in Babylon were divided by his sons probably in the sixteenth year of Darius I.[765] His sons Nīr-Yāma, Haggâ, and Yāhû-izrī engaged in business activities already before their father's death and continued after Ahīqam had passed away.[766] The last attestation of Yāhû-izrī was recorded in 34 Dar (B16, 488 BCE).

The activities of this Judean family were centred in Yāhūdu, but the three earliest attestations of Ahīqam were written outside the village. The first Ahīqam document (C12, 5 Cyr) records his *ilku* payment[767] to the substitute of a Judean *dēkû* official in Kēš, which suggests that Ahīqam was a landholder in the land-for-service sector, and perhaps a member of a Judean *haṭru*-like organisation. Two years later, most likely after the death of Rapā-Yāma, Ahīqam travelled to Našar to settle a debt which was originally owed by his father (C13, 7 Cyr).[768] This transaction connects Ahīqam closely with the group of texts pertaining to Ahīqar: Našar was not only the hotspot of Ahīqar's activity, but the scribe and the first witness of C13 were known to Ahīqar as well. The scribe Arad-Gula wrote the majority of Ahīqar's documents, and Arad-Gula's son Bēl-upehhir witnessed some of his transactions.

After the two early documents from the reign of Cyrus, Ahīqam disappears from sight until he appears again in Babylon in the fourth year of Darius I (B5). If the previous documents pertaining to Rapā-Yāma and Ahīqam seem to relate to their activities as landholders, promissory note B5 for over five minas of silver and five sheep paints a completely different picture. As usual, the reason for the debt is not made explicit in the text, but several pieces of information may help us to understand the context of the transaction. First of all, this is the biggest transaction related to Ahīqam. Because of its sheer size, it cannot have resulted from the cultivation of his own plot of royal land. Rather, the transaction should be situated in the realm of business or in the sphere of the institutional economy. Second, over half of the silver is described as *ša nadāni u mahāri*, '(silver) for giving and receiving'. This type of silver was intended for commerce,[769] which also suggests that this promissory note had a commercial background. Third, sheep may have been an additional payment by the debtor; they do not necessarily imply that

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[763] Yāhû-izrī's name is once written as Yāhû-azar (C30), but he must be identical with the Yāhû-izrī attested in B15–16; C45 (Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 297).
[764] Ahīqam is mentioned in texts B5–6, 9, 12; C12–14, 16–20, 23, 25, 29–31, 33–36, 40–44.
[765] His last transaction was recorded in 24-V-15 Dar (C25), and his sons divided his assets in 5-VII-16(?) Dar (C45||A2). The year of the inheritance division is not perfectly clear: there is discrepancy between the transliteration (sixteenth year) and cuneiform copy (nineteenth year) in C45. The photograph seems to suggest '16' instead of '19'.
[766] Ahīqam's sons are attested in B8, 10, 13, 15–16; C24–27, 29–30, 32, 37, 39, 45–46; J8.
[767] *Ilku* refers to a service obligation or (most often) to its compensation in silver. See van Driel 2002, 254–259; Jursa 2011a, 441.
[768] See Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 115.
[769] Vargyas 2001, 21–24; Jursa 2010a, 488; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 167.

the debt was related to herding. Finally, the later documents C44–45 pertain to Ahīqam's beer-brewing activities in Babylon: the former records the delivery of 15 vats of beer to Babylon, the price of which Ahīqam paid in barley in Yāhūdu. The latter is an inheritance division of Ahīqam's business assets in Babylon, including some vats and two slaves. Promissory note B5 is thus to be related to Ahīqam's commercial activities in Babylon, the importance of which I return to later.

Promissory note B5 was written in Babylon, but the repayment was to take place after a month in Yāhūdu. The majority of people attested in the document lived in the environs of Yāhūdu and Našar as well. The debt was owed to Ahīqam by a man whose broken name should probably be reconstructed as Banā-Yāma/Abdi-Yāhû. If this is correct, he is presumably attested as Ahīqam's creditor in Yāhūdu nine years later (C36, 13 Dar).[770] In C36, the debt of 16;1.4 *kurru* of barley was royal property (*makkūr šarri*) managed by Banā-Yāma. It thus appears that Banā-Yāma, Ahīqam's debtor in B5, was a businessman involved in the management of state lands. The witnesses and the scribe of B5 came from the countryside as well. The second witness, Hanan/Habbuhru, is probably attested as a witness to Ahīqam's transaction in 12 Dar (B9).[771] The scribe of B5, Arad-gula/Nabû-šum-ukīn/Amēl-Ea, is attested numerous times in the village of Našar. Finally, the first and third witnesses, in all probability brothers, shared the Yahwistic patronym Padā-Yāma, which makes it likely that they also lived in the environs of Yāhūdu.[772] Therefore, we may conclude that the group of people who were present at Ahīqam's transaction had travelled from the countryside to Babylon.

There is one puzzling feature in promissory note B5, namely, the presence of the scribe Arad-Gula with Ahīqam in Babylon, outside his normal sphere of influence in Našar. The scribe was active in 3 Cyr – 4 Dar, but despite the great number of documents he wrote, he is seldom attested outside Našar: except for the present document, he appears only three times in Bīt-Bāba-ēreš (B34, 39; C80). Arad-Gula and Ahīqam had known each other for a long time, because the scribe wrote a document for Ahīqam in Našar already fourteen years earlier (C13, 7 Cyr). Ahīqam does not appear in a single document during these fourteen years which coincide with Ahīqar's and Arad-Gula's peak activity.[773] B5 therefore marks a watershed in the composition of the corpus, as it is the last attestation of Arad-Gula and it starts the period of Ahīqam's peak activity.[774] I will return to this document and its importance in section 4.3.10 when I discuss the interrelations between the different text groups in the corpus.

Promissory note B5 is dramatically different from Rapā-Yāma's and Ahīqam's previous transactions in 1 AM – 7 Cyr. These earlier documents paint a picture of a father and son who cultivated a plot or two of royal land in the land-for-service sector and who occasionally had to take out a loan to fulfil their tax or service obligations. Ahīqam's activities and the whole economic landscape in Yāhūdu look very different in the fourth year of Darius I. From then on, Ahīqam was working as a rent farmer in the land-for-

[770] Because both Banā-Yāma and Abdi-Yāhû are common names in the text corpus (Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 257, 264), it cannot be confirmed that the namesakes in B5 and C36 were actually one and the same person.
[771] The text was written in Adabilu, which was located close to Yāhūdu (see C9–10).
[772] The patronymic of the third witness is partially broken, but the restoration Padā-Yāma is well-founded.
[773] Figure 4.1.
[774] Figure 4.3.

service sector, buying rights to collect payments from landholders and converting the rent in staples to silver through beer brewing and retail sales. The organisation of the land-for-service sector in Yāhūdu was also different, and Judean landholders – called *šušānu*s – worked in *haṭru*-like administrative units.

The change must have taken place at some point during the undocumented period in the reign of Cambyses or the early years of Darius I, because all the essential components of Ahīqam's business and the new administrative structures were in place already in the fourth and fifth years of Darius: in addition to his business dealings in Babylon, Ahīqam collected *imittu* rental payments, and his connections to Babylonian officials were well established. C33 (4 Dar) is a promissory note for 21;1 *kurru* of dates, an *imittu* rent from the fields of *šušānu*s, which is owed to Ahīqam by a certain Banā-Yāma/Ahu-Yāma. The debtor hardly cultivated the gardens himself, and the formulation of the promissory note indicates that he was a sublessor or business partner of Ahīqam and managed the landholdings of the unnamed *šušānu*s.[775] Furthermore, B12 and C14 from the fifth year of Darius I feature Ahīqam as a witness to the lists of estimated *imittu* rents from Judean *šušānu*s. C15 belongs to this group as well, because it closely resembles the other lists, except for the absence of Ahīqam. The lists were written in the seventh month, just before the date harvest, when a group of officials travelled in the countryside and assessed the rental payments of landholders.[776] It appears that most of the *šušānu*s held only a fraction of a bow land. This did not necessarily result from inheritance divisions which split the plots, for the state could also grant fractional bow lands to landholders.[777]

Ahīqam witnessed the *imittu* lists in his role as a rent farmer who had bought the rights to collect payments from landholders in the surroundings of Yāhūdu. This aspect of his business operations is clarified by three documents from the last month of the ninth year of Darius I.[778] Two receipts (C17 and B6) record Ahīqam's payment of 4 minas of silver to Babylonian officials. The documents are not duplicates, as the former concerns *sūtu* rent of the ninth year of Darius and the latter of the tenth year.[779] Ahīqam paid a lump sum in silver in order to buy the rights to collect rental payments in kind. Promissory note C18 records Ahīqam's debt of 160 *kurru* of barley, the equivalent of 4 minas of silver, which Ahīqam had to deliver in the second month of the tenth year of Darius. The way in which these three documents were written seems to imply that Ahīqam paid the rental fees of 9–10 Dar in silver but was required to deliver 160 *kurru* of barley again a couple of months later. This would not make sense, and it is reasonable to suggest that Ahīqam paid off the debt of 160 *kurru* barley in silver and retained a copy of the promissory note as a further proof of the transaction.

The documents discussed above show that Ahīqam worked as a middleman between the state administration and the units of landholders by collecting annual rental payments from the latter. He bought the rights to collect rent in a lump sum of silver, but

[775] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 155.
[776] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 120.
[777] van Driel 2002, 239–240, 247–249. Cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 120.
[778] See the discussion in Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 126–130.
[779] Pearce and Wunsch (2014, 126) regard the texts as duplicates.

the rental payments were made in dates or barley, which indicates that he had the means to convert crops into cash.[780] Three documents pertain to Ahīqam's beer-brewing activities,[781] and we have to suppose that he had channels to sell the barley crops as well.[782] It is noteworthy that the retail sales of beer took place in Babylon (C44–45); thus, Ahīqam's business was regional rather than local.[783] Promissory note B5 for over 5 minas of silver and five sheep from Babylon fits the context of retail sales as well, as my previous discussion of the text shows. In sum, Ahīqam's activities in Yāhūdu and Babylon were two integral parts of his business which can be compared with the dealings of some native Babylonian businessmen.[784] They acquired the rights to collect rent from farmers in staples, converted the staples into silver through retail sales, and paid their fees to the crown in silver.

Ahīqam did not run his business alone, as several people were involved in it. Most notably, three of his sons – Nīr-Yāma, Haggâ, and Yāhû-izrī – were active during his lifetime and for a long time after his death in 15 or 16 Dar. However, their business profile was different from that of their father: whereas Ahīqam was primarily involved in rent farming and retail, his sons practised agricultural management. This is the same type of management as practised by Ahīqar: the efficient cultivation of fields required plough teams of four oxen, and substantial resources were needed to form such a team. Businessmen pooled the lands they owned or had rented from farmers and entered into partnerships to secure the workmen, oxen, and equipment needed to cultivate the fields. Ahīqam also participated in agricultural management, but that primarily belonged to the business portfolio of his sons.[785] As opposed to Ahīqar, credit granting was only of minor importance to Ahīqam and his sons, and the fields they managed were more likely rented than pledged.[786]

Business partners who did not belong to the family are also regularly present in the documents pertaining to Ahīqam and his sons. Most notable was Izrīqam/Šamā-Yāma.[787] His career was long (11–34 Dar) and his activities changed over time. In the beginning, he worked as a rent farmer of the fields of Judean *šušānu*s, just like Ahīqam (C19, 11 Dar), but he primarily engaged in agricultural management together with Ahīqam's sons

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[780] *Imittu* and other rental payments to Ahīqam include C23, 25, 33, 35. C16 is closely related to the same phenomenon.
[781] C40, 44, 45.
[782] There is no direct evidence of retail sales of barley, but C44 shows that Ahīqam used his barley income to finance his beer brewing business in Babylon.
[783] B10, a sharing contract for a donkey, is another piece of evidence for the trading activities of the family. On donkeys and trade, see Jursa 2010a, 216, 259–261.
[784] Compare with the Murašû family (section 5.1) and Itti-Šamaš-balāṭu from Larsa, for which see Beaulieu 2000. For further examples, see van Driel 1989; Jursa 2010a, 198–203.
[785] Regarding Ahīqam: pooling land: C23; acquiring oxen: C31; partnership contract for cultivation: C29. Regarding Ahīqam's sons: leasing land: B8; C26; dispute over a landholding: C27; acquiring oxen: C30; J8; partnership contracts for cultivation: B15–16.
[786] C41 is a clear instance of credit granting: Ahīqam loaned silver to a certain Abdi-Yāhû/Hašdâ to help him hire a substitute to serve in Elam. The debt was to be paid back in barley. C43 relates to commercial activities (debt of 11.5 shekels of silver *ša nadāni u mahāri*), and the debtor Bēl-zēr-ibni/Bēl-ahhē-erība was probably a business partner of Ahīqam and his sons (Bēl-zēr-ibni is attested as a witness in B10 and C25). C34 may be related to future rental payments rather than real credit granting.
[787] B13–16; C19, 27–28.

after the death of their father. This reflects the change from Ahīqam's rent farming activities to the agricultural management practised by his sons. It remains unclear, however, if these changes reflect actual developments in business activities or if they just result from the accidental preservation of ancient documents. Izrīqam's relationship to the family of Ahīqam is made explicit in C27, in which he appears among the witnesses bearing the title *kinattu ša Nīr-Yāma* ('the colleague of Nīr-Yāma'). The three last documents of this group (B13, 15–16) are important because they show that Izrīqam and Haggâ/Ahīqam still practised agricultural management in 31 Dar, and that Izrīqam and Yāhû-izrī/Ahīqam entered into partnership contracts for the cultivation of land in 32 and 34 Dar, almost twenty years after Ahīqam's death. Even though Izrīqam is attested twice alone without any family members of Ahīqam, these documents can be connected to the Ahīqam family via other people present in the texts.[788] The documents pertaining to Izrīqam thus appear to be closely related to the text group documenting the activities of Ahīqam and his sons.

Ahīqam's business partner Qīl-Yāma/Šikin-Yāma engaged in rent farming and agricultural management. His activities are documented only for a period of a year in 11–12 Dar (C20, 22–23). Most interesting of these three documents is promissory note C20 for *imittu* rent in dates, owed by Qīl-Yāma and Šalāmān/Rapā-Yāma to Iddinâ/Šinqā. Ahīqam is among the witnesses of the document, leading to the conclusion that Šalāmān was his brother. Roughly ten years earlier (C80, 2 Dar), Šalāmān/Rapā-Yāma bought a cow in Našar in the presence of the scribe Arad-Gula, thus providing yet another connection between the descendants of Rapā-Yāma and Našar. Unfortunately, Šalāmān is not attested in any other text of the corpus.

In addition to Izrīqam and Qīl-Yāma, several other people were close to Ahīqam's family, either as clients or business partners.[789] Bahi-iltā/Zakar-Yāma acted as a surety for Nīr-Yāma's debt to his father Ahīqam (C25) and witnessed another document pertaining to Haggâ (B10). Bēl-zēr-ibni/Bēl-ahhē-erība witnessed both of these documents (B10; C25), and Ahīqam granted him an interest-free loan of silver which was intended for trading (*kaspu ša nadāni u mahāri*; C43). Šalammu/Bahi-Esu rented a house out to Nīr-Yāma (C46), with whom he was also in litigation about the holding of a plot of land (C27). Finally, Zumbâ/Amidû operated in the same sector of agricultural management as Ahīqam's family and Izrīqam/Šamā-Yāma (C23, 27, 28).

Ahīqam and his colleagues probably belonged to the same social class of state-controlled landholders as the people from whom they collected rent, but they managed to obtain a position that allowed them to profit from the structures of the land-for-service sector. Judeans are prominent in the texts, but, interestingly enough, Judean witnesses are mostly absent from the documents pertaining to direct transactions with the royal administration.[790] In these documents, witnesses have both Akkadian and West Semitic names, but Ahīqam or his colleagues are usually the only ones who can be safely connected with the Judean community. This is not dependent on the place of writing:

[788] Yāhû-izrī/Barīk-Yāma connects B14 to B13, and Zumbâ/Amidû connects C28 to C23 and C27.
[789] Bahi-iltā/Zakar-Yāma (B10; C25), Bēl-zēr-ibni/Bēl-ahhē-erība (B10; C25, 43), Šalammu/Bahi-Esu (C27, 46), Zumbâ/Amidû (C23, 27, 28).
[790] B6, 12; C14–15, 17–22, 24–25.

Judeans did not witness Ahīqam's transactions with Babylonian officials in Yāhūdu, but the division of Ahīqam's private business assets was witnessed by several Judeans in Babylon.[791] We may suggest that Ahīqam and his colleagues were working between two worlds, while most Judeans had only limited access to the higher administrative echelons of the land-for-service sector.

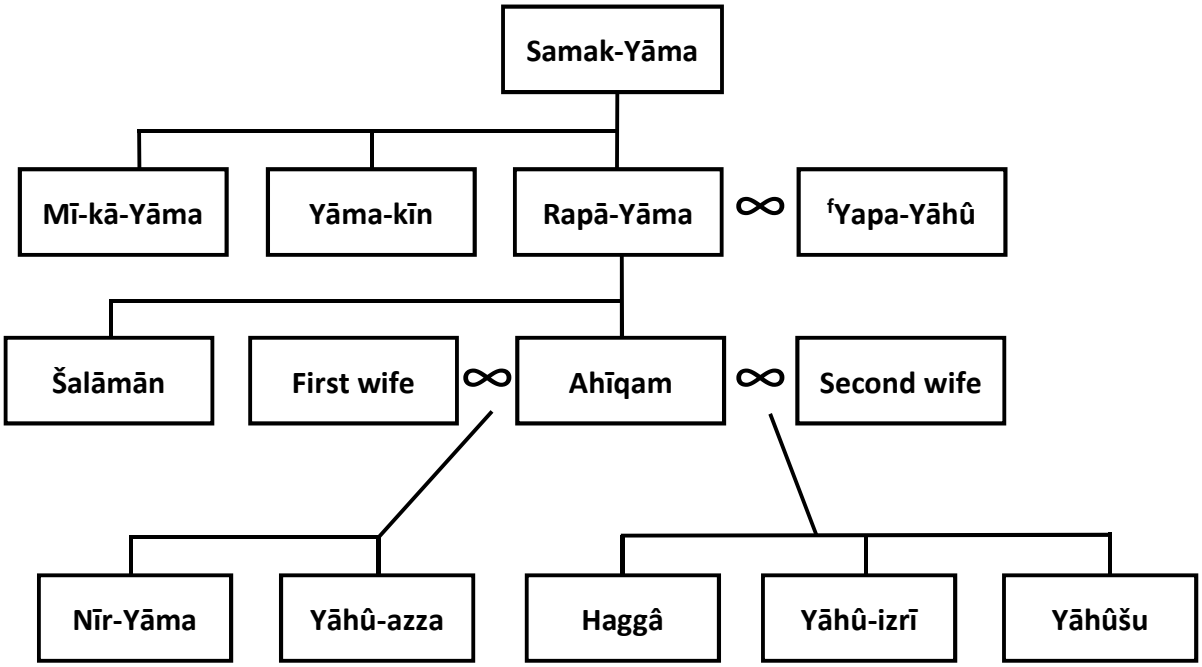
None of the surviving documents directly pertain to Ahīqam and his family members' private life. This also applies to the inheritance division, which is only concerned with Ahīqam's business assets in Babylon.[792] However, the numerous documents pertaining to Rapā-Yāma, Ahīqam, and his sons are generous with information about family relationships. We know that Samak-Yāma had at least three sons, of whom one of them, Rapā-Yāma, was married to a certain Yapa-Yāhû (section 4.3.6.2). Two sons of Rapā-Yāma and Yapa-Yāhû are known to us: Šalāmān and Ahīqam, the latter of whom was the father of five sons. Two of the sons, Yāhû-azza and Yāhûšu, are attested only in the inheritance division, whereas Nīr-Yāma, Haggâ, and Yahû-izrī certainly continued their father's businesses after Ahīqam's death in 15 or 16 Dar (507–506 BCE). Ahīqam probably had two wives, because his sons are classified into two groups in the inheritance division: one group consists of Nīr-Yāma and Yāhû-azza and the other group of Haggâ, Yahû-izrī, and Yāhûšu.[793] The last attestation of Ahīqam's sons dates to 34 Dar (488 BCE), when Yahû-izrī is mentioned in a contract related to joint farming (B16).

[791] Compare C14–15, 19–22 with C45 || A2

[792] C45 || A2 (16? Dar). The inherited property was related to beer brewing, and it consisted of two slaves, eighteen vats, and some unspecified equipment.

[793] Abraham 2007, 210; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 172. Pearce and Wunsch also raise the possibility that the grouping of the sons is related to the larger share of the firstborn, but this seems unlikely to me.

**Figure 4.4 The descendants of Samak-Yāma**[794]




[794] Cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 8.

It is highly likely that Samak-Yāma or his father belonged to the first generation of Judeans settled in Yāhūdu,[795] and this village remained home for his descendants as well. More than half of the documents pertaining to the family were written in the village, and most of the remaining documents in its immediate surroundings. Nīr-Yāma even rented a house in Yāhūdu for three years, but the lease was more likely connected to his business activities than to private housing.[796] It is striking that most of the place names in the environs of Yāhūdu refer either to an estate or to a settlement of a professional or ethnic group.[797] This is yet another sign of the prevalence of the land-for-service sector in this rural area. The evidence of beer brewing in Babylon shows that the family's activities extended beyond the countryside surrounding their home village.

Ahīqam's family followed Judean naming practices, but at the same time they adapted to Babylonian cultural practices. Yahwistic names prevailed in Ahīqam's family, and none of the family members bore a Babylonian name. Although the family was in regular contact with Babylonian officials and traded in Babylon, they did not adopt local name-giving practices like the Judean royal merchants in Sippar (chapter 3). At the same time, Ahīqam used a stamp seal that fully conforms to the style of contemporary Babylonian seals (B9, 12 Dar). It depicts a worshipper standing before a spade and an eight-pointed star, the symbols of Marduk and Ištar. A small, unclear figure stands on a pedestal at the feet of the worshipper. Worshipper scenes like this were one of the standard motifs of Babylonian seal impressions in the sixth century.[798] The sealed document is a promissory note for 21 shekels of silver owed by Ahīqam, whose slave woman was pledged to secure the debt. Her work for the creditor substituted for interest payments on the silver. Ahīqam acts as a private person, and his seal was therefore his personal property, not a seal related to a certain office. This is the single attestation of a Judean seal owner before the mid-fifth century; in the Murašû archive, several Judeans owned seals.[799] This results from a general change in sealing practices in the Persian period, when private persons increasingly started to use seals. In the time of Ahīqam, seals were predominantly used by obliged parties or parties who ceded rights in the stamped document.[800] Ahīqam's seal use in B9 is related to the transfer of rights in the document.

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[795] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 7.

[796] C46. The house was leased *ana aššābūti*. According to CAD A/2, 462, this means 'in tenancy', but Pearce and Wunsch (2014, 175) translate it as 'to live in'. The former translation is to be preferred in the light of the large-scale business activities run by the family. These activities probably resulted in some wealth, which was often invested in houses in other contemporary archives. It is unlikely that Nīr-Yāma's generation was still living in a rented property, but the renting of houses for business purposes fits well with the picture emerging from other texts. On owning and renting houses in Babylonia, see Baker 2004, 47–62; Jursa 2010a, 169–171.

[797] Ālu ša Amurru-šar-uṣur ša muhhi nār Zabinā (C16), Ālu ša $^{lú}$x$^{meš}$ (B16), Ālu ša $^{lú}$dam.nagar$^{meš}$ (B12, perhaps a mistake for $^{lú}$dam.gàr$^{meš}$ ('merchants'). See Wunsch (forthcoming), 43.), Ālu-ša-Ṭūb-Yāma (C8), Bīt-Bāba-ēreš (C80), and Bīt-Šinqāma (C18). Bīt-Naʾinnašu (B6, C17) and Adabilu (B9, 15; C9, 23) are perhaps to be added to this group as well. On the last two place names, see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 72, 112.

[798] Bregstein 1993, 82–85; Ehrenberg 1999, 15–25, 43–44. The scene depicted on the seal of Ahīqam resembles the image on the seal of the official Ērišu in B27. In addition to the simple stamp seal depicting a fish in B18, these are the only seal impressions in the corpus.

[799] Section 5.7.

[800] On Babylonian sealing practices, see section 5.1.2.

Ahīqam's success in establishing business relationships with Babylonian officials and his commercial activities in Babylon bear witness to his integration into local society, but the adherence to Yahwistic and West Semitic naming practices attests to the persistence of Judean cultural traditions. The occurrence of Yahwistic names, the spade of Marduk, and the star of Ištar do not necessarily mean that all or any of these deities were worshipped by the family of Ahīqam. However, they show that the family was exposed to the influence of Babylonian society even when they adhered to Judean naming practices. The readiness to integrate and adapt to the local customs may have been both the key to and the result of their evidently successful careers.

The composition of the text group pertaining to Ahīqam and his sons resembles that of the Ahīqar texts: apart from the inheritance division, documents pertaining to family affairs or immovable property are absent. However, not every text is a simple business document, and especially the *imittu* rent lists from the fifth year of Darius I are undoubtedly administrative documents (B12; C14–15). There are also other documents which do not neatly fit into a private business archive; they will be discussed in the next section. This composition of texts, which comprises business transactions and administrative documents, must relate to Ahīqam's role as a middleman between Judean landholders and the royal administration. Although Ahīqam and his sons might be labelled businessmen, they also provided an important level in the management of the land-for-service sector. The success and failure of their business was dependent on local officials, but the same officials needed intermediaries like Ahīqam to ensure the efficient cultivation of fields and the steady flow of tax income.

#### *4.3.6.4 Royal Administration in the Environs of Yāhūdu*

The bulk of the documents from Yāhūdu would easily fit in a hypothetical private archive of Ahīqam and his sons, but a number of texts constitute a well-defined subgroup interconnected by Iddinâ, son of Šinqā, the deputy of the *rab urâti*. He is attested in eleven documents written in Yāhūdu and its surroundings in 5–12 Dar.[801] The *rab urâti* was a royal official or military officer who was in charge of horse teams, and, according to the Murašû texts, he had an estate in the Nippur region.[802] Even though such an estate is not attested in the surroundings of Yāhūdu, this example of the *rab mūgi*'s estate makes its existence quite possible. The *rab urâti* himself is never attested in the present corpus, and the title occurs only in connection to his deputy. In light of his father's Arabian name Šinqā, Iddinâ himself was of non-Babylonian origin.[803] The estate of Bīt-Šinqāma was evidently named after Iddinâ's father; this is one of the places where Iddinâ and Ahīqam negotiated the latter's rent farming rights (C18).[804]

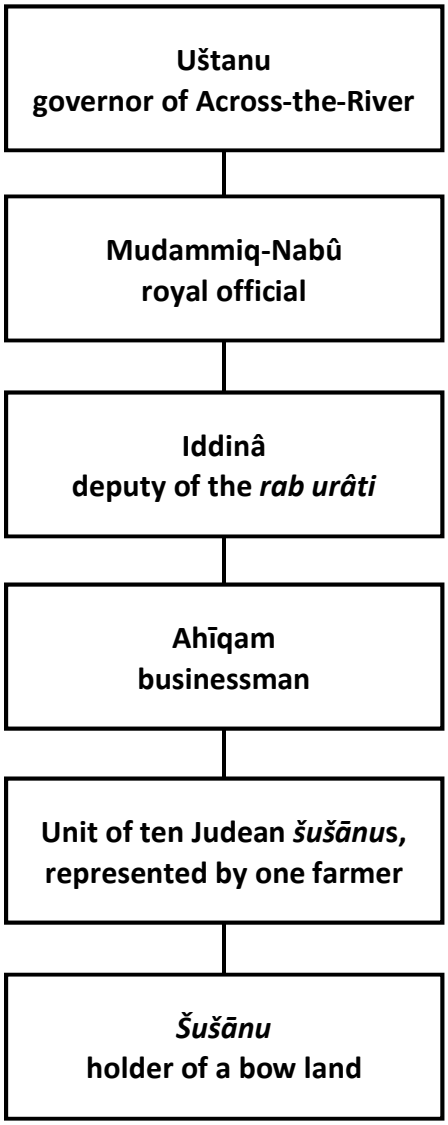
The documents pertaining to Iddinâ can be further divided into three groups. The earliest texts from 5 Dar are lists of *imittu* rent owed by Judean *šušānu*s to Iddinâ, who managed their lands (B12; C14–15). Royal property was distributed as bow lands to

[801] B6–7, 12; C14–15, 17–22.
[802] On *rab urâti*, see CAD U–W, 258–259; Stolper 1977; 1985, 95–96. On the estate of the *rab urâti* in the Murašû archive, see Stolper 1985, 73.
[803] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 85.
[804] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 130.

*šušānu*s, who were grouped together in units of ten and represented by one of the respective farmers.[805] Ahīqam witnessed two of the three lists, apparently in the role of a rent farmer of the lands in question. Another three texts from 9 Dar show how Ahīqam bought rights to collect rent from local landholders (B6; C17–18). These documents elaborate on the role of Iddinâ and the administrative hierarchy of the local land-for-service sector: Iddinâ appears to have been a subordinate of a certain Mudammiq-Nabû, son of Nabû-aplu-iddin, whose title is not given in the documents.[806] Ultimately, they were both subordinate to Uštanu, the governor of Across-the-River, who was responsible for the royal lands in the environs of Yāhūdu.[807] Based on these six texts, the administrative hierarchy of the land-for-service sector in Yāhūdu and its surroundings is visualised in Figure 4.5.

[805] Ten landholders are represented by one nominal debtor in C14 and twenty landholders by two nominal debtors in C15. Because of the damaged state of the tablets, only one of the nominal debtors, Qaṭīb-Yāma in C15, can be identified on the list of landholders. B12 pertains to the *imittu* rents of only two landholders. The organisational structure in C14–15 resembles *eširtu*s, units of ten, which are attested in Babylonian cities and temples, and which were responsible for tax payments and work or military service. See Jursa 1999, 101, 104; 2011a, 439–441; van Driel 2002, 295, 298–299, 309; MacGinnis 2010, 160–161.
[806] B6; C17–18.
[807] B7; C18–20, 21.

**Figure 4.5 Administrative hierarchy in the environs of Yāhūdu**



The third group of texts pertaining to Iddinâ was written in 11–12 Dar. Four documents (B7; C19–21) are promissory notes for dates or barley, concerning *imittu* rents from the fields of Judean *šušānu*s. The creditor is always Iddinâ and the debtors bear Yahwistic names or patronymics. C22 resembles these documents, but the reason for the debt is not given in the promissory note. Three of the documents (C19–20, 22) can be directly connected to Ahīqam: he is a witness in C19–20, the debtors Izrīqam/Šamā-Yāma (C19) and Qīl-Yāma/Šikin-Yāma (C20, 22) are his business partners, and his brother Šalāmān is the second debtor in C20.[808] The debtor of C21 witnessed a document pertaining to Ahīqam (B9), which suggests that he was Ahīqam's acquaintance as well. Only the debtor of B7 cannot be connected to Ahīqam.

The last group of texts discussed above emphasise that Ahīqam and his sons were not the only Judeans who practised rent farming in Yāhūdu. Other people also worked as middlemen in the land-for-service sector and bought rights to collect rental payments from landholders. Although Ahīqam knew most of these people, the presence of their documents in the corpus is difficult to explain if we would like to assign all tablets from Yāhūdu to a private business archive of Ahīqam's family.[809] The same difficulty applies to the administrative lists of *imittu* rents (B12; C14–15). A closer look at the people attested in these documents reveals that the texts are not only interconnected by Iddinâ but by scribes and other administrative personnel as well.

The assessment of the *imittu* rents in B12 and C14–15 (5 Dar) was performed by a single group of administrative personnel: the witnesses are always Nabû-zēr-ibni/Il-gabrī and Bēl-ēreš/Šalāmān, and the scribe is Šamaš-ēreš/Marduk-mukīn-apli/Mudammiq-Adad. The assessment was performed in the countryside where the orchards were located, in Yāhūdu and in Ālu ša $^{lú}$dam.nagar$^{meš}$.[810] Šamaš-ēreš was a frequent scribe in the environs of Yāhūdu and evidently a member of the local administration in the land-for-service sector. In addition to the *imittu* lists, he wrote the documents pertaining to Ahīqam's purchase of rent farming rights in 9 Dar (B6; C17–18), two promissory notes on rental payments (C22, 24; 12 and 14 Dar), and a judicial document (B11, during the reign of Darius I).

Documents relating to Ahīqam's purchase of rent farming rights (B6; C17–18) were witnessed by several people, some of whom appear in several other documents as well. The importance of the transactions is emphasised by the presence of the courtier (*ša rēš šarri*) Nabû-lū-salim among the witnesses; this is the only time when a person bearing this high official title is attested in the corpus.[811] Two other noteworthy persons on the witness lists are Bīt-il-šar-uṣur/Šalammu and his son Bīt-il-ab-uṣur. The name of the father betrays a connection to the royal administration.[812] Bīt-il-ab-uṣur is attested in

[808] One these people, see section 4.3.6.3.
[809] Waerzeggers 2015, 185–186.
[810] As Pearce and Wunsch (2014, 120) put it: 'A commission of appraisers travels the area about one month before the harvest and has the pertinent debt records issued.' However, I do not fully agree with their suggestion that the transactions were witnessed by the representatives of 'the administration and the community'. In my view, Nabû-zēr-ibni and Bēl-ēreš should be counted among the officials, and Ahīqam as a representative of his own business interests.
[811] For *ša rēš šarri* officials, see Jursa 2011b.
[812] On *šarru* names, see section 1.4.5.1.

numerous other documents relating to the administration of the local countryside.[813] Bēl-ušallim/Šinqā (B6–7; C17, 19–22) was a royal official but apparently of a lower rank than his brother Iddinâ.

Something changed in the administration of the land-for-service sector around the twelfth year of Darius I. Iddinâ, his brother Bēl-ušallim, and the governor Uštanu[814] disappear from the documentation, and new officials are suddenly in charge of the lands managed by Ahīqam and his sons. The new functionaries include a nameless commander of the troops at the riverbank (C23: *rab ṣābi ša kišād nāri*), Kanzarā, the commander of the (reserve?) troops (C24: *rab ṣāb kutalli*?),[815] and a nameless commander of the troops in an unnamed town or estate (C26: *rab ṣābi ša Bīt*-[…]). The province of Across-the-River is mentioned in a broken context in the last document, which suggests that the governor of the province still had landholdings in the Yāhūdu region in 21 Dar. Even though Iddinâ and Uštanu are not mentioned any more, there was continuity in the administration of the local land-for-service sector before and after the twelfth year of Darius. Bīt-il-šar-uṣur and Bīt-il-ab-uṣur are attested in 9–14 Dar and the scribe Šamaš-ēreš in 5–14 Dar. If the royal estates were redistributed among the high functionaries of the Persian Empire around 12 Dar, this did not significantly affect the local officials of the land-for-service sector.

### *4.3.7 Texts from Āl-šarri*

Āl-šarri ('Kingstown') was a village located not far away from Yāhūdu.[816] The place name itself suggests that the fields and orchards in the vicinity of Āl-šarri belonged to the land-for-service sector: C47 and C51 were written in Āl-šarri ša qašti eššeti ('Kingstown of the New Bow Land'). This was certainly the same place as Āl-šarri, as its name apparently fluctuated in a similar way as the name of Yāhūdu.[817] Here we have yet another locality which was founded to bring new royal lands under cultivation. Ahīqam is attested there once in promissory note C41 (5 Dar). He granted credit to a certain Abdi-Yāhû/Hašdâ in order to help him hire a substitute to perform service obligations in Elam. Apart from C41, all the other six texts from Āl-šarri are difficult to connect to the rest of

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[813] Bīt-il-šar-uṣur: B6; C17–18; 24. Bīt-il-ab-uṣur: B6–7; C17–22, 24.

[814] Because of the sporadic evidence, the chronology of the governors of Across-the-River cannot be reconstructed precisely. Uštanu was certainly the governor of Babylon and Across-the-River from the first until the third or the sixth year of Darius I, and a certain Tattannu was the governor of Across-the-River in the twentieth year of Darius. The documents from Yāhūdu suggest that Uštanu was the governor of Across-the-River at least until 11 Dar. See Stolper 1989, 290–291; Pearce 2015, 17–18. The reference to the estate and slave of Uštanu in C103 (3 Xer) is so late that it cannot be taken as firm evidence for Uštanu still being governor or even alive.

[815] $^{lú}$gal *ṣa-ab* gú.tar? The reading of the last sign is not completely clear, and as Pearce and Wunsch (2014, 138) note, the official title is not attested elsewhere. Kanzarā is attested without a title in C25.

[816] On the Āl-šarri texts, their protagonists, and the location of Āl-šarri, see Wunsch (forthcoming), 7.

[817] Yāhūdu was also known as Ālu ša Yāhūdāya and Yāhūdu ša ina muhhi […] (see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 312). The name Āl-šarri ša qašti eššeti is attested in 0 and 2(?) Camb, and the first certain attestation of the name Āl-šarri is from 4 Camb. However, B2 (6 Cyr) is most likely written in Āl-šarri, even though the place name is damaged. The available space on the tablet does not allow us to restore the long form but only Āl-šarri, which suggests that there was no linear change from the longer to the shorter form of the place name (but see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 176).

the corpus. They were written within twelve years in 6 Cyr – 1 Nbk IV, which is roughly contemporary with the early period of Ahīqar's activity.

The texts from Āl-šarri centre around two persons: Iqbâ/Nabû-šum-ukīn (B2; C47, 49; 6 Cyr – 1 Nbk IV) and Bēl-lēʾi/Mīnu-ana-Bēl-dannu/Ša-nāšišu (C48–51; 2? Camb – 1 Nbk IV). They are not attested outside Āl-šarri and they had no connections to the other protagonists of the corpus. Iqbâ engaged in the workings of the land-for-service sector by leasing bow lands from their holders for cultivation (B2; C49) and granting credit to farmers (C47).[818] Two of the documents pertaining to Iqbâ were written by a scribe named Itti-Šamaš-balāṭu/Bāba-ēreš (B2, C47) and the third one by Bēl-lēʾi/Mīnu-ana-Bēl-dannu/Ša-nāšišu. The latter is attested in three other Āl-šarri texts as well, twice as a scribe (C48, 50) and once as a debtor (C51). C48 is a promissory note for two shekels of silver, to be paid back at the time of the barley harvest. Both C50 and C51 pertain to sales of oxen to settle debts in silver. In C51, Bēl-lēʾi is one of the two debtors whose outstanding debt is settled by seizing an ox from the wife of Bēl-lēʾi's co-debtor Kīnâ. As draught animals were of high value and importance, the sale of an ox to settle a debt signals a strained economic situation. It is important to note that difficulties like this are not only found among farmers of foreign origin, since Bēl-lēʾi, a scribe in Āl-šarri and a Babylonian bearing a family name, could also find himself in such a bind.

Other people in the Āl-šarri texts do not connect the text group to the rest of the corpus either. In addition to Ahīqam and his debtor, only two Judeans appear in the texts from Āl-šarri: one is a witness in C50 and the other seizes the ox in C51. However, they are not attested elsewhere in the corpus. Two other connections are possible but very unlikely. A person named Nabû-rēʾûšunu/Arad-Nabû is attested as a lessor in B2 (Āl-šarri, 6 Cyr) and as a witness to the transaction of Nīr-Yāma/Ahīqam in C26 (21 Dar, the place of writing not preserved). The gap of thirty-two years makes it unlikely that the same person is referred to on both occasions. Another hypothetical link is Šamaš-erība/Nabû-[…]-iddin, the debtor in C47 (Āl-šarri, 0 Camb). If the patronymic is amended as Nabû-zēr-iddin, a homonymous individual is attested as a witness to B21 (Hamat, 4 Cyr), a text belonging to the Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde group.[819] I hold both of the above suggestions to be improbable, and even if they were right, the presence of these men in C26 or B21 would not explain why the Āl-šarri texts ended up in the present corpus. These texts cannot belong to the hypothetical private archives of Ahīqar or Ahīqam, nor do they fit into group 1, where Pearce and Wunsch assign them.[820] The existence of a group of isolated texts stresses the complicated archival structure of the corpus.

[818] Iqbâ's patronymic is lost in C49, but restoring Nabû-šum-ukīn is well-founded on the basis of B2 and C47 (see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 179). It must be noted, however, that two other men named Iqbâ are attested in C50 (Āl-šarri, 1 Nbk IV).

[819] There appears to be an additional sign or a remnant of a sign between the ag and the mu signs, which looks like the pap sign (see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 176). Reading 'numun' instead of 'pap' would result in the name Nabû-zēr-iddin.

[820] Waerzeggers 2015, 184.

### *4.3.8 Texts Pertaining to Zababa-šar-uṣur and Bīt-Abī-râm*

Texts pertaining to the royal official Zababa-šar-uṣur and to the estate of Bīt-Abī-râm are assigned to group 3 by Pearce and Wunsch, and the great majority of them remain unpublished. Zababa-šar-uṣur is attested in seven texts published by Joannès and Lemaire (J1–7),[821] and Bīt-Abī-râm is the place where C102 (1 Cyr) was written. Moreover, C101 (Hazatu, 5 Cyr) should be included in this group as well, because it can be linked to the rest of the corpus only via Nabû-zēr-iddin/Balāssu, the creditor in C102.[822] According to Pearce and Wunsch, text C103 (Bīt-Ṭāb-Bēl, 3 Xer) belongs to this group as well, but no person or place in this text is attested elsewhere in the corpus.[823] This makes the total number of published texts nine or ten, depending on the choice to include C103 or not. The publication of a hundred or so texts from this group is forthcoming (see section 4.1), which means that all the following conclusions are preliminary at best and need to be adjusted when more texts become available.[824]

The context of C101–103 and J1–7 is similar to that of the other texts in the corpus. They relate to the cultivation and management of royal lands in the Babylonian countryside, and the structures and terminology of the land-for-service sector are apparent in many of the texts. Zababa-šar-uṣur/Nabû-zēr-iddin, the steward of the crown prince's estate (*rab bīti ša bīt ridûti*), is the central figure in texts J1–7. According to the information available in Pearce and Wunsch 2014, he is attested in 1 Nbk IV – 5 Xer (521–481 BCE), and the peak of his activities is centred in the years 19–28 Dar (503–494 BCE). The chronological distribution of the Zababa-šar-uṣur texts in Joannès and Lemaire 1996 and Wunsch (forthcoming) is shown in Figure 4.6.[825] In the available sources, he appears as the manager of the crown prince's lands (J2–4), a creditor (J1, 5), a lessee (J6), and perhaps as a debtor (J7). The name of this official with its *šarru* element is a good example of *Beamtennamen* in first-millennium Babylonia.[826]

[821] Joannès and Lemaire 1996.
[822] Waerzeggers 2015, 184. For no obvious reason, the text is included in group 2 in Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 247.
[823] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 251. The document refers to the estate and slave of a certain Uštanu. Even if this Uštanu was the governor of Across-the-River, this information does not provide a link to the other texts mentioning the governor.
[824] For preliminary discussions of the text group, see Joannès and Lemaire 1996, 51–56; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 6–9.
[825] The table shows 50 tablets which can be dated to a certain year and which refer directly to Zababa-šar-uṣur: B43–57, 59–64, 66–72, 75–76, 78–84, 86–87, 90–91, 94–95; J1–7. This does not include the Zababa-šar-uṣur texts in Baghdad, no information on which is available. The information on the tablets in Wunsch (forthcoming) is based on Pearce and Wunsch 2014, xxxviii–xlii, 298.
[826] See section 1.4.5.

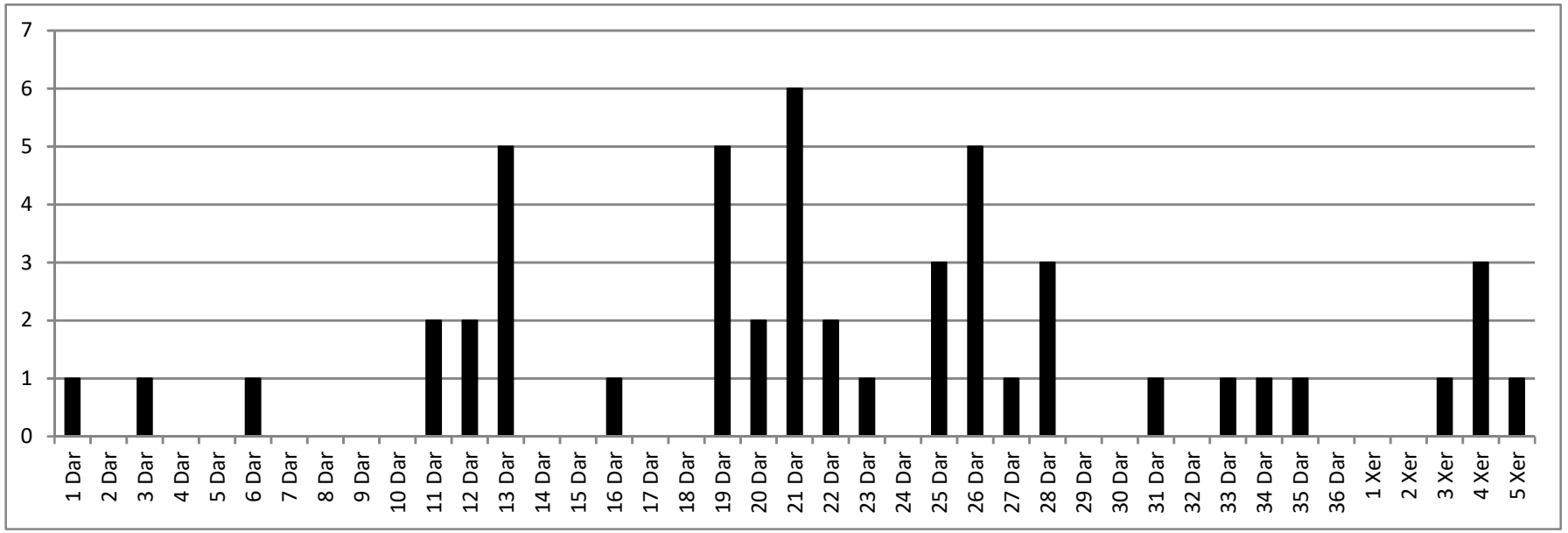


**Figure 4.6 Documents pertaining to Zababa-šar-uṣur**

In J2–4, Zababa-šar-uṣur is not an active protagonist, but only referred to as the manager of royal lands in texts pertaining to a certain Barīk-Tammeš/Zēria. The latter was a rent farmer of the lands belonging to the crown prince's estate:[827] in three documents written in the seventh month of 21 Dar, three different persons owe him significant amounts (18, 30, and 100 *kurru*) of dates as an *imittu* rent. These dates were produced in three different localities on the lands of the crown prince's estate. According to the information available in the indices of Pearce and Wunsch 2014, Barīk-Tammeš is attested in an additional two promissory notes, both written in the seventh month of 21 Dar, again in two different locations. Interestingly enough, all the localities attested in these five documents are hardly referred to in any other texts in the corpus. Only Kār-Adad is attested once in B79 and Kurubannu (cf. Bīt-Kurubannu) in a personal name in B45–46.[828] Accordingly, B45–46 and J2–4 appear to constitute a well-defined subgroup, which allows us a glimpse of agriculture practices at the estate of a very high-ranking person in the Persian Empire. As would be expected, the owner of the estate had appointed a steward to take care of his landholdings in the Babylonian countryside. In turn, the steward Zababa-šar-uṣur outsourced the everyday management of the estate's lands to rent farmers, one of them being Barīk-Tammeš, who collected the rental payments from the farmers or their representatives.[829] The hierarchy is somewhat similar to the one at the governor Uštanu's estates near Yāhūdu.[830]

The rest of the published texts pertaining to Zababa-šar-uṣur are more random and shed light on various sides of his activities. An important text (J6) from 26 Dar shows him visiting Babylon, where he leased a large plot of 45 *kurru* (circa 60 hectares) of land from a certain Bagazuštu/Marharpu.[831] The lessor appears to be a high official of Egyptian origin: his first name is Iranian but patronymic Egyptian, and he is explicitly referred to as $^{lú}$*miṣirāya* ('Egyptian').[832] His official title, *ša rēš šarri ustarbaru,* which can be translated roughly as 'courtier' or 'chamberlain', shows that Zababa-šar-uṣur interacted both with local farmers and high officials in the Persian administration.[833] It is not clear whether Zababa-šar-uṣur leased the lands in an official capacity or for his own personal interests, but judging by the inclusion of Bagazuštu's bow land, the rented property included or consisted of royal lands.[834]

Two promissory notes from 6 Dar (J1) and 22 Dar (J5) are similar in various ways: the creditor is Zababa-šar-uṣur, but he bears no official title, the debts are rather small and their origin is not explained, and the delivery of the staples is to take place in Bīt-Abī-râm after the date harvest, even though the debts are in sesame, barley, and sheep. What is important is that both tablets bear an Aramaic epigraph referring to the name of the

[827] Joannès and Lemaire 1996, 53–54.
[828] For $^{lú}$*zakku* as in Bīt-Zakku (J4), see B27 and C54.
[829] Cf. Joannès and Lemaire 1996, 53–54.
[830] Figure 4.5.
[831] See Henkelman 2003, 122, 162–164.
[832] For an analysis of the personal names, see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 42, 65.
[833] On *ša rēš šarri* and *ustarbaru*, see Henkelman 2003, esp. 122, 162–164; Jursa 2011b; see also Hackl and Jursa 2015, 167–168.
[834] As Hackl and Jursa (2015, 168) note, Bagazuštu leased out his own estates. This is in accordance with the general picture of complex hierarchies in the management of crown lands and the estates of high officials. See also Joannès and Lemaire 1996, 54, 56.

debtor. Two other published tablets (C102; J7) from this group bear Aramaic epigraphs as well, which makes the proportion of Aramaic epigraphs on the published Zababa-šar-uṣur/Bīt-Abī-râm tablets (40%) significantly higher than in the corpus in general.[835] The obverse of J7 (4 Xer) is almost completely lost, but the Aramaic epigraph on the reverse refers to Zababa-šar-uṣur, which may suggest that he was the debtor of this document.[836] The fourth Aramaic epigraph is found on document C102 written in Bīt-Abī-râm, and it probably also refers to the debtor of the document; see more on this text below. If the number of Aramaic epigraphs is equally high in the unpublished tablets of the Zababa-šar-uṣur and Bīt-Abī-râm group, it provides us with important information on the use of Aramaic in the royal administration in Babylonia of the mid-first millennium.

Texts C101 and C102 do not pertain to Zababa-šar-uṣur, but they are connected to group 3 via Nabû-zēr-iddin/Balāssu, who is the creditor in both documents. The texts were written in Bīt-Abī-râm (C102, 1 Cyr[837]) and Hazatu (C101, 5 Cyr), and they concern debts in barley which were due after the harvest in the second month. The barley fields belonged to the land-for-service sector, which is suggested by the reference in C102 to a pledged bow land and in C101 to a person managing the fields. Like Barīk-Tammeš/Zēria in J2–4, Nabû-zēr-iddin was a rent farmer on royal lands, and he is also attested in the earliest text pertaining to Zababa-šar-uṣur (B75, 1 Nbk IV).[838] The place names in these two texts are noteworthy: C102 is the earliest attestation of Bīt-Abī-râm, and Hazatu in C101 is yet another example of a twin town in Babylonia, this time referring to Gaza.[839]

Promissory note C103 (3 Xer) is one of the latest texts in the corpus and almost completely isolated, even though Pearce and Wunsch assign it to group 3.[840] The references to the estate and slave of a certain Uštanu remind the reader of the homonymous governor of Across-the-River, but any link to group 3 seems to be missing.

Due to the limited number of texts available at the time of writing this thesis, very little can be said about the connections between the Zababa-šar-uṣur dossier and other text groups in the corpus. The following remarks are thus preliminary and must be reviewed when more texts become available. First, it can be noted that the texts pertaining to Zababa-šar-uṣur and Bīt-Abī-râm are not closely related to the Judean community in the environs of Yāhūdu, but they originate from the same economic environment. Only one Judean (Nabû-uṣur/Dalā-Yāma in C101) is attested in the ten texts discussed above, and the same applies to the whole group as well.[841] However, the texts evidently relate to the land-for-service sector, shedding light on how the estates of Persian royalty were administered and their fields were cultivated. Despite the absence of Judeans, the

[835] Circa ten per cent of the texts published in Pearce and Wunsch 2014 contain Aramaic epigraphs (personal communication with Rieneke Sonnevelt; cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 301).

[836] Joannès and Lemaire (1996, 50–51) are not completely certain about the reading of the epigraph. However, they suggest reading it as *bʿl* […?] *ḥnṭyʾ zy zbbšrʾṣr bʿl p*/, with the last sign being a vertical wedge. They interpret *bʿl p*/ as an abbreviation of the official title *bēl piqitti*, and they translate the epigraph as '[…] the wheat of Zababa-šar-uṣur, the super<intendent>'.

[837] The name of the king is damaged in the date of the tablet, but Cyrus is the most plausible restoration of […]-*áš*, especially given the date of C101. See Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 250.

[838] The information on B75 is gathered from the indices of Pearce and Wunsch 2014.

[839] Ephʿal 1978, 80–82; Zadok 1985, 158; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 247.

[840] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 251.

[841] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 9.

presence of people with non-Akkadian names and the twin town of Hazatu/Gaza suggest that groups of foreign origin were living in the villages surrounding the crown prince's estate.[842]

Second, there are a number of important connections between the Zababa-šar-uṣur dossier and the rest of the corpus. It is noteworthy that Ahīqar's son Nīr-Yāma is attested as a debtor in B88, a promissory note for silver written in Dibtu in 25 Dar.[843] The witnesses and the scribe are not attested elsewhere, but the creditor Aplâ/Šamšāia is a central person in the dossier pertaining to Zababa-šar-uṣur. He is attested in ten Zababa-šar-uṣur texts, including document J6, a lease which he witnessed in Babylon.[844] Nīr-Yāma's connection to Zababa-šar-uṣur's entourage suggests that people in the environs of Našar came in touch with or under the influence of the crown prince's estate in the early fifth century at the latest. Another important link between the Zababa-šar-uṣur texts and other groups in the corpus is the royal administration. The scribe Arad-Gula plays a central role in Našar, the presence of royal officials is notable in the Ahīqam texts, and Zababa-šar-uṣur himself was a royal official. Finally, the Zababa-šar-uṣur dossier is chronologically related to the texts pertaining to Ahīqar and Ahīqam. The corpus can be divided into three successive phases: Ahīqar's peak activity in 7 Cyr – 3 Dar, Ahīqam's activity in 4–15 Dar, and Zababa-šar-uṣur's activity in 19–28 Dar. These issues will be discussed in more detail in section 4.3.10.

### *4.3.9 Loosely Connected and Isolated Texts*

A number of texts cannot be easily assigned to any of the previous groups, but all of them adhere to one of the general characteristics of the corpus: they refer to Yāhūdu or Našar, or some people with Yahwistic names appear in them. Accordingly, it is probable that these documents also originate from the same find-spot as the rest of the corpus. At the same time, they emphasise the complicated structure of the corpus, as they highlight the internal heterogeneity of Pearce and Wunsch's groups 1 and 2.

B11 is a verdict on the ownership rights of a ram (reign of Darius I, place broken). The document was written by the well-attested scribe Šamaš-ēreš/Marduk-mukīn-apli/Mudammiq-Adad, who wrote several documents in the environs of Yāhūdu.[845] The parties of the litigation, Il-lindar/Nabû-zēr-iddin and Nadab-Yāma/Abdi-Yāhû, also appear in C16, which pertains to litigation over rental income between Ahīqam and Nadab-Yāma (9 Dar, the town of Amurru-šar-uṣur on the Zabinā canal). Il-lindar is among the witnesses in C16, but nothing suggests that the legal cases were connected. Other witnesses or the scribe of C16 do not appear in other documents. It is possible that Ahīqam bought the ram at a later point in time and received B11 as a further proof of legal ownership. However, the administrative connection is again noteworthy and may better explain why B11 ended up in the corpus: the scribe Šamaš-ēreš was a central figure in the administration of the local land-for-service sector.

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[842] See Joannès and Lemaire 1996, 52–53; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 9.
[843] This information is gathered from the indices of Pearce and Wunsch 2014.
[844] The other documents are B48–49, 71, 76, 79–80, 84, 86; J4.
[845] See section 4.3.6.4.

The latest documents of the corpus, C52–53, were written in the seventh and ninth year of Xerxes, respectively (479 and 477 BCE). The texts come from the same region and from the same economic environment as the earlier texts of the corpus, but the people appearing in these late texts are not attested elsewhere. The texts show that the text corpus was not affected by Xerxes' reprisals against the rebelling Babylonians in his second regnal year.[846] Promissory note C53 for *imittu* rents from Yāhūdu bears witness to the continuity of Judean settlement and the basic structures of the land-for-service sector until the fifth century BCE. Nevertheless, the organisation of or the terminology relating to the land-for-service sector had changed over time: the fields of *šušānu*s or estates of royal officials are not referred to, but the fields are instead said to be located in a *pardēsu*, a Persian royal estate.[847] C52 is the standard sale of a slave woman and her child, witnessed by a Judean and written in uru é *ha-ʿam-maʾ*-[], which may be identical to the previously attested village of Hamat.[848] Apart from that, nothing connects this text to the rest of the corpus.

B3 is a peculiar text pertaining to the transfer from father to daughter of a slave woman and a share in a cow. Something had gone wrong and the original tablet was apparently lost, which prompted someone to draft the present document. Its genre is difficult to establish, but following Wunsch, it can be characterised as a 'reconstruction of lost bequest record and quest for expert witness'.[849] The slave woman bears the Egyptian name Huṭuatā,[850] but all the other persons are Judeans. The name of the scribe and the time and place of writing are not recorded. The last witness Sidqī-Yāma/Natīn may be identical to the homonymous witness in the marriage agreement from Yāhūdu (A1), but no one else is attested in other documents.

In B4, a Judean man hires a substitute to perform royal service duties in Elam.[851] The document is written in Yāhūdu in 10 Dar, and it provides us with important information about the service obligations and ways to deal with them in the land-for-service sector. Even though the document is dated to the period of Ahīqam's peak activity, only the scribe and perhaps two witnesses can be connected to him or his sons.[852]

B17 is a broken contract for cultivation, and none of its protagonists or witnesses can be identified in other documents. The text was probably written in Yāhūdu in the eleventh year of Darius I. It is possible that the contract is somehow connected to the business of Ahīqam and his sons, but the damaged tablet does not yield such information.

C54 is a list of expenses, like a note for personal use. It refers to Yāhūdu, but a date is not given.

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[846] On the events in the second year of Xerxes and the end of many Babylonian urban archives, see Waerzeggers 2003/2004.
[847] See CAD P, 182.
[848] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 190. See section 4.3.2.
[849] Wunsch (forthcoming), 8.
[850] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 56.
[851] The name of the Judean alternates strangely between Šalam-Yāma and Šamā-Yāma.
[852] Iddin-Nabû/Marduk-ēṭir/Naggāru also wrote documents C21, 32, 37. Šamā-Yāma/Pili-Yāma or his namesake is attested in C14, and Yāhû-izrī/Barīk-Yāma or his namesake in B13 and B14.

### *4.3.10 Administrative Practices and the Origins of the Text Corpus*

The preceding discussion of the texts from Yāhūdu, Našar, Bīt-Abī-râm, and their surroundings has revealed that the documents cannot be easily assigned to a single private or institutional archive. They certainly stem from the same geographical area and economic context of the land-for-service sector, but the texts belong to several groups. These groups seem to be interlinked by scribal and administrative practices, which emphasises the role of the state in the origins of the text corpus. In order to understand the forces which brought the text corpus into being, this section will discuss the relations between the text groups in detail. The meagre number of available texts from Bīt-Abī-râm hinders attempts to link these texts with the rest of the corpus, and the following discussion thus focuses on finding factors that interconnect the other text groups with each other.

The first impression of the texts from Yāhūdu, Našar, and their immediate surroundings is that they constitute two groups, one documenting the business activities of Ahīqam/Rapā-Yāma and his sons and the other those of Ahīqar/Rīmūt. However, a closer look reveals that there are two groups of texts which precede the activities of Ahīqam and Ahīqar. The first one not only pertains to Ahīqam's father Rapā-Yāma but also includes other early texts from Yāhūdu. The group featuring Rīmūt/Abī-ul-īde and Rīmūt/Samak-Yāma is like a prelude for the business activities of Ahīqar/Rīmūt. One of the men could be the father of Ahīqar, but this connection would not explain the inclusion of the texts pertaining to the other Rīmūt. Further investigation reveals more subgroups, which pertain to the village of Āl-šarri and to a certain Bēl-ahhē-erība from Našar. Some isolated texts resist being connected to any other documents.

Ahīqam and Ahīqar are never mentioned in one and the same document, even though they must have known each other. They were contemporaries, men of Judean descent, who lived in close proximity to each other. They both worked in the land-for-service sector, and Ahīqam once visited Našar, the focal point of Ahīqar's activity (C13). They both knew the scribe Arad-Gula and his son Bēl-upehhir. Šalāmān, the brother of Ahīqam, is once attested in Bīt-Bāba-ēreš (C80) on the very same day when Ahīqar visited the village (B34).[853] Moreover, promissory note B42, relating to the ownership history of Ahīqam's slave woman Nanâ-bihī, reveals that Nanâ-bihī's previous owners were active in Našar.[854]

The most peculiar feature of the texts pertaining to Ahīqam and Ahīqar is their chronological distribution. Both men are first attested in the reign of Cyrus, Ahīqam in two texts referring to a tax payment and the settlement of his father's debts in 5 and 7 Cyr (C12–13). The first two Ahīqar texts were written in 1 and 3 Cyr, but the main period of his business activities extends from 7 Cyr until 3 Dar, including a break in 6–7 Camb. Only one Ahīqar text was written after the third year of Darius I (C94 in 7 Dar), whereas Ahīqam's business activities took place in 4–15 Dar. The chronological distribution of the documents directly pertaining to Ahīqar and Ahīqam is presented in Figure 4.7.

[853] Both B34 and C80 are written by Arad-Gula, and Ibâ/Nabû-iddin and Mukkêa/Yāhû-azza are attested in both documents.

[854] Nanâ-bihī is listed among the business assets in the inheritance division C45||A2. B42 was written by Arad-Gula in Našar, and the co-creditor Šum-iddin/Bēl-zēr-iddin is attested together with Ahīqar in C98–99.

However, as was shown above, the nature of Ahīqam's business was very different from that of Ahīqar and the contents of the text groups do not show continuity from one file to another. In the same vein, the geographical focal point of the texts shifts from Našar to Yāhūdu when Ahīqam starts his business activities. The abrupt end of the Ahīqar file and the sudden start of Ahīqam's activities are hinged by a text written in Babylon in 15-V-4 Dar (B5), which is the earliest document pertaining to Ahīqam's own business activities. The promissory note for over five minas of silver and five sheep owned to Ahīqam by a certain Banā-Yāma/Abdi-Yāhû was written by the scribe Arad-Gula. The debt was to be paid back within one month in Yāhūdu, and we may encounter the debtor Banā-Yāma again in C36 (13 Dar), now as the creditor of Ahīqam. The text stands out from the patterns we see in the texts pertaining to Ahīqam, Ahīqar, and Arad-Gula, and it implies that the Ahīqam and Ahīqar texts were not fully independent from each other. B5 might be related to Ahīqam's beer brewing and retail sale activities in Babylon, but the presence of Arad-Gula creates the impression that the text somehow marks the transition from the Ahīqar-Našar group to the Ahīqam-Yāhūdu group.

Despite the centrality of Ahīqar, Ahīqam, and the latter's son Nīr-Yāma in the texts from Našar and Yāhūdu, two other persons played an extremely important role as well. Arad-gula/Nabû-šum-ukīn/Amēl-Ea and his son Bēl-upehhir are present in numerous documents as a scribe and witness but never as active parties in the transactions. Arad-Gula wrote the majority of documents pertaining to Ahīqar but also two documents relating to Ahīqam (B5, C13), and his son is attested as a witness to the transactions of Ahīqar (C75–76, 92, 97), Ahīqam (C13), and Ahīqam's son Nīr-Yāma (C32). Their centrality as links between the text groups from Yāhūdu and Našar is shown by social network analysis of the full corpus of 155 texts: Arad-Gula has the third-highest and Bēl-upehhir the fifth-highest betweenness centrality scores. The other three people of the five most central persons are the protagonists Ahīqam, Ahīqar, and Ahīqam's son Nīr-Yāma.[855]

[855] Normalised (Freeman) betweenness centrality scores are 24.42 for Ahīqam, 19.49 for Ahīqar, 19.44 for Arad-Gula, 10.91 for Nīr-Yāma/Ahīqam, and 10.06 for Bēl-upehhir.

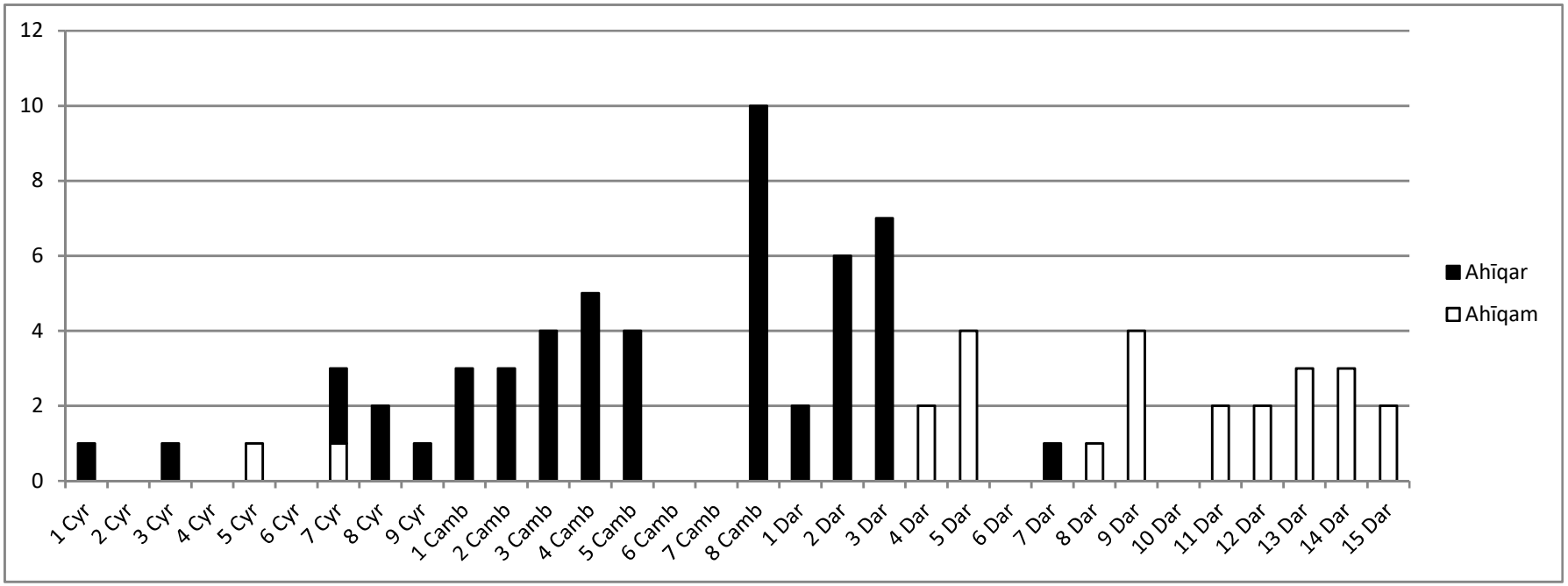


**Figure 4.7 Documents pertaining to Ahīqar and Ahīqam**

Arad-Gula seems to have been more than a mere scribe in a small village. As I argue above, Našar was not only a rural village but also an administrative estate in the land-for-service sector. It is highly unlikely that Arad-Gula just lived in Našar and wrote documents for Ahīqar, Ahīqam, and others who lived in or visited the village. Instead, Arad-Gula probably belonged to the administrative personnel of the estate, who not only recorded but also supervised the transactions of the local farmers (see section 4.3.4). It is noteworthy that Arad-Gula is attested from 3 Cyr until 4 Dar (536–518 BCE), but the only text (C86) written in Našar during the short rebellion of Nebuchadnezzar IV is not written by him but by Lâbâši-Marduk/Arad-Nabû/Sîn-imitti, who is not otherwise attested. Changes in local rule may have been reflected in the status of Arad-Gula as well.[856]

Arad-Gula's role is further clarified by three documents pertaining to Bēl-ahhē-erība/Nūr-Šamaš (section 4.3.4). The transactions are similar to those of Ahīqar, even though he is not mentioned in these texts. Bēl-ahhē-erība's debtor in C65, Šum-iddin/Ṣillâ, was also Ahīqar's debtor and a witness to his transaction (C89–90), but the strongest link between Bēl-ahhē-erība and Ahīqar are Arad-Gula and his son Bēl-upehhir. The scribe wrote all three tablets pertaining to Bēl-ahhē-erība (C64–65, 84), and two of them were witnessed by his son (C65, 84). If Bēl-ahhē-erība was not Ahīqar's business partner, his documents most likely found their way into the corpus via Arad-Gula and Bēl-upehhir.

Other scribes were also involved in the administration of the land-for-service sector. As discussed above, Šamaš-ēreš/Marduk-mukīn-apli/Mudammiq-Adad was attached to the administration of the royal lands in Yāhūdu and its surroundings in 5–14 Dar (see section 4.3.6.4). Neither was Arad-Gula's and Ahīqam's journey to Babylon unique: Ah-immê/Rīmūt and the scribe Nabû-ēṭir/Niqūdu are attested together in Babylon in 3 Cyr (C61), and the same Nabû-ēṭir wrote two documents pertaining to Ah-immê's father Rīmūt in Bīt-Dibušiti in 14 Nbn (C57–58).

The text groups of the present corpus did not originally belong to a single large archive, but they were created and brought together by the administration of the land-for-service sector. It seems probable that the business dossiers of Ahīqam and Ahīqar existed originally as independent units and that they were held by the businessmen themselves. Some other groups of the archive, such as the texts pertaining to Bēl-ahhē-erība, have a similar background. The word 'business' should be understood in the widest sense of the term: a distinction between private business and official administration can be misleading, because men like Ahīqar and Ahīqam had a central role in the running of the land-for-service sector.

By recording their transactions, the state administration supervised farmers and businessmen in the land-for-service sector. Changes in the administrative hierarchy affected all the members of this system, and they are also reflected in the composition of the text corpus. A noticeable change took place during the first years of Darius I. The peak activity of Ahīqar ceased and that of Ahīqam started at the moment of administrative changes in the environs of Yāhūdu and Našar. It is hardly a coincidence that the term *šušānu* appears for the first time in the fourth year of Darius (C33) and that evidence for *haṭru*-like units of landholders cannot be found before the fifth year of his reign. The

[856] Waerzeggers 2015, 187.

scribe Arad-Gula disappeared from the scene after the fourth year of Darius, but new administrative personnel had arrived in the countryside: Zababa-šar-uṣur is attested in the first and Iddinâ/Šinqā in the fifth year of Darius.

The transition from the Ahīqar texts to those of Ahīqam marks a shift to a very different administrative landscape. In the course of this transition, the documentation relating to the previous period was no longer needed, and it was sorted and deposited in an administrative archive. It is also noteworthy that no Ahīqam texts survive from 8 Cyr – 3 Dar, although his business had to have been running already before 4 Dar. This implies that the tablets documenting the early phase of Ahīqam's business activities were deposited around the fourth year of Darius, but they have not come down to us. Just like the Ahīqar tablets, these documents were not needed anymore after the reorganisation of the land-for-service system and they were archived as a part of new administrative procedures.

Other texts found their way into the corpus in a similar way: the texts from Āl-šarri and those pertaining to Bēl-ahhē-erība document economic activity in the land-for-service sector before the early reign of Darius. The dossiers were created independently, but they were deposited in a single administrative archive. This explains how isolated texts and administrative documents found their way into the corpus as well. All the texts clearly originate from the same geographical and economic environment of the land-for-service sector in the surroundings of Našar and Yāhūdu.

The career of Zababa-šar-uṣur, the steward of the crown prince's estate, also started at the time of administrative changes in the late reign of Cambyses or the early reign of Darius. As can be seen in Figure 4.8, the texts pertaining to Zababa-šar-uṣur constitute the third and last phase of the corpus. According to published texts and the indices of Pearce and Wunsch 2014, Ahīqam and his sons had no contact with Zababa-šar-uṣur, but Ahīqar's son Nīr-Yāma was in touch with a person in Zababa-šar-uṣur's entourage in 25 Dar (B88). This suggests that people and local administration in the environs of Yāhūdu and Našar came under the influence of the crown prince's estate in the late reign of Darius at the latest. These developments resulted in the final composition of the corpus. Zababa-šar-uṣur is attested until the fifth year of Xerxes and the last document of the corpus, C53 from Yāhūdu, was written in the ninth year of Xerxes. Around this time one or more administrative archives were sorted and a number of texts pertaining to the land-for-service sector in the environs of Yāhūdu were disposed of.[857]

[857] Cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 9.

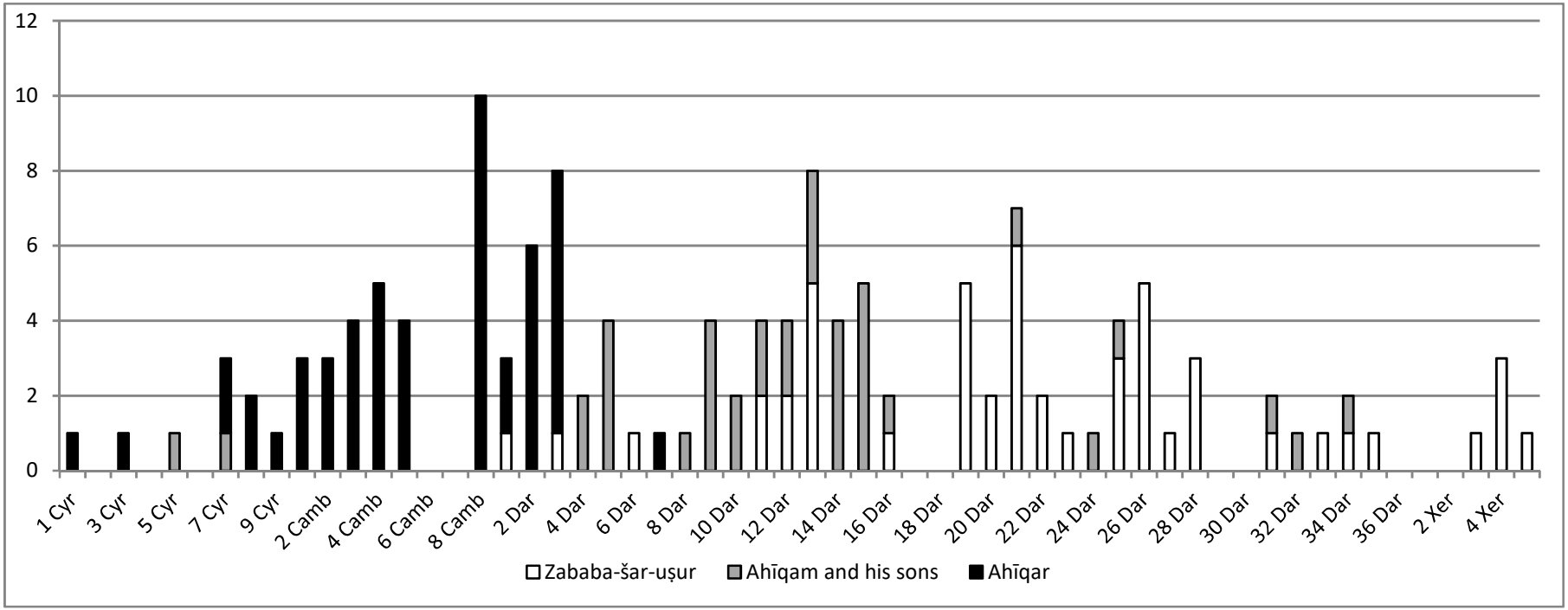


**Figure 4.8 Main text groups of the corpus**

### *4.4 Judeans in Yāhūdu and Its Surroundings*

It is evident that the careers of Ahīqam and Ahīqar were exceptional, such that the average Judean is to be sought among their clients. The ancestors of these people had arrived in the region of Yāhūdu and Našar in the early sixth century as a result of the Babylonian deportations, were settled in communities, and were provided with plots of land to cultivate. These plots were a part of the land-for-service sector of the Babylonian agriculture, and, aside from providing a source of income, they were burdened with taxes and service obligations. It appears that some farmers struggled to make ends meet and they had to rely on the services of men like Ahīqar. Credit was needed to pay taxes or to hire a substitute to perform service obligations, and sometimes indebtedness resulted in the pledging of landholdings. In the worst case, the landholder found himself cultivating his own field as a lessee of his creditor.

The problem of indebtedness among landholders is visible in the Murašû archive as well. In no way was it restricted to Judeans, as the predicament applied to small farmers in the land-for-service sector in general.[858] However, it is impossible to estimate how common this problem was, since our sources document especially those cases when indebtedness occurred. At the same time, the careers of Ahīqam and Ahīqar demonstrate that Judeans could expand their economic activities beyond their plots and enter into the world of administration and business within the land-for-service sector. As I argued above, these men should not be seen as private entrepreneurs per se, as their economic activities were controlled and encouraged by the state. It is noteworthy that the geographical scope of Ahīqam's activities extended to Babylon, which shows that his local operations in Yāhūdu were connected to retail sales in the regional economic centre.

Judeans worked in the land-for-service sector as officials as well. Two Judean *dēkû*s, tax-summoners, appear in the texts. Judging by his name, Bēl-/Yāhû-šar-uṣur pursued a career in the state administration as well.[859] The hierarchical structure of the land-for-service sector provided opportunities for Judeans, who occupied some lower-level positions between their fellow landholders and higher state officials. The term *šušānu* is often used in the texts from Yāhūdu when referring to Judeans – it implied a legal status different from that of a slave or fully free person.[860] The status of *šušānu*s might be characterised as being semi-free, protected from slavery but not free to alienate their landholdings and the associated obligations.

One possibly Judean slave is attested in the corpus, but because he was owned by a Judean family, he may have received his Yahwistic name by his masters (C45||A2). In general, a great number of Judean slaves in the countryside is not to be expected, because the land-for-service sector was not run by slaves but by people whose social status was that of a *šušānu*. On the other hand, some Judeans were slave-owners: Ahīqam owned at least three slaves and Malēšu/Mī-kī-Yāma and Ṣidqī-Yāma/Šillimu each had one slave.[861]

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[858] See chapter 5.
[859] *Dēkû*s: C83 and J9; Bēl-/Yāhû-šar-uṣur: C2–4. See below.
[860] See sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.6.
[861] On slavery in the text corpus, see Magdalene and Wunsch 2011.

Both Ahīqam and Malēšu had a slave woman of Egyptian origin,[862] whereas the rest of the slaves bore Yahwistic and generally West Semitic names.[863] The status difference between Ahīqam and his Judean clients or the Judean ownership of Egyptian slave women and a possibly Judean slave are strong evidence for diversity among the immigrants in rural Babylonia. Not everybody cultivated their small plots of state land. Some people acquired wealth, while others served their fellow immigrants as slaves.

Because of their economic nature, the texts from the surroundings of Yāhūdu and Našar do not directly touch upon religious views or the cultural traits of their Judean protagonists. However, the practice of using Yahwistic names may tell us something about group identity, religious views, and changes in these over time.[864] It is noteworthy that Judean fathers bearing Yahwistic names tended to give Yahwistic names to their sons, while fathers bearing non-Yahwistic names had sons bearing Yahwistic names; it happened less frequently that a person bearing a Yahwistic name had a son with a non-Yahwistic name.[865] The non-Yahwistic names were more often linguistically West Semitic than Akkadian, which indicates that Aramaic and Hebrew played a major role in the Judean communities.[866]

An interesting feature in the non-Yahwistic names borne by Judeans is their religious neutrality: the great majority of them do not pertain to any divinity but are non-theophoric, like Rīmūt and Šillimu. There are only three examples of Babylonian theophoric names borne by people who can be identified as Judeans.[867] Given the size of the sample (124 father-son pairs), this cannot be a pure coincidence, and we may conclude that there was a tendency to favour Yahwistic names at the expense of other theophoric names. This could have been both a religious and cultural preference, and it should not lead us to conclude that the Judeans of the Yāhūdu region were monotheists who only worshipped Yahweh. It should also be kept in mind that it is not possible to identify most of the Judeans who had a non-Yahwistic name and patronymic. Yet, one cannot escape the conclusion that traditional name-giving practices and Judean customs persisted among

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[862] The slave woman Nanâ-bihī is mentioned among the business assets divided by Ahīqam's sons in C45||A2. Nanâ-bihī's Egyptian origin is made explicit in B42. Malēšu's slave woman was named Huṭuatā; see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 56 on the Egyptian etymology of the name.

[863] Ahīqam owned a slave called Abdi-Yāhû (C45||A2) and a slave woman called Ilā-bî (B9). Ṣidqī-Yāma had a slave called Puhullā (C5). On the names, see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 33, 57, 76.

[864] On name-giving practices among Judeans in Yāhūdu and its surroundings, see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 10–29; Pearce 2015.

This section on naming practices has greatly benefitted from the discussions at the conference 'Die Religionspolitik der Achaimeniden und die Rolle der kleinasiatischen und vorderasiatischen Lokalheiligtümer', Münster, 24–26 February 2016. Especially valuable were the comments and suggestions by Reinhard Kratz.

[865] There are 56 cases of Yahwistic father and Yahwistic son; 23 cases of Yahwistic father and non-Yahwistic son; 42 cases of non-Yahwistic father and Yahwistic son; and 3 cases of non-Yahwistic father and non-Yahwistic son.

[866] 43 names are West Semitic, 16 Akkadian, 9 of uncertain origin, and 3 generally Semitic.

[867] Bēl-šar-uṣur/Nubâ (also known as Yāhû-šar-uṣur) in C2–4, Nabû-uṣur/Dalā-Yāma in C101, and Yāma-aqabī/Bēl-ušallim in B29. One person bears the Aramaic name Bahi-iltā, referring to a goddess (B10, C25). There are some names referring to *ilu* ('god'), but these should be considered as neutral in the present context.

the rural population, and Yahweh had a special place in the cultural-religious tradition of the community.

A peculiar exception to the previous pattern should be noted, however. In the early Yāhūdu documentation, a man was known by two names, Bēl-šar-uṣur (C2–3) and Yāhû-šar-uṣur (C4).[868] It is beyond doubt that these two names refer to one individual, a son of Nubâ: he is always attested as a creditor of Ṣidqī-Yāma/Šillimu in promissory notes written in Yāhūdu in the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus. It remains unclear whether he bore a real double-name or if he changed his name from Bēl-šar-uṣur to Yāhû-šar-uṣur around the fifth or sixth year of Nabonidus. The use of different names in different situations does not make much sense here, because all three transactions closely resemble each other. Neither is there any apparent reason for a name change in the early reign of Nabonidus. The decision to use two different names may have been somehow motivated by the status of Bēl/Yāhû-šar-uṣur, because the *šarru* element of the name betrays its bearer's connection to the royal administration.[869] It appears that naming practices remained more traditional among Judean farmers than their countrymen who lived in bigger cities or were members of the royal administration. Finally, it should be noted that the theophoric element Bēl allows one to play with words and meanings. As a divine name, Bēl usually denoted Marduk in the Neo-Babylonian period, but, in general usage, the word simply meant 'lord'. It is not inconceivable that some Judeans found it tempting to equate Bēl to Yahweh, who undoubtedly held the central position in their pantheon.

A few documents pertaining to family affairs shed very little light on the everyday life of the Judean community. A marriage agreement has survived from Yāhūdu (A1), but it is a problematic piece of evidence because there is no way of knowing whether any of the parties were Judean.[870] However, as the document was witnessed by several Judeans, at least the milieu where the contract originated was distinctly Judean. Even though the document follows the structure of Neo-Babylonian marriage agreements in general, some of the stipulations differ from the standards of that time.[871] By comparing this document with other marriage agreements involving non-Babylonian parties, Kathleen Abraham shows that these deviations likely reflect some non-Babylonian legal and cultural traditions.[872] This implies that the people of foreign origin had some agency in the wording of the documents and they were not dictated by the scribes or the Babylonian party of the marriage.[873]

The inheritance division of Ahīqam's business assets in Babylon conforms to Babylonian legal practice.[874] The text does not pertain to the division of Ahīqam's whole property but only to his brewing enterprise in the capital. Accordingly, no conclusions about Ahīqam's wealth can be drawn from the document. In any case, two remarks are in

[868] See Pearce 2015, 24–28.
[869] See Bloch 2014, 135–136; Jursa 2015b; section 1.4.5.
[870] See section 4.3.6.2.
[871] Abraham 2005/2006, 202–206.
[872] Abraham 2015.
[873] Abraham 2015, 57.
[874] Magdalene and Wunsch 2011, 121–125, esp. 124. See also the discussion in Abraham 2007; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 172–173.

order. First, Ahīqam may have had two wives, because his sons are divided into two groups in the document.[875] Second, the great number of Judean witnesses in Babylon sheds some light on the Judean community in the capital. As none of these people are mentioned in other texts of the corpus, it is unlikely that they all travelled from Yāhūdu to Babylon.[876]

Mostly, the naming practices help us to glean some information on the cultural and religious views of the Judean communities in Yāhūdu and its surroundings. Traditional Yahwistic names played a major role in the Judean onomasticon and it appears that non-Yahwistic theophoric names were rarely used. This does not mean that the Judeans practised a monotheistic religion, but it attests to the continuity of cultural traditions and the importance of Yahweh in the Judean pantheon. At the same time, there is no reason to suspect that Judeans aimed to isolate themselves from the surrounding society, as evidenced first and foremost by the careers of Ahīqam and Ahīqar. Both men were in regular interaction with non-Judeans, and they were not stationed in their villages but travelled around the region.

One does not find an assimilationist policy from the side of the Babylonians or Persians. This is corroborated by the policy of settling deportees in twin towns and by the survival of these communities from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II until Xerxes. Natural integration into the surrounding society can be observed on many levels: Judeans found their place in the local economy, no tensions between Judeans and other population groups are evident, and some Judeans were able to find ways to prosper beyond the limits of their plot of royal land.

[875] Abraham 2007, 210–211; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 172.
[876] Cf. Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 173.