Introduction

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Aim of This Book

One of the largest corpora of epigraphic texts from the ancient world was produced between c. 750 and 100 BCE in Babylonia, present-day southern Iraq, on clay tablets in cuneiform script. In this period, Babylonia was intensively connected to other areas of the Near East and the Mediterranean, from Greece to Iran and from Anatolia to Egypt and Arabia.[1] Increasingly, historians are finding their way to these rich materials, but not without encountering problems of accessibility. One of these problems relates to the high degree of language variety reflected in the personal name record of this text corpus.

Personal names are a fascinating testimony to Babylonia's multi-ethnic society in a globalising world, for a person's name often (albeit not necessarily) tells us something about the language community in which they grew up as a child. Personal names thus offer information on the ancient linguistic landscape; indeed, not seldomly, the onomastic material constitutes the only remaining trace of non-Babylonian communities.[2] For modern readers, however, the study of personal names often poses problems. While most languages represented in the Babylonian name material have been studied in their own scholarly traditions, few researchers enjoy training in each of these traditions to be able to deal with these materials independently.

Challenges do not only apply to the linguistic determination of non-Babylonian names. A person's name was, and is, more than a tool of identification.[3] The name is an important element in the construction of

[1] For a general introduction to the history of Babylonia in this period, see Beaulieu (2018).

[2] Puzey (2016) makes a case for the value of onomastics in linguistic landscape research generally. For the methodological challenges of reconstructing (minority) language communities from the repertoire of personal names in cuneiform texts, see the reflections by Pearce 2015 on identifying Judeans in the Babylonian text corpus.

[3] The name as a means of identification in Mesopotamia is discussed by Démare-Lafont (2014).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009291071.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

social identity.[4] As shown in Chapter 1, Babylonian names situated the person in a larger social group (e.g., a family unit, clan, residential, or occupational community) and transmitted values that were culturally defined and historically contingent. Decoding the dynamic meanings of a name is a complex procedure that is seldomly explained in specialist literature.

Moreover, the spelling of personal names was subject to extensive, and sometimes confusing, scribal conventions that are yet to be described in a systematic way (Chapter 6). This renders even the seemingly straightforward step of reading a name a complicated matter. In the case of non-Babylonian names, we face the additional challenge of trying to understand how Babylonian scribes transcribed the alien-sounding names in a script that was ill-suited for the task at hand.[5]

This book provides users with an introduction to the personal name repertoire in the Babylonian sources, reflecting interests both of traditional 'onomastics' (e.g., name typology, etymology, semantics, and orthography) and of 'socio-onomastics' (e.g., naming practices, patterns of name use, attitudes towards names, and religious sensibilities reflected in names). The volume showcases methodologies for working with personal names and offers practical guidelines and tools. As a guide, it offers a general overview of the current state of the field and gives suggestions for further reading in specialist literature.

Knowledge of the linguistic and cultural background of personal names allows students independent access to a rich mine of new data for writing the social and cultural history of Babylonia in its Mediterranean and Near Eastern contexts.[6] Onomastic analysis of personal names touches upon such themes as slavery and servitude, mobility and migration, acculturation and social segmentation, identity and gender, and lineage and patronage. Moreover, as some of the languages represented in the name repertoire are themselves poorly documented, the Babylonian transmission has significance beyond questions of a socio-historical nature pertaining to Babylonia proper (see, for instance, the indirectly attested Iranica discussed in Chapter 15 or the Anatolian and Elamite names in Chapters 13 and 16).

[4] Aldrin (2016) discusses how onomastic studies have understood the role of personal names in the construction of identities. For a study of these matters focused on Mesopotamia, see Radner (2005) and Cousin (2020).

[5] Matters of cuneiform transcription are discussed in most chapters of Part II.

[6] As the Babylonian text corpus is still largely unpublished, relying on the work of others is not always an option.

The volume is meant as a first port of call for students interested in tapping into this multi-fronted source of information.

Historical Background

After the end of the Isin II period in the eleventh century BCE, text production in Babylonia came to a near halt, with few exceptions (Paulus 2014). In the next centuries, southern Mesopotamia was politically divided between communities of different cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds. The cities were inhabited by people of Sumero–Akkadian heritage, while the borderlands – along the Zagros, the Gulf Coast, and the Arabian Desert – saw the arrival of new tribal confederacies of Aramean, Chaldean, and later also Arabian people.[7] Their occasional encroachment on urban hinterlands created tensions with the city-based population, as reported in some of the few cuneiform inscriptions that were crafted in Babylonia in this period.[8] As is well known, the personal name record from both Assyria and Babylonia reflects the increasing presence of West Semitic-speaking people in Mesopotamia.[9]

By c. 750 BCE, more cuneiform texts were again written in the cities, and the 'Kings of Babylon', even those of Chaldean descent, managed to unite the region for increasing lengths of time. The growing popularity of family names among the urban nobility reveals the emergence of a lineage society (Chapter 4). This was also the time when Assyria intensified its conquest of the Near East under Tiglath-pileser III. Babylonia inevitably came under control of its northern neighbour, at times as a vassal ruled by its own king, at other times as part of a single imperial monarchy.

A Babylonian rebel, Nabopolassar, brought the time of Assyrian suzerainty to an end. He not only 'avenged' the land of Akkad by dispelling the Assyrians from Babylonia (626 BCE), he also went on to topple the Assyrian Empire in its entirety, with the help of his Median allies. In due course, Babylonia became the next dominant power of the Near East, heir, and successor of its erstwhile oppressor, Assyria.

Babylonian society changed as a result of the imperial ambitions of its ruling class. These changes can be traced in the personal name record. First,

[7] Beaulieu 2018, 171–92 and Chapters 4, 8, and 11 in this volume. The Chaldeans are thought to be ethno-linguistically Aramean: see Streck (2014, 299–300).

[8] Cylinder of Nabû-šumu-iškun (Frame 1995, B.6.14.2001 i 15'b–21'); a later Babylonian chronicle reports on similar events under Nabû-šumu-iškun's predecessor Erība-Marduk (Grayson 1975, ABC 24 rev. 9–15).

[9] Fales 1991; Nissinen 2014, 282–95; Streck 2014; and Chapter 8 in this volume.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009291071.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

according to recent scholarship, a centrifugal dynamic took place in the centre of the Empire. Families from the Babylon era were encouraged to settle in smaller, provincial towns of the imperial core – such as Uruk, Ur, and Sippar – as representatives of the state. This effort of centralisation is reflected in onomastic patterns: the Babylon-based families introduced their own naming practices to the local arena (Jursa and Gordin 2018). A second social shift that can be studied through personal names is the growing complexity of Babylonia's linguistic landscape as a result of imperial expansion. After the fall of the Assyrian Empire, refugees, deportees, and other migrants from Assyria came southward to settle, or be settled, in Babylonia. There they may have joined older émigré communities who were established in the south for political reasons when Assyria still ruled the world (Beaulieu 2019). These Assyrians are among the earliest ethno-linguistic groups whose presence can be discerned in the Babylonian text corpus thanks to their distinctive repertoire of personal names (see Chapter 7). The next decades saw the arrival of more non-Babylonian communities, often victims of war who had been taken captive during military expeditions in the West – the Levant, Syria, and Egypt (Chapters 8, 9, 10, 12, 13). Once transported to Babylonia, these deportees faced a range of different fates. Some were distributed against their will as human booty to temples, others were settled as tax-paying farmers on newly reclaimed crown land, and the most eminent among them (the defeated kings and their families, artisans, and other skilled workers of the conquered kingdoms) were kept at the palace of Babylon as distinguished, yet humiliated, hostages. Recent research shows that the Babylonian Empire's policy of forced migrations had devastating effects on the peripheries while changing the social fabric of the centre.[10] The linguistic landscape of Babylonia further diversified following the voluntary migration of traders, merchants, and settlers, amongst others, attracted by the opportunities of an expanding economy. Onomastics is the primary means of detecting the presence of these men and women in their new environments. Babylonian scribes sometimes used ethnic labels to specify the origins of foreigners. For instance, a palace scribe at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, charged with administering the dispensation of oil rations to captives, listed among the many recipients a certain Kurbannu 'the Mede' and seven 'Ionian' carpenters (*madāya*, *iamanāya*; Weidner 1939, 930, 933). But scribes did not always add such ethnonyms; in these

[10] The case of Judah and its population has received much attention of late (e.g., Alstola 2020); other communities subjected by Babylon suffered similar experiences.

cases, the personal name can offer a clue about the person's roots. As an example, we can cite the case of Pusamiski, an Egyptian man recorded in the archive of the temple of Sippar, and of Milkūmu-šarru-uṣur, an Ammonite man working in the service of the Empire as a royally appointed official. Neither of these men is explicitly labelled as Egyptian or Ammonite; instead, their foreign roots can be inferred from their names. In the case of the Egyptian man this information is of a linguistic nature: Pusamiski is a name in the Egyptian language (Psamtek).[11] In the case of Milkūmu-šarru-uṣur, it is the element Milkūmu that gives away the man's Ammonite roots: the god Milkom was venerated in the Transjordanian kingdom of Ammon, which was incorporated into the Babylonian Empire early in the sixth century BCE.[12]

Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylonia in 539 BCE and added its vast realm to his emergent Empire.[13] In the following decades, Cyrus and his successors went on to create the largest and most resilient state the world had seen so far. In this new constellation of power, Babylonia lost its metropolitan status, causing its society to change and adapt again. The erstwhile capital of Babylon became the seat of a province ('satrapy') in the new state, albeit an important one with a large population and a prosperous economy. This prosperity depended to a significant degree on the labour of the deportee communities whom the Babylonian state had settled in its eastern borderland. The Persians recognised the value of these communities. Steps were taken to protect them from formal slavery by fixing their legal status as dependents of the state, while certain groups within these communities were sent back to their ancestral lands (Alstola 2020), presumably as protégés of the new regime. Archival continuities allow us to study the fate of those who stayed behind in Babylonia. Well into the fifth century, the multi-ethnic fabric of the population remains visible in the linguistic variety of the personal name repertoire captured in documentary texts (Zadok 2003). The change of regime also created new conditions for Babylonia's traditional ruling class. The Persians relied on their own 'ethno-classe' to staff the highest imperial positions, giving rise to the formation of a new colonial super-elite (Briant 1988). In the cuneiform documentation, this nobility is recognisable by their Persian names (Chapter 15). The Babylonian native elite continued to enjoy privileges but they gradually saw their position erode. After a failed revolt, they

[11] See Bongenaar and Haring (1994, 70) and Chapter 12 (this volume).
[12] For the name Milkūmu-šarru-uṣur, see Chapter 10 in this volume.
[13] For the rise of Cyrus and his conquests, see Shayegan (2018) and Kuhrt (2021).

suffered considerable setbacks (Waerzeggers 2003–4). This affected in particular the 'old guard' of Babylon-based families who had enjoyed the protection of the Babylonian kings in the past. A reversal of fortune is in evidence: the local families, whose influence had been curtailed by the efforts of centralisation by the Babylonian state, now saw an opportunity to reaffirm their positions and shape their own agendas. These developments left a clear trace in the name repertoire of Uruk.[14] It is thought that similar trends affected other provincial towns as well.

The name repertoire recorded in cuneiform texts underwent further change after Alexander's conquest of Babylon (331 BCE) and the (eventual) establishment of Seleucid rule over Babylonia. The number of Greek individuals attested in cuneiform sources increases significantly (Chapter 14). Thanks to the efforts of Julien Monerie, this corpus of Greek names is now entirely and easily accessible (Monerie 2014). In many instances, the bearers of Greek names in Babylonia were dignitaries of the Empire, but members of the native Babylonian elite are also known to have adopted Greek names. Intermarriage meant that in some families Greek and Babylonian heritage came together in the private sphere – a development that is, again, traceable in onomastic practice (Langin-Hooper and Pearce 2014).

Seleucid rule over Babylonia entered an unstable phase after the death of Antiochos IV in 164 BCE. It took a long period of conflict before the area was consolidated as a territory of the Parthian Empire by Phraates II and his successor Mithradates II (124–88 BCE).[15] Seen from the perspective of the cuneiform text corpus, however, the change of regime had little impact on the ground. By now, the practice of writing and storing cuneiform texts was much reduced. The tradition survived exclusively in an insular and inward-looking group associated with some of the major sanctuaries (e.g., in Babylon and Uruk).[16] Not long after the start of Parthian rule, in the first decades of the first century BCE, the use of cuneiform for recording everyday legal or administrative transactions came to a halt. Even though learned texts (mostly of astronomical content) continued to be written for some time, the retreat of cuneiform from everyday life means that also the repertoire of personal names, once amply attested in documentary texts, now slips out of our view.

[14] Kessler (2004); Beaulieu (2019, 9–11).

[15] His predecessor Mithradates I had not managed to establish stable rule despite his initial victory over the Seleucid monarch Demetrios II in 141 BCE. For the transition from Seleucid to Parthian rule in Babylonia, see Beaulieu (2018, 265–7).

[16] Clancier 2011.

The Text Corpus and Its Limitations

The personal names discussed in this volume derive mostly from Babylonian cuneiform texts written on clay tablets.[17] Tens of thousands of such texts survive in a nearly uninterrupted stream of varying densities from the mid-eighth century to the early Parthian period. They offer a rich and still mostly untapped fount of data on named individuals, recorded in well-documented archival or literary contexts. The social embeddedness of these attestations allows one to tease out details about the shifting composition of Babylonian society in the course of these centuries, a time when the cultural and political significance of Babylonia in the Middle East waxed and waned.

It is important to emphasise that the cuneiform evidence, albeit rich and extensive in its own right, offers only a limited view of Babylonian society in its full extent. An obvious bias is the under-representation of women – and hence, women's names – as a result of the type of transactions usually recorded by Babylonian scribes.[18] Another shortcoming is the patchy representation of the diverse linguistic landscape. Babylonia boasted a multi-ethnic society where many different languages were spoken, some of them written in their own scripts that have not, or only sparingly, survived. The most important of these other languages and scripts is Aramaic. It is generally thought that by the mid-first millennium BCE, southern Mesopotamia had become bilingual: in the cities, and especially in the temple communities, the Babylonian language and the Sumero–Akkadian cuneiform script were used, whereas large sections of the population, rural as well as urban, used Aramaic both for spoken and written communication (Beaulieu 2006). The social standing of Aramaic increased when it became an officially sanctioned *lingua franca* of the Persian Empire.[19] The perishable materials on which the alphabetic letters were

[17] The clay tablet was not the only medium used for writing cuneiform texts in Babylonia at the time. MacGinnis (2002), Jursa (2004, 170–8), and Nielsen and Kozuh (2021) discuss the use of wooden boards in Neo-Babylonian accounting. High-end ivory writing boards were excavated in Assyria, and many scenes on Assyrian palace reliefs depict scribes writing on folding boards (Fincke 2004). These depictions give us an idea of how the wooden specimens referred to in Babylonian texts may have looked. In addition to wax boards, other surfaces (such as leather) were also used for writing cuneiform texts. Royal inscriptions were executed on a variety of materials, including architectural elements, rock faces, steles, decorative tiles, clay prisms and cylinders, votive objects (stones, jewellery, etc.), and vessels (Da Riva 2008).

[18] For the socio-economic considerations that determined whether or not a transaction was recorded on clay, see Van De Mieroop (1997), for Mesopotamia in general, and Jursa (2005, 9), for the Late Babylonian text corpus in particular.

[19] The rise and use of Aramaic as a *lingua franca* in the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Achaemenid Empires is discussed by Folmer (2020).

scratched or painted with pen and ink did not survive, leaving us with only a few traces of written Aramaic (i.e., those applied on durable materials).[20] As the choice of language/script/medium reflected faultlines in society, it becomes quickly clear that we do not only have to reckon with a textual record that favours more powerful groups in society while silencing others. Especially during Babylon's imperial age (c. 620–540 BCE) the name repertoire of non-Babylonian communities often comes to us in contexts where imbalances of power brought these groups within the perimeter of elite interests. The ration lists of the N1 archive from Nebuchadnezzar's palace are a case in point. After Babylonia lost its hegemony, first to the Persian monarchs and later to their Macedonian, Seleucid, and Parthian successors, anthroponomastics no longer reflect such disbalances of power in straightforward ways. Many of the Elamite, Persian, and Greek names attested in cuneiform records pertain to individuals who were part of the imperial super-elite of these empires. Another limitation that needs emphasising is the unequal spread of documentation across the centuries covered in this volume. After the long sixth century BCE, the overall number of surviving texts is lower. This drop in quantity does not, however, mean that the later periods are less promising for (socio-)onomastic research. The Astronomical Diaries are a case in point. These texts contain records of natural and human phenomena made by scholars of the Esagil temple of Babylon. Whereas the earlier Diaries mention very few individual persons by name (mostly kings), those from the Seleucid and Parthian periods talk more often about the actions of a range of (non-royal) historical persons, citing even their very words.[21]

State of Research

Onomastics – the study of names – is a broad field of research with a long history (Hough 2016). It encompasses not only personal names ('anthroponyms'), the topic of the current volume, but also place names, literary names, names of non-human entities such as business companies, and objects, among others. As a field of research, onomastics has an interdisciplinary outlook, combining the study of names with insights from linguistics, geography, sociology, psychology, and cultural and religious

[20] Note that as a spoken language Aramaic left its mark on Akkadian, for instance, in the shape of loanwords. The influence of Aramaic on the Babylonian dialect is nowadays thought to be less thorough and far-reaching than some decades ago.

[21] See Haubold, Steele, and Stevens (2019) (general introduction to the Astronomical Diaries); Tuplin (2019, 95–9) (prosopography of the Diaries).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009291071.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

studies. Broadly speaking, onomastics moved in the course of the twentieth century from favouring studies on the origins of names (e.g., etymology) to studies on naming practices (also known as 'socio-onomastics').[22]

In Assyriology too the study of names constitutes a vibrant area of interest (Pruzsinszky 2021). Like in the broader field of onomastics, one notices a shift of attention from the formal characteristics of names attested in cuneiform texts (e.g., their semiotic value or semantic meaning, linguistic features, typology, and classification) to the social and cultural significance of names and naming (Pruzsinszky 2021, 483–91).

The onomastic heritage of Babylonia in the period under consideration was first studied by Knut L. Tallqvist in his still indispensable *Neubabylonisches Namenbuch* (1905). In recent decades, Ran Zadok exploited the name repertoire (personal and otherwise) with the aim of studying Babylonia's society, geography, and linguistic landscape.[23] Significant work on naming practices was done by John P. Nielsen, who described for the first time the historical development of the system of clan names (2011). There is currently no resource comparable to the *Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (PNA) that supplies students with an overview of all individuals attested with a personal name in the Neo-Assyrian text corpus. Julien Monerie's dictionary of Greek names in Hellenistic Babylonian sources covers a specific sub-section of the Babylonian text corpus (Monerie 2014). John P. Nielsen assembled the personal names in early Neo-Babylonian texts (Nielsen 2015). The online database *Prosobab* collects information on persons attested in cuneiform texts under the Babylonian and Persian Empires (Waerzeggers and Groß et al. 2019).

Structure and Limitations of This Book

The focus of this book is on Babylonia (i.e., the southern Mesopotamian plain): it uses name material that is found in cuneiform records from this area dating between c. 750 and 100 BCE. The first six chapters of this volume (Part One) are concerned with naming practices in the Babylonian-speaking communities residing in the southern Mesopotamian cities. The next twelve

[22] For brief introductions to 'onomastics' and 'socio-onomastics', see Nicolaisen (2015), Ainiala (2016), Hough (2016), and Ainiala and Östman (2017).

[23] Zadok's body of scholarship is too vast to do justice to here. His major works on onomastics are his 1978 and 1979 monographs on West Semites and Jews in Babylonia and his 2009 monograph on Iranian names. Recently Gabbay and Gordin (2021, xiii–xxii) compiled a list of Ran Zadok's publications, to which the reader is referred.

chapters (Part II) are devoted to non-Babylonian personal names recorded in Babylonian texts. In these chapters, we do not attempt to describe the entire onomastic traditions of the various languages, but we focus on names borne by individuals recorded in the Babylonian sources. For example, the chapter on Assyrian names (Chapter 7) discusses such names in Babylonian texts, not the entire onomastic material of the Neo-Assyrian text corpus. Similarly, the chapter on Aramaic names (Chapter 8) focuses on such names in Babylonian texts.

Most of the Babylonians, whose names feature in Part I, resided in the urban centres, embraced Sumero–Akkadian culture, shared common religious traditions and political ideologies, and spoke and wrote the same language.[24] Despite their shared cultural values, naming practices reveal significant regional variation and social differentiation. Francis Joannès discusses the social aspects of Babylonian naming practices in Chapter 1. After outlining the fundamentals of name identification (patronym, mammonymy and papponymy, family names), the author draws attention to distinctive name types for foundlings, orphans, and slaves as well as to the existence of taboos on certain names. Chapter 2, by Julia Giessler, offers a typology of Babylonian male names and discusses naming practices, such as the use of nicknames, double names, and other variants. Chapter 3, by Laura Cousin and Yoko Watai, continues this line of investigation and presents a typology of Babylonian female names. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of names in the construction of social and gender identities. John P. Nielsen, in Chapter 4, points out that the name as a means of legal identification underwent change in the course of the first millennium. Whereas in older periods a two-tier filiation (name + patronym) sufficed, an extra name now added information about the individual's membership to a larger kin group. Nielsen discusses the historical origins of this onomastic practice, the typology of family names, and their social meaning in the emergent lineage society of first-millennium BCE Babylonia. Chapter 5, by Michael Jursa, deals with a particular name type often borne by royal officials that contains a reference to the king. The author discusses to what extent names of

[24] The ability to read and write cuneiform was limited to an educated elite that was associated with the temples and institutions of civic administration. While this group constituted a minority in absolute numbers, in-group literacy rates were high, as most of the male adults were able to read and write on at least a rudimentary level (Jursa 2011). Advanced writing skills were the prerogative of scholars and professional scribes (Veldhuis 2011). The status of Babylonian as a vernacular declined in favour of Aramaic in the course of the first millennium BCE (Beaulieu 2006), but within the secluded world of the temple communities Babylonian probably remained in use as a spoken language long after older scholarship posited its 'death' (Hackl 2021).

this type can be used to make assumptions about the name-bearer's allegiance to the crown. The final chapter of Part I (Chapter 6), by Cornell Thissen, delves into the conventions of orthography that determined how Babylonian scribes rendered personal names. It offers a number of useful tools to navigate the numerous (unwritten) rules.

In Part II, each chapter focuses on the name repertoire of a particular, non-Babylonian language as attested in the cuneiform texts from the period under consideration: Assyrian (Chapter 7 by Heather D. Baker), Aramaic (Chapter 8 by Rieneke Sonnevelt), Hebrew (Chapter 9 by Kathleen Abraham), Phoenician and related Canaanite languages (Chapter 10 by Ran Zadok), Arabian names (Chapter 11 by Ahmad al-Jallad), Egyptian (Chapter 12 by Steffie van Gompel), Anatolian (Chapter 13 by Zsolt Simon), Greek (Chapter 14 by Paola Corò), Old Iranian (Chapter 15 by Jan Tavernier), Elamite (Chapter 16 by Elynn Gorris), Sumerian (Chapter 17 by Uri Gabbay), and onomastica of residual languages and unexplained names (Chapter 18 by Ran Zadok). With the exception of the names in Sumerian and in some residual languages, these names mostly pertain to individuals and communities who migrated, for a variety of reasons and at different moments in the course of the first millennium BCE, to the southern part of the alluvial plain.

The chapters in Part II all adhere to the same general structure. They open with a brief discussion of the language at hand, followed by the historical background that explains why individuals bearing names in that language can be found in the cuneiform text material. The chapters continue with an overview of the principal name types and name elements in the respective language. These discussions are meant to help the identification of new attestations in the future, as the editing process of the Babylonian text corpus continues. The chapters proceed with a consideration of naming practices in the pertinent communities (socio-onomastics) and close with a discussion of spelling conventions used by Babylonian scribes to render names in the language at hand. The authors supply practical tools for identifying names of the pertinent language and point the reader to useful literature for further reading.

A Note on Conventions Used in This Volume

The contributors to this volume have made different choices with regard to the difficult question of how to normalise the Babylonian renderings of non-Babylonian names. Babylonian scribes faced limitations when trying to render foreign names in the script at their disposal. Not seldomly, they

heard sounds that were alien to their own native language and for which no suitable cuneiform signs were available. This problem did not only affect names from languages unrelated to Semitic Akkadian, such as Elamite or Anatolian, but also the gutturals and vowel quality of names from the Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabian repertoire. As a result, foreign-language names appear in the texts in a Babylonianised version (i.e., in a form that reflects the interpretation of the Babylonian scribe). This leaves scholars with a number of options when discussing these names. Some stick as closely as possible to the version as recorded in the cuneiform text, sometimes going as far as abstaining from a normalisation altogether by citing the name in transcription. This procedure is preferable especially if the original language is badly known (e.g., Elamite). Other scholars prefer to cite the name in its original language. For instance, in Chapter 15 Jan Tavernier cites the restored Old Persian name *Miθravasa- which in the Babylonian text appears as Mitriamasu (^{I}*mit-ri-a-ma-a-su*; Tavernier 2007, 253). Similarly, in Chapter 14 Paola Corò cites the Greek name Poseidōnios, which was rendered Pisidunisi (^{I}*pi-si-du-ni-si*) by the Babylonian scribe (Monerie 2014, 160). This latter approach is only possible if the original language is well documented.

Throughout the chapters, female names are marked with an initial superscript ^{f} (e.g., ^{f}Amtia). This letter ^{f} does not relate to the actual rendering or pronunciation of the name in Babylonian. It is based on the orthographic convention of the cuneiform script to mark female names with a cuneiform sign designating 'woman'.[25] In all fairness, male names were also preceded by a cuneiform marker (the so-called '*Personenkeil*'); nevertheless, we left male names unmarked in Latin-script renderings.

The scope of this volume is limited to personal names, but some chapters also include discussions of relevant ethnonyms and toponyms, especially when these are composed of personal names.

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[25] We did not add the superscript ^{f} when no such marker was used in the cuneiform text or when historical women with well-known non-Babylonian names are discussed (e.g., Laodice).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009291071.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

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