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TWIN TOWNS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN FIRST-MILLENNIUM BABYLONIA

Muhammad Dandamayev

In the first millennium B.C.¹ Babylonia was to a considerable degree a country of mixed population, and multilingual. Beginning with the early ninth century, southern Babylonia was invaded by the Chaldeans, who probably spoke a dialect of Aramaic [Lipiński 2000, 416–422, with previous literature]. Advancing to the north of the country, they gradually adopted ancient Babylonian culture and the way of life of the native population. Thus they started to play an important role in the economic and political life of the country and finally were assimilated with its native people. In the eighth and seventh centuries Aramaean tribes began to settle along the Lower Tigris and in the region of Sippar, as well as on the Middle Euphrates. Soon all Babylonia was inundated with Aramaean tribes who lived side by side with the local population. Thus the process of the Aramaizing of Babylonia started which, however, never became complete in Antiquity [Lipiński 2000, 513–514], while Assyria proper gradually became thoroughly Aramaized. There exists some evidence for immigration from Assyria to Babylonia after the fall of the Neo-Assyrian empire. However, the ethnic name Aššurāja is attested only in a few Babylonian economic and administrative texts drafted during the reign of Nabonidus. These Assyrians occupied a low social standing, and there were among them slaves of the Ebabbar temple in Sippar, including some carpenters [Zadok 1984a, 2].

In the eighth and seventh centuries, Neo-Assyrian kings conducted a policy of forced resettlement of entire peoples from their native lands to Mesopotamia and other regions of the realm. The same policy was continued to a certain degree by Neo-Babylonian rulers (seventh and sixth centuries). Besides, some individuals were deported to Babylonia as hostages, and others arrived there from neighbouring countries as political refugees (for instance, a fugitive from Media is mentioned among persons at the court of Nebuchadnezzar II). Later, in the sixth – fourth centuries, the Persian administration created in Babylonia military colonies consisting of representatives of various peoples and not infrequently appointed to the administrative apparatus Persians, Medians, Egyptians, etc. Finally, since Babylonia was a fertile country, many ethnic groups of neighbouring lands tried to settle there. According to Stolper, of circa 2,200 personal names in the Murašû documents drafted in the fifth century, about two-thirds are Babylonian and about one-quarter are Aramaic, while the remaining names are Iranian, Jewish, Egyptian, etc. [Stolper 1992, 927]. Along with the autochthonous population of Babylonian cities, as well as Chaldeans, Assyrians and Aramaeans, about thirty ethnic groups, beginning with Egyptians and Phoenicians and ending with Areians (individuals from ancient Haraiva on the territory of present-day Afghanistan) and

1 All dates in this paper are B.C. Abbreviations are those of the *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of University of Chicago* and of the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*.

Bactrians, are attested in Mesopotamia during the period under consideration. Prisoners of war, including numerous artisans, presented a considerable group of aliens in Mesopotamia. However, a large proportion of them was not reduced to slavery but settled on state land in order to till it and pay taxes. Finally, we do not know the reasons of stay of a number of strangers in Mesopotamia. Let us consider documentary evidence on the main foreign ethnic groups of Babylonia, and the contacts among themselves and with the native population.

From ca. 755 on Arabians or Arabs (Arabi, Arbaja, etc.) started to penetrate Babylonian cities and mingle there with the native people. The ethnic name designating Arabians in cuneiform sources has been examined by Eph'al and Zadok [Eph'al 1984; Zadok 1981]. As Eph'al has noted, the term "Arab" primarily denoted a desert dweller, a Bedouin. According to Zadok, it is still impossible to determine what language or languages the individuals called "Arabians" spoke, and frequently their personal names cannot be distinguished from the West Semitic (mostly Aramaic) names. In Babylonian economic documents of the sixth and fifth centuries Arabians are referred to as residents of Babylon, Nippur, Sippar and some other cities. The "Town of Arabians"² is mentioned in a few documents from the neighbourhood of Nippur where it was located. Apparently this settlement was named after some Arabians who lived there. According to one text, in 563 a certain Uhabanna was obliged to deliver a quantity of barley to another man from the Town of Arabians [BE 8, no. 26]. As Zadok observes, Uhabanna is "an explicitly Arabian name" [Zadok 1981, 71]. A field in the same settlement which belonged to some Arabians was rented out to the Murašû business firm [TMH 2/III, no. 147]. It seems that these Arabians were royal soldiers settled on state land in the Nippur region.

Several Arabians are attested as workmen of the Ebabbar temple in Sippar. For instance, six pieces of linen clothes from the paraphernalia of the goddess Bēlet of Sippar were put at the disposal of an Arabian for repair [Nbn. 1090]. In 530 another Arabian delivered several ducks to the storehouse of the Ebabbar [CT 55, no.713]. In 527 an individual paid 58 shekels of silver to the Ebabbar for eight "adult" sheep which were in the care of Duhhabat, son of Igarat, who was an Arabian [Camb. 211].

Arabians are also mentioned in several documents from the archives of the Eanna temple in Uruk. One of these texts contains an injunction against an Arabian by the name Zabdija, forbidding him to have contacts with a temple slave woman under the threat of punishment [YOS 7, no.92]. There are also known some Arabians who were petty state officials. Descendants of Arabians were integrated into Babylonian society and, as a rule, bore Akkadian names. In some cases the surname Arbaja became a family name of such individuals.

It seems that Egyptians were scattered throughout all of Mesopotamia. They are designated by their ethnic name Miširaja. In some cases, evidence of their

2 In this paper the Akkadian determinatives *ālu*, *mātu* and *bītu* are rendered correspondingly 'town' (e.g. "Town of the Cilicians"), "country" (e.g. "Country of the Elamites") and settlement or village (e.g. "Settlement of the Egyptians").

ethnic origin is found in the personal names with theophoric components. There are attested the following groups of the Egyptians.

Among the foreigners who lived at the court of Nebuchadnezzar II are mentioned Egyptian “guards of the mares and monkeys” [Weidner, *Mél. Dussaud*, p.926]. Some slaves of Egyptian extraction belonged to the Eanna and Ebabbar temples in Uruk and Sippar respectively [see, e.g., YOS 6, nos.2, 148, etc.]. In 524 a Babylonian soldier sold “his slave woman Nana-ittija and her daughter of three months, an Egyptian from his booty of the bow, for two minas of silver” [Camb. 334]. Apparently, they were captured at the time of Cambyses’ campaign in Egypt in 525. The Babylonian name of this slave woman had obviously been given in captivity. It seems, however, that in the majority of cases the Egyptians belonged to the free population of the country and some of them were royal and temple officials. Thus, still during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II an Egyptian, Harmašu by name, was a judge in Babylon [ROMCT II, no.37:26]³. Pamunu, another Egyptian, was a supervisor over the workmen of the treasury in 420 in the Nippur region [BE 10, no.88]. Egyptians often appear as contracting parties. For instance, in 476 the Egyptian Pisusasmakaš, son of Patnašu, granted a loan in dates to another man [CT 4, no.34d]. An Egyptian who lived in the city of Sippar sold a piece of Egyptian linen in exchange for flour and dates to a Babylonian who worked in the Ebabbar [CT 2, no.2]. It can be added here that an important article in foreign trade with Egypt, along with linen, was alum which is frequently mentioned in Babylonian texts [e.g., Nbn. 214; YOS 6, no.168, etc.].

Such toponyms as the “Settlement of the Egyptians”, the “Canal of the Egyptians”, and the “Town of the Egyptians” [see Zadok 1985, 229–230, 392] might attest that considerable communities of Egyptians were located in such places.

Elamites constituted one of the most substantial groups of the aliens. Still during the rule of Nebuchadnezzar II there were already many Elamites in Babylon. For instance, a document from the royal archives there mentions a group of 713 Elamites who were issued food rations [Weidner, *Mél. Dussaud*, p.929]. Some Elamites appear as workmen and petty officials in the Ebabbar and Eanna temples⁴. They usually bear typical Babylonian but sometimes also Elamite names (e.g., Ummanšibir).

Many documents from various archives mention Šušān which was an important town located not far from Borsippa [Joannès 1989, 55]. Apparently, it bore this name after the capital of Elam (Šušān), and its inhabitants were partly or mainly Elamites. Some scholars assume that this locality may have been named for the social group of *šušānu* [see, for instance, Joannès 1989, 55]. It seems to me, however, that the distinction should be made between this Šušān and the toponym Ālu-ša-šušānē⁵ which was named for the *šušānu* social group of dependents who were settled not far from Sippar.

3 *Miširaja dajānu* (“An Egyptian judge”).

4 See, for instance, CT 56, no.776 (line 13: *elamû*); CT 57, no.212; *AUWE* 5, no.159.

5 See, e.g., Cyr. 158. Cf. Zadok, 1985, 20; cf. also *Ālu-ša-ikkarē* (the “Town of the plow-men”) in YOS 19, no.34:13, etc.

It can also be noted here that Babylonian merchants (e.g., businessmen of the Egibi family) were engaged in trade with Elam and Media [see, e.g., Cyr. 60, 277; Dar.575, 577].

Cilicians, “Ionians”, Lydians and other ethnic groups from Asia Minor are referred to among foreigners who were issued rations at the court of Nebuchadnezzar II [Weidner, *Mél. Dussaud*, 923 – 924]. At least, some of them were carpenters. Nabonidus led off 2,850 prisoners of war from Cilicia and presented them to Babylonian temples as slaves [VAB 4, p.284]. Some Cilicians (Humāja) are listed among foreigners settled in the neighbourhood of Sippar who paid temple tithes [AOAT 254, p.26]. The “Town of the Cilicians” is also attested in the same region [AOAT 254, p.42]. One document from the Eanna archive in Uruk mentions fifteen minas of iron brought from Cilicia [YOS 19, no.209]. Another document from the same archive refers to a certain “Cilician garment” (*tupemu*) [YOS 19, no.273:3–4].

The term “Ionians” (Jamanu) denoted not only Greeks but also native inhabitants of Asia Minor, including Ionia itself [on this term see Rollinger 1997]. For instance, one document of 601 mentions ten minas of purple wool from Ionia⁶ which was issued at the disposal of two weavers of the Eanna temple in Uruk in order to produce a garment.

As to Greeks, our information about their presence in Mesopotamia before the Hellenistic period is very scant. For instance, some of them served in the army of Nebuchadnezzar II as mercenaries, including Antimenidas, brother of the Aeolian poet Alcaeus⁷. But the influence of Greeks on Babylonian culture during the period under consideration was very insignificant [Röllig 1968–1971, 644–647]. During Achaemenid times, Carians, Lydians, Lycians, Urartians, Meliteneans, Phrygians and inhabitants of some other districts of Asia Minor were settled in many villages around Nippur and gave their names to some settlements there.

Before the conquest of Mesopotamia by the Persians in 539 only a few Iranians (Medes and Persians) are mentioned in Babylonian texts. They probably were hostages and political refugees [see, e.g., Weidner, *Mél. Dussaud*, 924 – 926].

During the Achaemenid period, there are attested many Areians, Choresmians, Medes, Persians, Sakais, and other Iranians as contracting parties, witnesses of various routine transactions, officials of the royal administration, soldiers and military commanders, as well as private persons. In some cases the reasons of their living in Babylonia are unknown to us. They appear among all the social groups of the population, beginning with the nobility and ending with slaves. According to Zadok, the Murašû documents drafted in Nippur and its environs in the fifth century mention about 200 individuals “who either bore Iranian names, or had relatives bearing such names, or belonged to Iranian population groups” [Zadok 1977, 107]. Gradually many Persians became large landowners. They usually lived in big cities. For instance, the Persian (*Parsāja*) Uhejagam, son of Parnaka, who lived in Babylon, owned a field located near Nippur. In 423 he was issued one mina of silver by the Murašû firm as part of his rent [PBS 2/I,

6 YOS 17, no.253:2 (KUR *ia-a-ma-nu*).

7 E. Diehl, *Anthologia Lyrica Graeca I* (Lipsiae 1925), 412.

no.5]. Another Persian, Bagāmīri, the son of Mitradāta, in 429 rented out his grain field near Nippur for a period of sixty years [BE 9, no.48 = TMH 2/III, no.144]. The prince Manuštānu received 4,000 *kur* (i.e., 720,000 l) of barley from a member of the Murašû firm as rent [PIHANS 54, no.59]. A “Town of the Persians” was located in the Nippur region which was named after some Persians [BE 10, no.101]. The Persian Arbatama’ was the owner of a storehouse in Borsippa [VAS 4, no.191]. Sometimes Persians could be found in the very midst of the masses. Thus, in a record drafted in Dilbat during the reign of Darius I, the Persian Ahšeti, son of Kamakka, acts as a witness of a transaction along with four Babylonian judges and some temple officials [VAS 6, no.171]. A Mede (*Mādāja*) Kakia by name owned a field near Babylon and rented it to the Egibi business house. He and his wife Ahija lived in Babylon in a rented house, whose furniture and household utensils were taken from the same Egibi firm [Dar., nos. 51 and 57].

Many soldiers of Iranian extraction (Areians, Sakas, etc.) served in Nippur, Babylon, Dilbat and other cities. One Saka⁸ is even listed among witnesses of a promissory note drafted in Sippar in 511. It is well known that Sakas mainly served in the army as equestrian archers. But one document from Uruk indicates that some Sakas served also as sailors [VAS 20, no.49].

Judaeans (*Iaudaia*) constituted one of the most important foreign ethnic groups in Babylonia. First of all, about ten thousand Judaeans were deported there by Nebuchadnezzar II. Some of them were settled in the environs of Nippur. Thus, eight per cent of the personal names in the Murašû archive are Jewish. Judging by these names, there were nearly one hundred Jewish families in twenty-eight villages in the Nippur region in the fifth century [Bickerman 1984, 346–348, with previous literature]. Some of them were engaged in farming, others served as business agents or were in the royal service. There is known also the toponym Āl-Jahûdu, i.e. the “Town of Judah”, named after Jerusalem. A document about the sale of a bull drafted there contains twelve Hebrew names. Except the scribe who was a Babylonian, almost all other persons mentioned in it were Jews. Thus, they were settled compactly in a village which was probably located in the neighbourhood of Sippar [Joannès, Lemaire 1999]. Some Judaeans are also listed among foreign prisoners of war who were issued food rations in Babylon [Weidner, Mél. Dussaud, 925].

A colony of Gezerites (*Gazarāja*, people from the city Gezer in Palestine) was set up in the neighbourhood of Sippar [Heltzer 2002]. They are listed among foreign groups paying tithes due to the Ebabbar temple. Their annual payment constituted 200 *kur* (36,000 l) of barley [AOAT 254, 25–27].

During excavations at Neirab in North Syria (about eight km from Aleppo), an archive of 27 economic documents was discovered. They belonged to a single family and were drafted in the Babylonian dialect of the Akkadian language at the “Town of the Neirabaeans”. These documents cover the period between 560 –

8 CT 55, no.93:9 (LÚ *sak-ka-a-a*). Usually the Babylonian texts call the Sakas “Cimmerians” (*Gimirāja*) after the tribes who invaded Western Asia in the seventh century. As known, the ethnic name *Saka* of the Old Persian and Elamite versions of the Achaemenid inscriptions is rendered as *Gimirri* in Babylonian versions.

521. Eph'al has convincingly shown that these documents had originated not in Syria but in a Babylonian village Neirab named after the hometown of the settlers from Syria and were later brought to their native land [Eph'al 1978, 84–87]. Thus, it is obvious that the Syrian Neirab had its twin town in Babylonia.

It is not excluded that Aleppo (Halab) had also its namesake in Babylonia. Thus, according to a document, some planks were brought from “the town Hallab/Halbu” and the “Village of the Egyptians” to Sippar for work on a drainage system [CT 55, no.427]. Referring to the opinion of Jursa and Zadok, Bongenaar notes that this Halbu might have been located in the vicinity of Sippar [Bongenaar 1997, 395 n.335]. But on suggestion of M. Stol he considers that it could also be Aleppo (Halab). As seen from a number of documents, farmers of the Ebabbar temple lived in Hallab and delivered this sanctuary rental payment in barley [for references see Jursa 1995, 224]. Other texts record delivery of bitumen from Hallab [Nbn. 1004] and payment of money for some work done on a dam there [Nbn. 1002]. According to Camb. 48, some fruit trees located there belonged to the Ebabbar. Thus, it seems certain that this Hallab was situated not far from Sippar. However, it was probably a namesake of Syrian Hallab.

Six cuneiform documents from the reign of Nabonidus were drawn up in the city Elammu. Four of them are promissory notes, two record business enterprises and one is a slave sale contract [for references see Dandamayev 1999; now add YOS 19, no.25]. All the principals and witnesses in them bear Babylonian names. It is difficult to establish for certain whether this toponym denoted a colony of ethnic Babylonians in the city Elammu which was located to the west of the Euphrates, or if it was a village in Babylonia named after its Syrian counterpart. In any case, a few prosopographical links can be found in the documents from Elammu and in texts from the archives of the Eanna temple [Dandamayev 1999, 544]. Therefore this Elammu could have been a village near Uruk.

Numerous Phoenicians are referred to in Babylonian documents. Already under Nebuchadnezzar II a Phoenician, Hanunu by name, is mentioned as the “chief merchant of the king” among some highly-placed state officials [Unger, *Babylon*, p.285, line 19]. As is well known, when Nebuchadnezzar II conquered the countries to the west of Babylon, he deported from them thousands of inhabitants and settled them in various parts of Mesopotamia. Among such peoples are mentioned “126 residents from Tyre”, “30 sailors from Tyre”, “8 carpenters from Byblos”, etc. [Weidner, *Mél. Dussaud*, 930 – 932]. These artisans were settled in Babylon.

Some toponyms named after Phoenician geographical names are attested in Murašû documents in the vicinity of Nippur. They are Išqallūnu (Ashkelon), the “Village of Tyrians”, etc. which were populated by Phoenicians, Philistines and other West Semites [Eph'al 1978, 80–83; Zadok 1978]. They were mostly royal soldiers. These twin towns were known till a hundred years ago. Two more such towns have recently become known. One of them is Qadeš named after the Phoenician city of the same name. It was probably located in the Nippur region (cf. below). A slave sale contract drafted in this Qadeš stipulates that the seller should deliver a female slave to the father of the buyer who lived in Nippur [ROMCT II, no.2]. All the principals and witnesses of the transaction, as well as the scribe were

Babylonians. A namesake of Sidon, another Phoenician city, is attested in a document from Nabonidus' reign. As seen from prosopographical evidence, it was located in the Nippur region⁹.

But in a number of cases it is difficult to establish whether some toponyms were located in Phoenicia itself or in Babylonia. As was previously said, several Murašû documents mention the "Village of Tyrians"¹⁰ located near Nippur. It is, however, difficult to determine the location of Šūru where twelve documents were drawn up between 574 – 564. They come from temple archives of Uruk, Nippur and Sippar. These texts have been studied by Joannès and Czechowicz¹¹. They had been unanimously attributed to Tyre in Phoenicia, whereas Joannès expressed an opinion that it was a settlement located between Nippur and Uruk. Taking into consideration that the accepted date of the siege of Tyre by the Babylonians is 587 – 572 and that the earliest of the documents under discussion was drawn up already in 574, he has come to the conclusion that it was a village which existed before the conquest of Tyre by the Babylonians, and therefore it did not consist of deported people. But perhaps Czechowicz is right when she assumes that this document allows us to define more precisely the date of Tyre's fall. The text mentions five officials of the Enlil temple in Nippur as witnesses of the document, and, according to Joannès, this fact demonstrates that it was written in Babylonia, since, as he assumes, it is impossible to explain the presence of these functionaries in Phoenicia.

The localization of this Šūru in Babylonia was questioned by Dalley and denied by Czechowicz [Dalley 1984, 20; Czechowicz 2002, 339–341] who placed it in Phoenicia. Let us consider some of these documents. Two of them have a determinative for a land. One of them records that in 563 four leather coats and garments were given for the disposal of four soldiers who were going to the "country" Tyre [GCCII II, no.135]. According to the second text, two individuals who were going to the "country" Tyre received food rations [GCCII I, no.151]. A third text records rations in dates issued to three foremen who were on their way to Tyre [GCCII I, no.169]. Here the determinative before Tyre has not been preserved.

In all other texts Tyre has the determinative for a city. Some of them record the allowances of food portions to shepherds and other groups of workmen [GCCII I, no.94, etc.] and the remaining are promissory notes. Of especial interest is the text according to which *Milki-iṭri*, "governor (*pīhātu*) of the city Qadeš", was to deliver at a specified time three cows with their calves to a certain individual in Tyre [Pinches, JTVI 49, p.129 – 130]. Joannès localizes both of these cities in Babylonia [Joannès 1987, 148 n.11]. However, the above-mentioned title usually refers to governors of large cities, and not of small settlements, and this might not be in favour of Joannès opinion.

9 YOS 19, no.32:8,14 (URU *ši-da-mu*). For prosopographical criteria see Dandamayev 2001, 700.

10 Bīt-Šūrāja, for references see Zadok 1985, 104.

11 Joannès, 1982; Joannès 1987; Czechowicz, 2002.

One document mentions “blue purple wool from the city Tyre” which belonged to the Eanna temple. The opinion of Joannès and Zadok that a village in Babylonia is meant here [Joannès 1987, 147; Zadok 1985, 280] has been already rejected by Czechowicz, since purple wool was an imported article in Babylonia [Czechowicz 2002, 329]. Finally, in CT 55, no.228 “iron, flour and sweets from the city Šūrā” are referred to. Thus, to sum up: it seems to me that, at least, when Šūru has the determinative for a land it was the Phoenician Tyre, but in some other cases it could have been a village in Babylonia. In any case, a number of documents from this place mention soldiers who might have been engaged in military operations in Phoenicia.

In a text drafted during Nabonidus’ reign a man from the Phoenician city Byblos (LÚ *gubulāja*) is mentioned among temple slaves of the Ebabbar in Sippar who were issued rations [CT 56, no. 638:8]. Another document from the reign of Darius I records that a governor of Byblos presented to the Ebabbar 12 shekels of silver, 1 mina 50 shekels of purple dye, 1 mina 24 shekels of purple wool, 2 vessels of wine and a trunk of cedar tree as his temple tithe [CT 55, no.435]. All these items are goods typical of Phoenicia but the document itself comes from the Sippar region.

“Carpenters of the Lebanon” (Labnānu) were active in the Ebabbar of Sippar during the reigns of Nabonidus and Cambyses¹². They received money, salt, barley and dates for their travel food rations, as well as leather shoes. Usually in the same texts archers are referred to as recipients of food portions. Bongenaar assumes that these bowmen protected the carpenters during their expeditions in order to hew cedar trees in the Lebanon Mountains and bring them to Sippar [Bongenaar 1997, 395]. There are known three carpenters of the Lebanon but their names are Babylonian, and probably they were Babylonians themselves.

As it is well known, Lebanon cedar trees were used in Mesopotamia in the erecting of royal and temple buildings [for references see VAB 4, p.304]. In passing, it can be noted that sometimes iron was also imported to Mesopotamia from the Lebanon¹³. The technique of acquisition of various imported articles from the countries to the west of the Euphrates (Eber-nāri, i.e., Transpotamia) can be seen from the documents of the Eanna temple. For instance, in 542 thirty shekels of silver and eight *kur* (1,440 l) of barley were issued from the property of this temple at the disposal of an individual for consignment of merchandise from Transpotamia [YOS 19, no.52]. As seen from the same document, this money and grain constituted only some part of the temple property which was destined for trade with the West.

During Neo-Babylonian and especially Achaemenid times, economic and cultural contacts, as well as international trade between Mesopotamia and other countries of the Near East developed on a previously unknown scale. As we have seen above, Babylonian documents provide particularly rich information on foreigners who lived in Mesopotamia. They entered into various transactions with one another and with native people and acted as witnesses of various business deeds. The

12 Camb. 359; CT 56, no.235, etc. See Bongenaar 1997, 392.

13 TCL 12, no.84; YOS 6, no.168. See Oppenheim 1967, 236–238.

question arises what was the attitude of the native population towards the foreigners? As known, the Old Testament required justice, hospitality, and charity to the aliens who lived among Israelites and even granting them the rights and privileges of native-born citizens and allowing them to participate in the Passover if they were circumcised¹⁴. In Mesopotamia perhaps there was no need to appeal to justice and hospitality towards the aliens, since from earlier periods of history numerous groups from the neighboring countries started to penetrate Babylonia which in their eyes was a rich and highly civilized country. They all gradually adopted its cultural standards and after all were assimilated with the local population. Summarizing the opinion of Bottéro on the Mesopotamian attitude to aliens, Singer writes that “even in the most pejorative descriptions of strangers, denouncing their hostile actions against Mesopotamian centers, the criticism is directed towards their uncivilized ways, not their inherent qualities or race” [Singer 1994, 19; Bottéro 1994]. This can be easily explained by the fact that in the ancient Orient there existed no national enmity, intolerance, no sense of superiority, no racial hatred. Besides, in contrast to monotheistic religions, in polytheistic faiths there were no notions of false faith or heresy. Therefore nobody was interested in imposing his religion on others. Persons, who chanced to go to a foreign land, while keeping to their faith, also paid respects to the local gods and tried to win the favour of these gods who were considered patrons of the regions where they happened to live.

Eph'al has already noted that there exists no evidence for the cult of foreign minorities in Mesopotamia during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods [Eph'al 1978, 88]. But some conclusions can be made from indirect evidence. For instance, one document recording a loan of barley was drafted near Nippur at the “Temple of Sīn in the Town of Arabians”¹⁵. It is well known that the cult of the moon-god Sīn was popular among the Arabians. Sometimes foreigners, as well as native inhabitants of the country, gave their children names with no connection to their ethnic background. Thus, some Egyptians, Jews, Iranians and individuals of various other nations, bore theophoric names components of which were alien to their traditional religions. Thus, a certain Padi-Esi', whose name contains the theophoric component of the Egyptian god Esi', has also a second name Bagādāta which is a theophoric Iranian name¹⁶. Another Egyptian (*Miširaja*), son of Marharpu, who was a royal official in Babylon, and rented out in 496 a grain field located near the Village of Arabians (*Arbaja*), bore the Old Persian theophoric name Bagazuštu [Joannès, Lemaire 1996, 48-49]. A Babylonian, Bēl-ibni by name, gave his son the Iranian theophoric name Artambara [PIHANS 79, no. 54]. Iddin-Nabû, another Babylonian, gave his son the theophoric Iranian name Hada-bagā [PIHANS 79, no.38]. In a number of cases, Iranians also gave their sons theophoric Babylonian names, e.g., Bēl-īpuš, son of Šatabarzāna [PIHANS 79, no.18]. Some Jews who lived in the Nippur region in the fifth century also gave their sons theophoric Babylonian names [Bickerman 1978, 8–10]. Such individuals appar-

14 See, e.g., Exod. 12: 48-49. On the legal status of the foreigners in biblical Israel see van Houten 1991; Matthews 1955.

15 BE 8, no. 50:15: É DINGIR XXX URU šá LÚ ár-ba-a-a; cf. Eph'al 1984, 189–190.

16 PIHANS 79, no.43. The document was drafted in 425 in Nippur.

ently worshipped Babylonian, Iranian, and other gods but also retained faith in their own traditional deities.

This mixing of personal names was partly due to intermarriages. For instance, in Babylon a certain Gambija, daughter of Parnakku, who apparently was an Iranian, married a man who bore the typical Babylonian name Zērūtu [VAS 5, no.101]. In another case, the Persian Mitradāta married in Nippur the Babylonian girl Esagil-bēlet, daughter of Bēl-ittannu, and their son bore the Iranian name Bagāmiri. The name of his uncle on the paternal line was Rušundāti (an Iranian name) [BE 9, no.48 = TMH 2/III, no.144].

In many cases, such intermarriages were inevitable for the following reason. Royal soldiers from Haraiva, Sakas from Central Asia, warriors from West India or Asia Minor, etc. who arrived in Mesopotamia and were settled there on state land remained there permanently, and in some cases we can trace their second or even third generations. But they came to Mesopotamia without any women and therefore had to marry local girls. The same probably can be said in a number of cases about royal officials sent there to serve in the state administration.

Thus, the aliens were not discriminated against in economic and religious life. But the question arises: what was their social status? As seen from our sources, the treatment of slaves did not depend upon their ethnic extraction irrespective of whether they were in private, royal or temple households. It can be noted that in some cases the owners changed the unusual foreign names of their slaves to Babylonian ones (thus, as we have seen above, a Babylonian who captured an Egyptian woman gave her an Akkadian name and sold her with her daughter in Babylon).

Foreigners who were free-born subjects of the king consisted of various groups: officials of state administration, soldiers, Iranian landlords, merchants, etc. In some cases, their reasons for living in Babylonia are not known to us. All these groups in their transactions between themselves and with the native people followed Babylonian laws and practice. Nevertheless, there existed a considerable difference in social status of native free-born men and aliens, including their upper strata (even the Persian nobility). Since early periods of Mesopotamian history, the structure of self-government was typical of Babylonian cities. The functions of this self-government were carried out by popular assemblies of temple communities which had jurisdiction in cases relating to temple matters, as well as in instances involving property and family law. The members of such assemblies were permanent residents of particular cities and possessed some property within their areas. Their status was hereditary, and they had a number of social and economic privileges. In particular, they could become prebendaries and receive regular income from temple property. The foreigners who did not own property within the city's communal land district had no access to the Babylonian temple organization. Therefore they had no part in city (or temple) self-government and could not become members of the popular assemblies (at least, in their first generation).

However, in some cases aliens were settled in considerable numbers in separate and distinct places. As we have seen above, there are attested some instances, when Elamites, Egyptians, Judaeans, Arabians, Phoenicians, etc. lived in Mesopotamia in compact groups. Besides, in the Nippur region each ethnic group of royal

soldiers had its own area under the jurisdiction of their own prefects. Such aliens could establish their own self-government, i.e. a popular assembly. Thus, according to a document from Babylon drafted in 529 (i.e. still before Cambyses' conquest of Egypt in 525) the "assembly of the Egyptian elders" existed there. It made a decision regarding lands which belonged to some soldiers of Egyptian extraction who performed royal service. Some of them had typically Egyptian names and patronymics [Camb. 85; cf. Eph'al 1978, 79]. Thus, these Egyptians had their own assembly that could settle matters of civil law within their colony.

At the beginning of the sixth century Ezekiel [8:1, etc.] mentions the "elders of Judah", i.e. elders of the Jewish settlements in Babylonia. They apparently decided problems relating to the internal administration of these settlements and judged litigations within Jewish colonies in Babylonia [cf. Bickerman 1984, 349].

Thus, although the aliens who lived in Mesopotamia had no part in the self-government of Babylonian cities, in some cases they were settled in considerable numbers in separate places and could establish their own self-government. As Eph'al observes, "self-organization and national identity were features common to various ethnic minorities in Babylonia during the 6th – 5th centuries" [Eph'al 1978, 87].

Our information about cultural contacts between groups of various nations in Mesopotamia is extremely scanty. Only a few Akkadian loan-words appear in the Old Persian versions of the Achaemenid inscriptions (for instance, *aguru* – "baked brick"). In a Babylonian document the Old Iranian loan-word *dargiš* ("couch") is attested in an inventory of furnishings [BE 8, no.43; see Zadok 1984b, 33–34]. A number of Babylonian documents show that the Ebabbar temple in Sippar and the Eanna in Uruk were ordered by the administration of Cyrus II to send their workmen in order to set out royal "paradises" (*pardēsu*) near Sippar and Uruk. This is the Old Iranian word **paridaida-* (i.e., paradise; for references see Dandamayev 1984). Many Old Iranian administrative and legal terms are attested in Babylonian documents, since during the Achaemenid period many public institutions of the country gradually fell under Iranian influence. The same influence can be traced in the production of metal vases and in the iconography of Babylonian seals, especially in their subjects and style. There have also been preserved ruins of some royal palaces of Persian origin [Haerinck 1997, 28–31].

But local Babylonian culture and religion were not significantly influenced by Persian rule. Some scholars have discussed the question of the influence of the Zoroastrian philosophical system on Judaism during the Achaemenid period. It is quite possible that a mutual influence of ideas between Zoroastrianism and Judaism could take place in Babylonia through the connections of Iranian magi with Jewish priests who were descendants of the deportees from the kingdom of Judah [Boyce 1982, 188–195].

These magi apparently came to Babylonia to perform religious rituals for the Persians and Medes who resided there as royal officials, military commanders, soldiers, etc. For instance, a certain Zattumešu, who is attested as a magus, owned a field near the city Kiš during the reign of Darius I [OECT 10, no.163]. Several

documents from the Murašû archive mention the “town/settlement of the magi” in the region of Nippur [BE 9, no.88, etc.].

Still before the conquest of Mesopotamia by the Persians, Babylonians to a certain degree adopted equestrian archery tactics from the Cimmerians and Scythians [Dandamyev 1979, 106–108]. The Scythian bows were more powerful than the Assyrian and Babylonian ones and therefore were used by the Babylonian archers. It is also known that Scythian archers served in the Assyrian army. Economic documents from various Babylonian cities mention “Cimmerian” (i.e., Scythian) leather straps, bows and arrows with bronze and iron heads. For instance, one text from 541 refers to “200 Cimmerian reed arrows of which 180 are with copper heads, one Cimmerian bow” [YOS 6, no.237]. Besides, it also seems that the Babylonians borrowed from the Scythians a special cap with a high pointed end called *karballatu* in Akkadian texts.

At the beginning of their life in Mesopotamia the various groups of foreign minorities were mostly settled in enclaves, had rather a strong sense of ethnic identity, and maintained their traditional languages and faiths. In their communication with other groups of aliens and with the native people they used the services of interpreters who are referred to, for instance, in Murašû documents as *sepīru* (“scribe-interpreter”). In a number of cases the aliens managed to return back to their native lands which was the case, at least, of the inhabitants of Neirab in Syria and of the Jews of the Babylonian captivity. However, foreign ethnic groups had to adapt themselves to local traditions and culture. In their turn, the aliens exerted a certain cultural influence on the Babylonians. Unfortunately, we know far too little about these processes. It is of some interest to note that the scribes of Babylonian legal, economic and administrative documents knew that Iranian, Egyptian, and Jewish personal names and patronymics compounded with the divine names Baga, Mithra, Amon, Isis, Yahweh, etc., were theophoric and usually put the determinative for gods before them. It is natural that these scribes were Babylonians except for a few cases when we can trace their Egyptian and perhaps Elamite extraction [see, e.g., Nbn.65, 67, etc.]. Besides, many descendants of Assyrians were apparently among scribes who wrote Babylonian cuneiform texts but only two such individuals are so far attested [for references see Zadok 1984 a, 11]. Within several centuries, due to the processes of ethnic mixing and syncretism of cultures and faiths, almost all the groups of ethnic minorities (except the Jews, or rather a substantial part of them) were assimilated with the native population [Eph‘al 1978, 88–89].

The questions arise: what language (or languages) did the aliens use in communication with the native population of the country? What were the languages of conversation between husbands and wives of intermarried couples (for instance, between Iranian men and Babylonian women)? What was the native language of their children? Cases were mentioned above where an Egyptian who lived in Sippar sold a piece of Egyptian linen to a local individual who worked in the Ebabbar temple, or about an Iranian magus who rented out a field near the city Kiš. Again the question arises: in what languages did they and other such individuals talk with their contracting parties? As previously was noted, a document refers to a certain Harmašu

who was an Egyptian judge in Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. From Murašû texts we know about several judges of Iranian extraction who were active in Nippur. Again the question arises: did they use the services of the interpreters when they discussed judicial verdicts together with their colleagues of Babylonian descent? It is difficult to answer all these questions for certain, since there exists no direct documentary evidence on these cases. But we can assume that in the instances with intermarried couples and their children, they talked in a mixture of languages. The *lingua franca*, however, was Aramaic which had already been replacing Akkadian and becoming the customary language of conversation and daily use in Late Babylonian times even for the native population of Mesopotamia.

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