Judeans in Babylonia

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Judeans in Babylonia

A Study of Deportees in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BCE

by

Tero Alstola

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Figures and Tables

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Conventions and Abbreviations

Dates. Babylonian dates are given as day-month-regnal year. For example, '10–XI–12 Nbk' refers to the tenth day of the eleventh month in the twelfth regnal year of King Nebuchadnezzar II. In the same vein, '7 Dar' refers to the seventh year of King Darius I. The abbreviations of kings' names are given below. The corresponding Julian dates are adopted from Parker and Dubberstein 1942. All Julian dates in this study are BCE unless otherwise indicated.

Nbk	Nebuchadnezzar II
AM	Amēl-Marduk
Ner	Neriglissar
Nbn	Nabonidus
Cyr	Cyrus
Camb	Cambyses
Bar	Bardiya
Nbk III	Nebuchadnezzar III
Nbk IV	Nebuchadnezzar IV
Dar	Darius I
Xer	Xerxes I
Art I	Artaxerxes I
Dar II	Darius II

Filiation. In Neo-Babylonian legal texts, people are normally referred to by their name and patronymic. The standard formula in Babylonian cuneiform is PN a-*šú šá* PN2 ('PN, son of PN2'), abbreviated in this study as PN/PN2. For those people who bore family names, the formula is PN a-*šú šá* PN2 a PN3 ('PN, son of PN2, descendant of PN3'), abbreviated in this study as PN/PN2/PN3 or PN//PN3. See Section 1.5.1.

Weights and measures (see Baker 2004, ix–x; Jursa 2010a, xvii–xviii).
A *kurru* was the standard measure of capacity, circa 180 litres. 1 *kurru* = 5 *pānu* = 30 *sūtu* = 180 *qû*. Fractions of *kurru* are recorded in positional notation (e.g. 1;2.3.4 stands for 1 *kurru* 2 *pānu* 3 *sūtu* 4 *qû*).

A shekel (c. 8.3 grams) was the standard weight for measuring silver and gold. 60 shekels equal 1 mina (c. 500 grams) and 60 minas equal 1 talent (c. 30 kilograms).

The **translations** of biblical passages are adopted from the New Revised Standard Version.

Introduction

1.1 Aims and Relevance of This Study

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

A study of Judean deportees in Babylonia can provide new insights into a
period commonly known as the Babylonian exile, which refers to Judean exis-
tence in Babylonia after the deportations in the early sixth century. The end of
the kingdom of Judah and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem was a
catastrophe which required theological explanation. The deportations and ex-
ile started an interpretative process that contributed to the birth of Judaism
and biblical literature, and, indirectly, to the emergence of Christianity and
Islam. Academic studies of this period have been primarily based on the He-
brew Bible despite the publication of relevant cuneiform sources already in

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

2 All dates are BCE unless otherwise indicated.

3 See Section 1.3.2.

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A study of Judeans in Babylonia is especially timely at the moment, as the recent emergence of cuneiform sources from the environs of Yāhūdu, '(the town of) Judah' in Babylonia, has more than doubled the number of sources relevant to this study.

At the same time, the present study can enhance our knowledge of Babylonian society and early migration history in the Near East. Despite their antiquity, many aspects of Babylonian society and economy are relatively well understood due to tens of thousands of extant cuneiform texts from the sixth and fifth centuries. However, the majority of available sources originate from temple archives and private archives of the urban upper class, and life in the countryside or the workings of the state apparatus are worse understood. A study of deportees and their descendants sheds new light on the margins of Babylonian society, it enhances the understanding of the economic sectors in which deportees participated, and it allows a diachronic study of state involvement in deportees' lives over two centuries. Moreover, an understanding of migration as an ancient phenomenon and appreciation of cultural diversity in the ancient Near East offer perspectives on often heated debates on migration and remind us that the movement of people is an intrinsic part of world history.

The study is structured as follows. The first chapter introduces the subject, its historical context, previous research, available sources, and methods used in this study. Chapters 2 to 7 are case studies on Judeans and Neirabians in Babylonia. They bear witness to the diversity of geographic location, socioeconomic status, and integration[4] among the deportees and their descendants. Chapter 8 concludes the study by offering a synthesis of the findings made in the preceding chapters and providing an up-to-date historical reconstruction of the life of Judean communities in Babylonia. The data generated during the research project is freely available online.[5]

1.2   Historical Background

1.2.1   *Political History*
This study covers the period from 591 to 413, from the first until the last attestation of Judeans in Babylonian cuneiform sources. The early sixth century

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4   'Integration' refers here to an immigrant's process of adapting oneself to the host society in social, economic, and cultural terms. The term is widely used in Europe, whereas 'assimilation' is preferred in the United States. Although the two terms refer, by and large, to the same phenomenon, there are important differences in their meaning. See Schneider and Crul 2010 and other articles in the thematic issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33/7.

5   For the data sets, see the section titled 'Research Data'.

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

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

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6   Waerzeggers 2003/2004.

7   Jursa 2010a, 4–5.

8   On the history of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, see Kuhrt 1995, 473–546; Bedford 2009; Radner 2014a; Frahm (ed.) 2017, all with further literature.

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

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

had reached Babylonia at the turn of the second and first millennia.[11] More-over, the voluntary and forced migration of Arameans within the empire brought the Assyrians and Arameans into close interaction with each other, and Arameans served the empire in various positions, including high offices.[12] This led to the adoption of Aramaic as an important administrative language of the empire, a practice that was later adopted by the Babylonian and Persian Empires.[13]

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

The territorial interests of Assyria also touched Babylonia, which had, how-ever, a very different status from Neirab and Judah. Babylonia, especially the city of Babylon, was the cultural epicentre of Mesopotamia, and the Assyrians generally respected its special status. Although Assyria intervened in the af-fairs of its southern neighbour, before the reign of Tiglath-pileser III the empire

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11   See Section 1.2.2.
12   Nissinen 2014.
13   Beaulieu 2007; Fales 2007b; Millard 2009; Nissinen 2014, 276–282; Radner 2014b, 83–86.
14   Kuhrt 1995, 458–472; Miller and Hayes 2006, 360–391.
15   Becking 1992; Younger 1998; Knoppers 2004.
16   Finkelstein 2013, 153–158, 162–164.
17   Grabbe (ed.) 2003; Kalimi and Richardson (eds.) 2014; Matty 2016.
18   Zadok 2015b.
19   See Section 1.5.

did not aim to control Babylonia directly.[20] At the same time, internal chaos characterised Babylonia: Chaldeans and native Babylonians fought for the Babylonian throne, and the foreign powers Elam and Assyria interfered in this struggle. For religious and political reasons, Assyria was hesitant to use ruthless practices of conquest against Babylonia, and it tried to employ alternative strategies instead.[21] However, constant Babylonian revolts and the abduction of the Assyrian prince Aššur-nādin-šumi to Elam in the 690's drove Sennacherib to destroy Babylon, deport the ruling family, and eradicate or deport local gods to Assyria.[22] Babylon did not remain in ruins for long, as Sennacherib's successor Esarhaddon started to rebuild the city; this policy was continued by his son Assurbanipal, who returned the statue of Marduk to Babylon.[23]

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

After the fall of Nineveh, Nabopolassar and his crown prince Nebuchadnezzar II continued their military operations in Syria and Palestine, confronting the Egyptians who had annexed former territories of Assyria after the empire's control declined on its western periphery. After the Babylonian troops broke the Egyptian resistance at the battles of Carchemish and Hamath, Nebuchadnezzar annexed the Mediterranean coast, including Judah, under Babylonia. Judah continued its existence as a vassal state of Babylonia. However, the turbulent political situation in the Levant and Egypt's promises of support sparked Judean hopes of independence, and the small kingdom revolted against its

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20 On the political history of Babylonia in the first millennium, see Brinkman 1968, 1984a; Frame 1992; Kuhrt 1995, 573–622; Jursa 2014a.

21 Porter 1993, 27–31.

22 Frame 1992, 52–63; Holloway 2002, 353–358; Vera Chamaza 2002, 89–102.

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

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

25 Jursa 2014b, 96.

26 Fuchs 2014.

Babylonian overlords. The attempt was futile and Egypt's promises short-lived, and the Babylonian troops captured Jerusalem in the spring of 597.[27] Part of the Judean population, including King Jehoiachin and other members of the upper class, were deported to Babylonia. Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, on the throne in Jerusalem. Jehoiachin and his sons were held hostage in Babylon to prevent Zedekiah from rebelling, but this was in vain. Zedekiah did revolt, and Jerusalem was destroyed, perhaps in 587 or 586,[28] and more Judeans were deported to Babylonia. Judah was reduced to a province, and the native kingship in Jerusalem came to an end.

Judeans start to appear in Babylonian cuneiform sources right after the deportations in the early sixth century. King Jehoiachin and other royal hostages in Babylon are mentioned in a text from 591, and the first attestation of Yāhūdu, '(the town) of Judah', in the Babylonian countryside is dated to 572.[29] Babylonian deportations from Judah and the advent of Judeans in Babylonia are thus chronologically closely related. There is no account of the conquest of Neirab or deportations of Neirabians to Babylonia, but the existence of a twin town of Neirab in the Babylonian countryside in the reign of Neriglissar (559–556) implies that some Neirabians were also deported during the Babylonian expansion at the turn of the seventh and sixth centuries.[30]

Babylonia prospered in the long sixth century.[31] Favourable climatic conditions and political stability in Southern Mesopotamia provided a basis for economic growth. The standard of living was relatively high, and both workers and large institutions could – and often had to – participate in the market-oriented economy. A reliable legal system, well-functioning labour market, and high degree of monetarisation supported commercial activity and economic growth. At the same time, booty from conquered regions flowed to the centre of the empire, and it was used in massive public building projects. Monumental buildings in the cities and defensive structures in the countryside reflected Babylonia's power, and irrigation projects enhanced transport, trade, and agriculture. Transition from cereal farming to date gardening intensified agriculture, especially around the cities in the north, and, at the same time, new land was brought under cultivation in less-populated regions. Deportees played a key role here: they were settled in marginal rural areas and integrated into the

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27   See Section 1.2.3 for a detailed discussion.
28   On the problems of dating the second deportation, see Albertz 2003, 78–81; Müller et al. 2014, 114–116.
29   See Chapters 2 and 4, respectively.
30   See Chapter 7.
31   For an excellent overview, see Jursa 2014c; for painstaking analysis and representation of the available data, see Jursa 2010a.

land-for-service sector of agriculture.[32] Given plots of land to cultivate, they had to pay taxes and perform work and military service in return. The majority of cuneiform sources pertaining to Judeans originate from the land-for-service sector of Babylonian agriculture. The social structures of long sixth-century Babylonia are studied in section 1.2.4 below.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire only ruled over the Near East for 70 years, and the last Babylonian king Nabonidus was defeated by the Persian king Cyrus in 539. Babylonia proper did not suffer dramatically from this transition, and Cyrus did not introduce major changes in Babylonian society and the local administration.[33] Babylonia was not, however, the centre of an empire anymore, and Darius I introduced new tax-related policies aimed at channelling the flow of resources from Babylonia to the heartland of the empire.[34] A noticeable change occurred in 484 when unsuccessful revolts against Darius' successor Xerxes resulted in reprisals against the rebels and their supporters among the Babylonian urban upper class, people closely associated with Babylonian temples.[35] From our perspective, the most dramatic effect of Xerxes' actions was the end of many temple archives and private archives of the urban elite in the Northern Babylonian cities. It is likely that Xerxes removed many priestly families from their offices, and, at this time, these people sorted temple and private archives. Useless, outdated documents were disposed of and deposited together, whereas tablets with long-lasting value were kept elsewhere. It is not entirely clear what happened to these people and their valuable deeds: although obsolete tablets have been found in great numbers, the documents which people retained have not survived to us. In any case, writing in cuneiform continued after 484 for hundreds of years, but the number of cuneiform sources dating after 484 is small in comparison to the rich evidence from the long sixth century.[36]

Judeans and other deportees were not involved in the organisation of the revolts against Xerxes, and they were not directly affected by his reprisals. Texts from the environs of Yāhūdu attest to the continuity of Judean habitation in the local countryside before and after 484, and a significant number of Judeans are attested in the Murašû archive from the second half of the fifth century.[37] The cuneiform record on Judeans in Babylonia ends in 413, when the last Murašû tablet pertaining to Judeans was written in the Nippur countryside.

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32 van Driel 2002, 226–273; see Chapters 4, 5, and 7.
33 Jursa 2007b.
34 Jursa 2007b, 86–89; 2011a; Waerzeggers 2010b; Kleber 2015.
35 Waerzeggers 2003/2004.
36 Geller 1997; Jursa 2005a, 1–2; Clancier 2011.
37 See Chapters 4 and 5.

The evidence of the Neirabian community in Babylonia ends in the reign of Darius I, and it appears that some Neirabians returned to their ancestral home-town in the early Persian period.[38]

1.2.2   *Forced and Voluntary Migration in the Ancient Near East*

Migration is a common phenomenon in world history,[39] and it profoundly shaped the demographics of the ancient Near East as well. Although deportations from and to conquered regions were the fate of many, the impact of other types of migration was as – or even more – significant.

The arrival of Aramean and Chaldean population groups from the north and north-west at the turn of the second and first millennia had a profound effect on the subsequent political formation in Babylonia.[40] The tribes did not amalgamate with the urban Babylonian population but introduced a strong counterforce to the old cities and occasionally vied for the throne in Babylon. Due to the lack of sources, the actual migration process of Arameans and Chaldeans is poorly understood, but conflicts between Assyria and the Aramean states in Syria, a lack of centralised power in Babylonia, and the fertile lands of the floodplain are among the plausible push-pull factors. In the same vein, Arabs started to find their way from the arid regions in the west to the Babylonian floodplain in the first half of the first millennium.[41]

Political stability and the thriving economy induced other types of migration to Babylonia during the long sixth century. Foreign traders found their way to the bustling quays of the large cities.[42] Soldiers of foreign origin are attested in the Babylonian army, and it is very well possible that not all of them were deportees but some were also recruited as mercenaries.[43] In general, the Near East was characterised by a high degree of connectivity in the first millennium, and people, objects, and ideas travelled from one region to another.[44] Deportations were far from being the sole trigger for migrations. However, as the present study is concerned with the life of deportees and their descendants

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38   See Chapter 7.
39   Bellwood 2013; Manning 2013.
40   On Arameans and Chaldeans in Babylonia, see Brinkman 1968, 1984a; Dietrich 1970; Cole 1996, 23–34; Lipiński 2000, 409–489; Fales 2007a, 2011; Beaulieu 2013a; Frame 2013; Zadok 2013; Streck 2014; Younger 2016, 670–740.
41   Zadok 1981; Ephᶜal 1982; Cole 1996, 34–42; Beaulieu 2013a, 47–51.
42   See Chapter 3.
43   On foreign elite troops, see Section 2.4; on ordinary soldiers in the land-for-service sector, see Sections 4.2.2, 5.3, and 5.6.
44   Wasmuth 2016. See also Versluys 2014, 12.

in Babylonia, it is necessary to discuss the aims and practices of deportations in closer detail.

In this study, the term 'deportation' refers to a form of forced migration[45] in which the state transfers population groups from one region to another. In the ancient Near East, deportation was usually the consequence of a military conquest or a reprisal after an unsuccessful revolt, and it served political as well as economic interests of the dominant state. Most of the available information on deportation policies in the first millennium BCE stems from the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, since the Neo-Babylonian state archives have mostly disappeared[46] and the extant Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions primarily focus on the kings' building projects.[47] The sources from the Persian period are not abundant either: Persian sources attest to the presence of foreign workers in Susa and Persepolis, and the Greek writers occasionally refer to Persian deportations of conquered peoples. Therefore, the logical starting point for our discussion of deportation policies in the ancient Near East is the rich Neo-Assyrian evidence.

Neo-Assyrian sources on deportations are abundant, but they have to be used with caution as they tend to give an exaggerated and propagandistic picture of the Assyrian kings' treatment of their enemies.[48] Deportations were carried out as punishment for rebellion and to prevent future revolts. Selective deportations of the upper class aimed at stabilising the empire, as the old elite was unlikely to start a rebellion after resettlement in a foreign region.[49] Another form of selective deportations involved craftsmen and soldiers, who were employed to work in state projects and serve in the Assyrian army. Moreover, population groups were deported to underdeveloped or sparsely populated regions to increase agricultural output.[50] Two main trends are visible in the geographical scope of the deportations: on the one hand, deportees were settled in the core areas of the empire to increase population, but on the other hand, two-way deportations from one peripheral area to another stabilised and pacified annexed regions.[51] Deportees were not generally turned into slaves, and their socio-economic status was diverse. Professionals employed by

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

46   See Section 2.3.

47   Da Riva 2008.

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

49   Oded 1979, 41–48.

50   Oded 1979, 48–74; Zehnder 2005, 143–165.

51   Oded 1979, 26–32; Naʾaman and Zadok 1988.

the state could enjoy a high standard of living, whereas people working in building projects or farming land lived at a subsistence level.[52]

There are no Persian sources on actual deportations,[53] but the Persepolis Fortification tablets and building inscriptions from the reign of Darius I confirm that workers from the west were present in Persepolis and Susa.[54] The Babylonian chronicle on the reign of Artaxerxes III describes the deportation of Sidonians to Babylon and Susa.[55] Moreover, Greek writers such as Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus provide us with some information on Persian deportation policies. Given the Greek writers' distrust of the Persians, these accounts are suspect in terms of being partial and propagandistic. However, as they find support in the Persian sources and mirror the practices of the Assyrian Empire, they are hardly pure imagination or mere propaganda. According to the Greek writers, deportations were often a consequence of rebellious behaviour, and people were deported across great distances from the Mediterranean to the eastern parts of the empire, including the Persian heartland.[56] Deportations of foreign professionals are also referred to.[57]

The aims of Persian population transfers resemble those of the Assyrians. Both empires used deportations as a geopolitical tool to crush rebellions, maintain stability in peripheral regions, and bring labour to the core areas of the empire. As will be shown in this study, Babylonian deportation practices were not markedly different from those of Assyria and Persia. It has to be noted that both Assyria[58] and Persia[59] resettled people in Babylonia, and thus the population diversity in Southern Mesopotamia did not only result from voluntary migration and Babylonian deportations in the long sixth century. However, there is no clear evidence of deportations from the region of Israel and Judah to Babylonia before Nebuchadnezzar II's expulsions in the early sixth century.

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52   Oded 1979, 75–115; Younger 1998, 219–224; Zehnder 2005, 166–191.
53   On deportations in the Persian period, see Shahbazi 1994–2011; Briant 2002, 505–507; Potts 2013; van der Spek 2014, 256–259; Silverman 2015a.
54   For the Persepolis Fortification tablets, see Henkelman and Stolper 2009 with further literature. For Darius I's *DSf* ans *DSz* inscriptions, see Lecoq 1997, 234–237, 243–245.
55   *ABC* 9.
56   See, for example, Herodotus 4.200, 4. 204, 6.18–20, 6.119; Diodorus Siculus 17.110.3–5.
57   Diodorus Siculus 1.46.4.
58   Fuchs 1994, 170:380–381; Zadok and Zadok 2003.
59   *ABC* 9. On possible deportations from Egypt to Babylonia in the Persian period, see Hackl and Jursa 2015, 159.

1.2.3 *Deportations from Judah to Babylonia*

Nebuchadnezzar II's deportations from Judah are undoubtedly the best-known population transfers in the ancient Near East due to their legacy in the Hebrew Bible and later Jewish and Christian traditions. Extra-biblical sources also attest to Babylonian military operations in Judah in the early sixth century BCE and to the resulting destruction of Jerusalem, population collapse, and deportations. The primary sources for these events are the Babylonian chronicle on the early years of Nebuchadnezzar II (*ABC* 5), the results of archaeological excavations and surveys in Palestine, and legal and administrative documents referring to Judeans in Babylonia. The Hebrew Bible is an important secondary source, but its use is hampered by textual problems and inconsistent information on deportations.[60]

Palestine was located in the border zone between Egypt and the Mesopotamian empires, and struggles for the control of this area affected Judah as well. Assyria had conquered Egypt for a short period in the early seventh century, but the tables were turned at the end of the century when Egypt invaded former Assyrian territories all the way up to Carchemish on the Euphrates.[61] Judah also came under the dominion of Egypt (2 Kgs 23:28–35). After the fall of Nineveh, the Babylonian army started to advance on Syria and Palestine and push back the Egyptian troops. According to *ABC* 5, it took years to expel the Egyptian forces from Palestine,[62] but Babylonia finally managed to annex the former provinces and vassal states of Assyria by the end of the seventh century. Judah also had to submit to Babylonian rule, and the native dynasty continued to rule as vassal kings in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:1).

It was in Egypt's interest to destabilise Babylonian rule in Palestine, and Nebuchadnezzar's annual military campaigns in the west suggest that Babylonia experienced difficulties in consolidating its power in the region.[63] It is probable that Egypt was also involved in the events that resulted in the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in the spring of 597.[64] *ABC* 5 (rev. 11–13) describes how

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

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

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

63 *ABC* 5.

64 2 Kgs 24:7 seems to indicate that Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, was hoping for support from Egypt. Altogether, it is very unlikely that he would have rebelled against Babylonia without any promises of Egyptian aid. See Albertz 2003, 53; Lipschits 2005, 51–52.

Nebuchadnezzar captured the king of Judah, took great booty from Jerusalem, and installed a new vassal king on the Judean throne in his seventh regnal year.[65] This account corresponds to the general outlines of the events described in 2 Kings 24, according to which King Jehoiakim of Judah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar but died before the Babylonian army besieged Jerusalem. It appears that Jehoiakim hoped for Egyptian support for his revolt, but this never happened, and his son Jehoiachin chose to surrender to the Babylonians. Jehoiachin, his retinue, Jerusalemite elite, and craftsmen were deported to Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah as the vassal king in Jerusalem. Cuneiform documents from the city of Babylon confirm that Jehoiachin was held there six years later in 591.[66] Jeremiah 52:28 refers to this deportation as well.[67]

The account of Nebuchadnezzar II's reign in *ABC* 5 breaks up after his eleventh year. As there are no other cuneiform sources on the history of Judah in the early sixth century, the reconstruction of the events following Jehoiachin's capture is primarily dependent on archaeology and biblical sources. Archaeological excavations and surveys in Judah attest to destruction and population collapse in the early sixth century. Jerusalem was destroyed, and the region recovered slowly in the Persian period. It was only in the Hellenistic period that the population finally started to grow rapidly.[68] Despite the destruction of Jerusalem and its environs, there was a noticeable continuity of settlement in the Benjamin region to the north of Jerusalem and around Ramat Raḥel to the south of Jerusalem.[69]

As *ABC* 5 (rev. 13) and 2 Kgs 24:17 claim that Nebuchadnezzar appointed a new vassal king in Jerusalem, it is unlikely that the archaeological record of destruction and population collapse in Jerusalem is primarily related to Nebuchadnezzar's military operations against Jerusalem in 597. Therefore, the accounts of Zedekiah's revolt in 2 Kings 24–25 and Jeremiah 34, 37, 39, and 52

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

66   Weidner 1939. See Section 2.4.

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

68   Carter 1999; Lipschits 2005; Finkelstein 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Faust 2012; Valkama 2010, 2012.

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

provide a reasonable explanation for the archaeological record. In addition to biblical sources and archaeology, the letters from the Judean fortified town of Lachish shed light on the last days of Judah before the Babylonian conquest (see Jer 34:6–7).[70] It appears that Zedekiah also hoped to receive support from Egypt, but these hopes were in vain (Jer 37:1–10). The Babylonian troops destroyed Jerusalem and deported another group of Judeans to Babylonia perhaps in 587 or 586.[71]

In addition to the deportations in the reigns of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, Jer 52:30 refers to a third deportation from Judah in Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year. The passage does not indicate the reason for the deportation, but some scholars have connected it to the murder of Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed as the governor of Judah after Zedekiah's defeat, according to 2 Kgs 25:22–26 and Jer 40–41.[72] No extra-biblical sources, however, attest to this population transfer. Although it remains a possibility, a historical reconstruction based on two deportations seems most plausible. Yāhūdu, the village of Judah in Babylonia, and its Judean inhabitants start to appear in cuneiform sources from 572 onwards, bearing witness to the deportations.[73]

The Hebrew Bible provides information on the size of the deportations from Judah, but this information is not consistent and its historical reliability remains doubtful. When it comes to the first deportation in 597, 2 Kgs 24:14 refers to 10,000 and verse 16 to 8,000 deportees. According to Jer 52:28, the number was only 3,023 people. When it comes to the second deportation, there is a strong sense of definitiveness in the accounts found in 2 Kings 25 and 2 Chronicles 36. According to 2 Kgs 25:11, 'all the rest of the population' were deported to Babylonia, although the next verse adds that the Babylonians 'left some of the poorest people of the land to be vinedressers and tillers of the soil'. The totality of the second deportation is emphasised in 2 Chr 36:20–21 in particular, and the land is described as being desolate during a Sabbath rest of seventy years. On the contrary, Jer 52:29–30 supplies the reader with precise numbers: the second deportation was comprised of 832 Judeans, and the alleged third deportation of 745 people. The exact numbers in Jer 52:28–30 are often taken as more reliable than the round numbers in 2 Kings 24,[74] but this matter needs to be assessed in light of archaeology and cuneiform sources as well.

70　Torczyner et al. 1938; Pardee 1982, 67–114; Lemaire 2004; Ussishkin 2004.
71　2 Kgs 25:1–21; Jer 39:1–10; 52:29. On the date of the second deportation, see Albertz 2003, 78–81; Müller et al. 2014, 114–116.
72　Albertz 2003, 74–75; Fischer 2005, 366, 654; but cf. Lipschits 2005, 100 n. 229. See also Miller and Hayes 2006, 486.
73　See Chapter 4.
74　See, for example, Holladay 1989, 443; Fischer 2005, 653; Blenkinsopp 2009, 45.

Recent archaeological studies on Judah in the sixth century do not conform to the idea of desolate land depicted in 2 Chronicles 36, but they do not support the opposite view of strong continuity either.[75] They show that there was a significant collapse in population, especially in the Jerusalem region, but also a continuity of settlement in the north and south of the capital. The population estimations in Judah before and after the Babylonian military actions vary, but they all attest to a major disruption: the population fell from about 110,000 to 15,000–40,000.[76] Naturally this change did not result from deportations only, and two other factors are equally or even more important. First, people were killed in battles, they were executed, and the disruption of farming activities could result in severe famine. Second, many people left the land seeking refuge.[77] Given the sharp population collapse, deportations of roughly ten thousand people do not seem exaggerated and they would be large enough to explain the relatively large number of Yahwistic names in the Babylonian cuneiform documents from the sixth and fifth centuries. The transfer of a mere several hundred people to Babylonia would not adequately explain the genesis of Judean communities in Babylonia, but given the different factors accounting for the population collapse in Judah, deportations of tens of thousands of people seem unlikely.[78]

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

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75   For somewhat polemical arguments for strong continuity in Judah, see Barstad 1996.

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

77   Faust 2011, 2012, 140–143.

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

in the sixth century. Part of these people were the Jerusalemite elite and educated professionals, and the existence of the village of Yāhūdu in Babylonia already twenty-five years after the first deportation suggests that the group consisted of both men and women. The aims of the Babylonian deportations from Judah match the outlines of Assyrian and Persian deportation policies described above. The deportations aimed to punish Judah for rebellion, prevent future unrest, and, as the present study will show in detail, increase agricultural output and provide the state with taxes and a work force.[79]

1.2.4   *Babylonian Society*

The study of any ancient society is hampered by our inability to have a balanced view of different social groups and the interactions between them. Written sources express the perspectives of a literate minority, and the archaeological record is rarely substantial enough to fully balance this view. At the same time, finding appropriate terminology to describe an ancient society is challenging, for our modern concepts – however accurate they may be in our current societies – can be misleading. The choice of terms is not a trivial question, as language necessarily guides our research questions and analysis.

These methodological concerns have to be taken seriously in Neo-Babylonian studies: indeed, the surviving texts were written by a well-defined elite group in society, and archaeological remains cannot satisfactorily complement the picture. Some widely used terminology can also be misleading if not defined carefully. For example, Babylonia and the Babylonians are etic concepts which conform to modern perceptions of state and nation, but they do not find a counterpart in cuneiform sources from Southern Mesopotamia. There is growing concern among Assyriologists about methodological rigour in the field, which is characterised by immense numbers of unpublished texts and a very small number of academics studying them.[80] Quite understandably, methodological considerations have often been overshadowed by the justifiable aspiration to make as many new sources available as possible. This section is an attempt to briefly discuss the methodological issues raised above and sketch some characteristics of 'Babylonian' society in the mid-first millennium.

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79   See Liverani 2005, 194–195.
80   See, for example, Van De Mieroop 1997b, 2013; von Dassow 1999a; Fleming 2014; Richardson 2014. The recently established *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* is an attempt to provide a platform for such methodological discussions (see Van De Mieroop and Garfinkle 2014).

The cuneiform records from the mid-first millennium provide us with a rich source for a historical study, but a serious methodological pitfall has to be taken into account. Despite their huge number, the written sources originate from a small segment of society. Scribes did not represent the local population as a whole, but they belonged to an educated minority which had mastered both the technical skills of writing Akkadian cuneiform and the traditions and values connected to it.[81] The texts written by these scribes undoubtedly offer an emic perspective on the social structures of the literate elite, but their perceptions of other groups in society may only reflect etic conceptions of the other. This is emphasised by the fact that two languages, Akkadian and Aramaic, played a major role in Southern Mesopotamia in the mid-first millennium, but hardly anything written in Aramaic has come down to us.[82] In contrast to tens of thousands of extant clay tablets written in Akkadian cuneiform, only a small number of short Aramaic inscriptions on clay tablets and bricks have survived. Aramaic was primarily written on perishable materials such as parchment and papyrus, of which nothing is left in Southern Mesopotamia. In the same vein, texts written in other languages spoken by immigrants do not survive from Babylonia. Accordingly, the Akkadian cuneiform texts and the terminology used in them by an educated elite have come to represent the whole society. This one-sidedness must be taken into account and its effects analysed critically.

The present book claims to be a study of ancient Babylonia, but, from an emic perspective, the term 'Babylonia' is not without its problems. Babylonia is the later Greek name of Southern Mesopotamia, and it is never used in Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Babylonian sources to describe the region around the cities of Babylon, Borsippa, Sippar, Nippur, and Uruk, located on the alluvial plain of the Euphrates and Tigris between present-day Baghdad in the north and the Persian Gulf in the south.[83] At the same time, cuneiform sources make a distinction between the southern alluvial plain and, for example, the Assyrian heartland in the north. These sources refer to the floodplain as Akkad, Sumer and Akkad, or Karduniaš, the last term being attested in Kassite and occasionally in Assyrian sources.[84] Sumer and Akkad were ancient terms which originally denoted two different regions on the alluvial plain, Sumer in the south and Akkad in the north.[85] Later this distinction was no longer meaningful, and

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81   Gesche 2000; Carr 2005; van der Toorn 2007; Still 2019, 213–227.
82   Beaulieu 2007, 2013b; Jursa 2012; Hackl (forthcoming).
83   von Dassow 1999a, 241–245; Beaulieu 2007, 209–210; Kanchan and Radner 2012.
84   Seux 1967, 301–303; Brinkman 1976–1980; Frame 1992, 33; von Dassow 1999a, 242.
85   Cooper 2012, 291–293.

the longer form Sumer and Akkad and the shorter form Akkad could be used interchangeably to refer to the whole alluvial plain, with the name Sumer and Akkad being predominant.[86]

The ancient names Akkad, Sumer and Akkad, and Karduniaš suggest that the southern alluvial plain was perceived as a distinct entity, different from the surrounding regions. The area is indeed well defined geographically, as the plain is bordered by the Arabian Desert in the west, the Persian Gulf in the south, and the Zagros Mountains in the east. In the north, the alluvial plain begins roughly where the courses of the Euphrates and Tigris are closest to one another, near the ancient city of Sippar.[87] The interconnected waterways created a network of cities which shared many cultural and social traits and participated in a close-knit economic system.[88] The dialect of Akkadian spoken on the alluvial plain – commonly referred to as Babylonian – was different from the dialect spoken in the north (Assyrian).[89] Despite strong local identities and claims for self-governance,[90] the old cities of the alluvial plain shared a number of cultural features and social structures. These included, for example, literature,[91] scholarship,[92] and the social organisation of the elites and temple service.[93] In light of this evidence, the southern alluvial plain was not just a distinct geographical entity, as its urban literate elite shared cultural and social structures which were characteristic of the region. For the purposes of the present study, we can legitimately adopt the Greek term and call the southern alluvial plain Babylonia.

Babylonia was a distinct entity but not a state in the modern sense. The term 'Babylonia' is derived from the name of the most important city in the region, Babylon, which was also a royal seat from the late seventh to the late sixth century. The standard title of the kings from Nabopolassar to Nabonidus in royal inscriptions was 'King of (the city of) Babylon' (*šar Bābili*), and the title 'King of Sumer and Akkad' (*šar māt Šumeri u Akkadi*) was used only occasionally.[94] 'King of Babylon' was also the standard title used in the dating formula of legal

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86 Beaulieu 2007, 209.
87 Adams 1981, 3.
88 On waterways and the Babylonian economy, see Jursa 2010a, 62–140.
89 Streck 2011.
90 Barjamovic 2004.
91 Southern and Northern Mesopotamia shared a literary tradition in Akkadian, but the regions also had distinctive traditions of their own. See Foster 2007.
92 See, for example, Rochberg 2004; Ossendrijver 2008; Geller 2010; Van De Mieroop 2016.
93 Waerzeggers 2010a, 2011; Nielsen 2011; Still 2019.
94 Da Riva 2008, 93–107.

and administrative texts.[95] This was an ancient and prestigious title, which rose to prominence already in the reign of King Hammurapi in the eighteenth century when Babylon became the political and cultural centre of southern Mesopotamia.[96] However, it has to be noted that there was no state of Babylonia which continuously existed on the alluvial plain since the reign of Hammurapi, but the region of Babylonia was sometimes a part of a larger state or empire, sometimes fragmented into numerous political entities. Babylonia was not a state, but rather a cultural entity and geographic region, as described above.[97] Accordingly, I will use the term 'state' to refer to the political entities which governed Babylonia in the sixth and fifth centuries, that is, first the Neo-Babylonian Empire and later the Persian Empire. The term 'Neo-Babylonian Empire' will be used to refer to the political entity founded by Nabopolassar in 626 and brought to an end by Cyrus in 539. Its successor, the Persian Empire, ruled over the ancient Near East from 539 until the conquests of Alexander the Great in the 330s.

In the self-identification of the rulers of the Babylonian Empire, the title 'King of Babylon' emphasised the importance of a city rather than a state. Sources from the mid-first millennium suggest that common people also identified themselves with a family, tribe, or city rather than a state. Although empires shaped the political landscape of Babylonia in the first millennium, cities still retained some autonomy and carried on the legacy of the earlier city states.[98] The term *bābilāya* ('Babylonian') in cuneiform sources does not refer to an inhabitant of the alluvial plain in general but to an inhabitant of the city of Babylon in particular. The same applies to people from other ancient cities of the alluvium, and migrants or visitors from another Babylonian city were occasionally labelled according to their place of origin.[99]

Mesopotamian sources from the first millennium do not provide us with an umbrella term to describe the inhabitants of Babylonia. Neo-Assyrian sources refer to several population groups: the Akkadians (*akkadû*), Arameans (*aramu* or *aramāya*), Chaldeans (*kaldu* or *kaldāya*), and Arabs (*urbu* or *arbāya*). In addition, the Sealand (*māt tâmti*) is mentioned as a separate entity.[100] The terms 'Chaldean' and 'Aramean' are also used in Babylonian sources before 626, but

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

96   Note that Hammurapi also used many other titles, which emphasised the geographical extent of his kingdom; see Charpin 2012, 75–77.

97   See von Dassow 1999a, 241–245.

98   Barjamovic 2004.

99   Kessler 2004; Jursa 2010a, 72, 126–127, 136–137.

100 Frame 1992, 32–51; 2013.

the first term disappears and the second one is rarely used after the emergence of the Neo-Babylonian Empire under Nabopolassar.[101] In the earlier sources, 'Chaldean' and 'Aramean' appear to be umbrella terms which cover a number of distinct entities. Five groups (Bīt-Amūkāni, Bīt-Dakkūri, Bīt-Yakīn, Bīt-Saʾalli, and Bīt-Silāni) are assigned under the rubric 'Chaldean', and although the term was no longer used in the sixth century, the names Bīt-Amūkāni, Bīt-Dakkūri, and Bīt-Silāni continued to be employed in Babylonian sources.[102] On the other hand, the term 'Aramean' appears to cover about forty groups, the most prominent in our sources being Gambūlu and Puqūdu.[103] However, the situation is complex, and it is often impossible to make a neat division between the Aramean and Arabian population groups.[104]

Social entities like Bīt-Dakkūri or Puqūdu are traditionally called tribes, but this term may be misleading as it is often associated with a semi-nomadic pastoral lifestyle.[105] In particular, the Chaldeans lived in cities and cultivated land.[106] Because we do not possess any sources written by the Arameans or Chaldeans, we are dependent on the cuneiform scribes' perceptions of these population groups. Accordingly, we do not know whether these people perceived themselves as members of, for instance, both Bīt-Amūkāni and a population group called the Chaldeans. However, the designations of these groups were not linguistically Akkadian but Aramaic and Arabian, and therefore they were most likely emic terms used by the members of the group themselves, not ones imposed on them by the cuneiform scribes.[107] Moreover, the membership of a Chaldean group like Bīt-Dakkūri seems to have been grounded in the idea of shared kinship among its members.[108] Labels like 'Chaldean' or 'Aramean' may have been given by outsiders, and we should not necessarily expect that strong feelings of solidarity existed between the members of Bīt-Amūkāni and Bīt-Dakkūri.[109] However, from the etic perspective of the Assyrian cuneiform scribes the social entities Aramean and Chaldean existed, and the terminology employed by the scribes will be used in this study for the sake of convenience.

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101   Beaulieu 2007, 199–200.
102   Lipiński 2000, 419–420; Beaulieu 2013a, 37; Frame 2013, 98–100.
103   Lipiński 2000, 422–489, Beaulieu 2013a, 45–47; Frame 2013, 90–97.
104   Lipiński 2000, 422–489.
105   See von Dassow 1999a, 234–241; Szuchman (ed.) 2009.
106   Frame 2013, 102–103.
107   According to Zadok 2013, these group names are primarily Aramaic, but Lipiński 2000, 416–489 favours an Arabian etymology of many names.
108   Lipiński 2000, 416.
109   On the tensions and cooperation between different Aramean and Chaldean groups in Babylonia, see Fales 2011.

Groups such as Bīt-Dakkūri will be called 'tribes' in this study, indicating primarily their social organisation, but this is not to claim that such organisation was a certain way or that their lifestyle was nomadic.

It is commonly thought that the Arameans and Chaldeans arrived in Babylonia at the turn of the second and first millennia and that they were Aramaic-speaking population groups from the north and north-west.[110] Nevertheless, they should not be regarded as outsiders in Babylonian society, as both groups exercised significant political power in Babylonia: men of Chaldean descent led numerous rebellions against the Assyrian Empire in the eight and seventh centuries and were occasionally able to claim the throne in Babylon.[111] Furthermore, it is possible that King Nabopolassar was also of Chaldean descent, and it seems probable that King Neriglissar belonged to the Puqūdu tribe and Nabonidus' mother was an Aramean from the Syrian city of Harran.[112] The political power of the Aramean and Chaldean tribes is reflected on Nebuchadnezzar II's *Hofkalender*, which lists a number of tribal leaders among the magnates of his empire.[113] Yet another testimony to the importance of Chaldean tribes in Babylonia are the Hebrew Bible and Greek sources, which use the word 'Chaldean' to refer to the inhabitants of Babylonia.[114]

Kinship was not only a central element of social organisation among the Arameans and Chaldeans. It appears to have been the most decisive affiliation in a person's social world among other population groups as well. This was obviously the case among cuneiform scribes, priests, and the other people in their circles, a group which Assyriologists have often called the urban elite or urban upper class.[115] There is no evidence of an emic term which was used to describe this group or its members, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that such a social group existed in antiquity and that it is not a mere modern construction. The most distinctive feature of this group is its habit of tracing family genealogies back to eponymous ancestors, resulting in such naming patterns as 'PN1 the son of PN2 the descendant of PN3'.[116] The identification of a person using his first name and his father's name was commonplace in the scribal and legal tradition of the period, but the usage of family names was confined to certain clans or lineages in each city. Many of these families were

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110   See Section 1.2.2, but cf. Lipiński 2000, 416–489 on their possible affiliation with Arabian tribes.
111   Frame 2013, 97–116.
112   Jursa 2014a, 131–133.
113   Da Riva 2013, 213 vi*:19'–32'. See Da Riva 2013, 204; Jursa 2014a, 127–130.
114   Beaulieu 2007, 199.
115   See, for example, Waerzeggers 2003/2004, 158; Jursa 2010a, 4.
116   Nielsen 2011; Wunsch 2014.

associated with temples and inherited prebends, whereas some engaged in large-scale entrepreneurial activities.[117] These families maintained the cuneiform culture, performed the rites in Babylonian temples, and exercised significant power in the old cities. The long sixth century was the golden age of these families, but their involvement in the unsuccessful revolts against King Xerxes in 484 led to changes in the Babylonian social landscape at the expense of this old elite.[118]

The urban elite comprised only a small minority of the population, but, as noted above, they are usually attested as protagonists of private archives and as scribes of any given document.[119] As a result, our perspective of the rest of the population is primarily their perspective, and a significant part of the Babylonian population is underrepresented in the available sources. This would include common people in the cities and countryside, including craftsmen, unskilled workers, slaves, farmers, herdsmen, fishermen, and, in particular, women and children.[120] Some of these people had recently arrived in Babylonia, while other families had lived in Babylonia for centuries. Some affiliated themselves with an Aramean or Chaldean tribe while others did not. Only a minority of the urban population belonged to the upper class. Babylonia experienced a period of population growth and urbanisation in the mid-first millennium,[121] and, as described above, this was accompanied by economic growth. There was a demand for hired labour and people could make their living as paid workers, for instance, in public construction projects.

At the same time, Babylonia was an agricultural society, and the number of farmers must have exceeded the more specialised population in the same way as in other non-industrialised societies.[122] Agriculture in Babylonia was wholly dependent on irrigation and thus vulnerable to floods, drought, and salinization.[123] The Euphrates was the main source of water and an important

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117   On the social world of Babylonian priests, see Waerzeggers 2010a; Still 2019. The most famous example of entrepreneurs is the Egibi family of Babylon, on whom see Wunsch 2007. On the urban elite in Sippar, see Waerzeggers 2014a.

118   See Section 1.2.1.

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

120   See Jursa 2007d, 2015a on different socio-economic groups and professions in Babylonian society.

121   Adams 1981, 178; Brinkman 1984b; Jursa 2010a, 37–42.

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

123   Adams 1981; Cole and Gasche 1998; Altaweel 2013.

waterway, and shifts in its course also changed urban settlement patterns over time.[124] Access to water was a prerequisite for a farmer's livelihood, and continuous work was necessary to maintain irrigation infrastructures on a local and regional scale.[125] Barley and date palm were the main crops, and the annual cycle of their cultivation dictated the work and leisure of a farmer's family.[126] Animal husbandry played an important role in the rural economy as well.[127] Villages appear only on the fringes of our source material, however, and little is known about their social organisation and daily life.[128] The texts discussed in this study can shed light on this issue, as the majority of them were written in rural settlements.

The urban elite should probably be included in the category of Akkadians mentioned in the Assyrian sources, but we lack information about the inclusion of the urban lower classes or peasants in this group. Because Assyrian sources focus on the political developments in Babylonia, it is conceivable that the categories of Akkadians, Chaldeans, and Arameans refer first and foremost to the power blocs, not to the three main population groups of the region.[129] In this regard, it has to be emphasised that a person's linguistically Akkadian or Aramaic name did not necessarily correspond to his affiliation with the Akkadians or Arameans.[130] There is no emic terminology that would correspond to the term 'Akkadian', and it is not to be equated with the modern usage of terms like 'Dutch' or 'Iraqi'. Nor does it correspond to the term 'Babylonian' if the latter is understood to denote the native inhabitants of Babylonia.

The term 'Babylonians' may in fact lead us to overlook the heterogeneity of the society and create imagined solidarities which did not actually exist. In this study, I aim to use more nuanced categories when possible, such as those related to socio-economic status. However, the word 'Babylonians' cannot be discarded altogether, because there is an obvious need for a general term which juxtaposes deportees with the native population of Babylonia. I use the term 'Babylonians' to refer to people who bore Akkadian or common Aramaic names and who were apparently not descendants of deportees or recent migrants to Babylonia. This group will unavoidably include deportees and other

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124   Brinkman 1984b, 175–176. For the case of Nippur, see Cole 1996, 5–22.
125   van Driel 1988; Joannès 2002.
126   van Driel 1988, 1990; Widell et al. 2013.
127   van Driel 1993, 1995.
128   On the Babylonian countryside and villages, see van Driel 2001; Richardson 2007. On the urban perceptions of the countryside, see Van De Mieroop 1997a, 42–62.
129   On the situation in the seventh and sixth centuries, see Frame 1992, 32–51; Jursa 2014a, 126–133.
130   See Section 1.5.

immigrants, because Akkadian names often disguise the foreign background
of their bearers. At the same time, Aramaic was widely spoken in Babylonia,
and Aramaic names are not indicative of a person's foreign origin. As Section
1.5 shows, uncommon personal names are normally the only means to identify
people of foreign origin.

Despite our inability to find an emic term that would cover the population
of Babylonia as opposed to the recently arrived deportees, foreignness – in the
sense of originating from a different region – was presented in cuneiform
sources as a distinctive feature of certain population groups. In the texts
from the Palace Archive of Nebuchadnezzar II, rations were given to sailors
from Tyre, carpenters from Arwad and Byblos, and to Judean courtiers, to name
but a few.[131] Moreover, the foreign origins of the Egyptian temple dependants
(*širku*s) in the Ebabbar archive[132] and the Carian population in Borsippa[133] are
made explicit. Finally, several foreign groups were deported to the countryside
of Nippur and settled in communities according to their geographic origin.
Consequently, places like Judah (Yāhūdu), Ashkelon, and Neirab appear in cu-
neiform documents from the sixth and fifth centuries.[134] Yāhūdu is also called
the Town of Judeans (*ālu ša Yāhūdāya*) and Neirab the Town of Neirabians (*ālu
ša Nērebāya*), which further corroborates the view that foreign origin was per-
ceived as a distinctive feature of the Judean and Neirabian deportees.

I will use the following terminology to refer to people of foreign origin in
Babylonia. The terms 'Judean' and 'Neirabian' will be used to refer to people
who or whose ancestors had arrived in Babylonia from the kingdom of Judah
or the city of Neirab. The great majority of them were deported to Babylonia at
the turn of the seventh and sixth centuries. The criteria for identifying these
people will be discussed in Section 1.5. Moreover, I use the terms 'deportee' and
'immigrant' to refer to people who had arrived in Babylonia after the late
seventh century, excluding the population groups that had settled there earlier,
such as the Chaldeans and Arameans. 'Deportee' specifically refers to people
who arrived in Babylonia as a result of forced migration, whereas 'immigrant'
refers to all people who had – voluntarily or involuntarily – resettled in
Babylonia.

In the context of first-millennium Babylonia, it is probably most appropri-
ate to speak of a multicultural and multilingual society in which power was

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131   See Section 2.4.
132   See, for example, Bongenaar and Haring 1994.
133   Waerzeggers 2006.
134   See Chapters, 4, 5.3.5, and 7, respectively. On this phenomenon in general, see Ephʿal 1978;
       Dandamayev 2004.

divided between different actors.[135] Chaldean and Aramean tribes exercised significant political, economic, and military power, whereas the closed circle of urban families dominated the sphere of temples, science, and cuneiform culture but were also entrepreneurs and owners of capital and real estate. A significant part of the population lived in the countryside outside the scope of the preserved sources, and among them were numerous immigrants and their descendants from different parts of the Near East. The tribes and urban elite enjoyed political and cultural hegemony, but they probably did not constitute the majority of the population in quantitative terms. There was no single social entity called the Babylonians, but rather population groups that were living in Babylonia and participated in its complex society. A key feature of the region was demographic diversity.

1.3   Babylonian Exile: Reception and Research History

Nebuchadnezzar II's deportations from Judah were only one of numerous population transfers in the ancient Near East, but their legacy is unparalleled. The catastrophe of Jerusalem's destruction and deportations is reflected throughout the Hebrew Bible, and Christian Europe learned to know Babylon as a place of splendour, decadence, and oppression. The term 'Babylonian exile' came to describe the period from the deportations until the alleged return migrations in the early Persian period. The terms 'exile' and 'exilic period' are also used in biblical scholarship, but this is problematic as the terms convey the idea of a period which had a clearly defined beginning and end.[136] The Judean presence in Babylonia did not end in a mass return to Judah in the early Persian period.[137] Moreover, the term 'exile' is loaded with images of oppression and does not do justice to the different experiences among the Judeans in Babylonia. The present section will use this traditional terminology to describe the reception and research history of the 'Babylonian exile', but the following chapters aim at discussing Babylonian sources in their own terms.

1.3.1   *Reception History*
The earliest reception history of the Babylonian exile is visible in the Hebrew Bible. It is not an exaggeration to state that most books in the Hebrew Bible

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135   On this division of power, see Jursa 2014a, 126–133.
136   See Grabbe (ed.) 1998.
137   Large Judean communities are attested in Babylonia in the late fifth century. See Chapter 5.