Elephantine in Its Persian Imperial and Administrative Context

# ASPECTS OF JUDEAN LIFE



JAMES D. MOORE

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To the memory of Dora Murdice (Robirds) Talley

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# PREFACE

My interest in the Elephantine documents began the moment I was first introduced to them as an undergraduate student. I had predominantly studied religious literature, which was the only field available to me at the time that provided access to the study of ancient Semitic manuscripts. After I read the letter by the Elephantine priest Yedanyah, I immediately felt that Elephantine documentary sources ought to be a significant dataset in the discourse of ancient Near Eastern and Hebrew Bible / Old Testament studies. I was surprised to learn that Elephantine scholarship was a niche and marginal area of study, passingly acknowledged in Near Eastern studies and frequently ignored by Bible scholars. It was not until I entered an MA program that I read the Elephantine documents in Aramaic under the late William C. Williams, who was the most careful Semitic grammarian under whom I have had the privilege to study. Since then, I have remained vigilant, reading and rereading the sources on my own and introducing them into my research when possible.

When it came time to propose a dissertation topic, my interest in the historical experience of ancient scribes led me to study what I thought might be the most significant source for understanding the sociohistorical experiences of Northwest Semitic scribal culture: the Aramaic Story of Ahiqar from Elephantine. It seemed my hobby was going to take a professional turn. After my time studying the Ahiqar Manuscript in Berlin, Verena Lepper (Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection, Berlin) and Bernd Schipper (Humboldt University, Berlin) teamed up and offered me the opportunity to publish a box of original papyri from the 1906–8 German excavations. The box contained the unplaceable or illegible scraps from the original publications (e.g., *APO*) and had been lost in the Berlin collection for a century (see *NAP*, pp. 1–17). From that moment on, it became clear that Elephantine documents would consume my professional life for the foreseeable future.

From the outset, I was perhaps more prepared to work on the al-Yahudu texts, which play an important role in this book. As a graduate student, I wanted to study at Brandeis because it was one of the few North American PhD programs that taught Akkadian and Hebrew Bible. While in Boston, I was able to take a full Assyriological course load between offerings at Brandeis and the Harvard Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations program, which opened some of its courses to me. It was at this time that I was exposed to the study of documentary sources on an advanced and historical-critical level, and the first-millennium sources in particular caught my attention because they allowed me to explore historical and philological comparisons between Akkadian and Northwest Semitic texts.

This background is useful to the reader of the present volume because it helps to explain my perspective. As a graduate student, I read the Aramaic sources frequently but found little time to focus on the secondary literature on Elephantine until the very end of my education. This distance from the entrenched views of Elephantine that had been in place for over a century allowed me to form my own historical impressions, based almost solely on the primary sources. Once I began to read the secondary literature more thoroughly, I was confused by what I saw as blatant contradictions between long-held scholarly assumptions about the Elephantine community and the evidence that survives from the site. This book is an attempt to understand and resolve—if only for myself—such fundamental inconsistencies.

The idea for this book was conceived after many conversations with Bernd Schipper, with whose help and under whom I wrote a successful German Research Council (DFG) grant to fund the first years of this project. The original objective was to write a comprehensive comparison of the Elephantine and al-Yahudu Judean communities, a topic that had been adroitly broached by Reinhard Kratz. It became clear, however, that a reassessment of the Elephantine community—stemming foremost from primary sources and recent research on the Achaemenid administration—would be a more significant contribution to both Achaemenid studies and Elephantine studies: the former of which is mostly engaged by multidisciplinary philologists and historians, the latter by Aramaic and biblical scholars. This book is not intended to replace the monumental historical studies on Elephantine, such as those by Bezalel Porten or Pierre Grelot, but rather to use the documents to provide a contextual argument for the political and administrative life of the Judeans within their imperial context.

Beyond those mentioned above, I am indebted to too many friends and colleagues to thank individually. Countless discussions with my colleagues residing in Germany—such as Jan Moje, Ruth Duttenhöffer, Natalie Naomi May, and Cornelia Wunsch—helped me shape and refine my thinking about documentary

evidence and scribal culture. Likewise, I am heavily indebted to my colleagues in Paris. Foremost is Maria Gorea, who spent countless days working with me at the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres and correcting my Aramaic. For years, Damien Agut has been a conversational partner to me on the Egyptian material. Most importantly, this book took its final shape after an invitation by Robert Hawley and Wouter Henkelman at the École Pratique des Hautes Études to give a month-long seminar on its contents. They and their students shaped the work's final structure. Wouter Henkelman, in particular, has read, corrected, and discussed this content with me into the early hours of the morning dozens of times in Paris, Berlin, and Columbus. The final stage of this project is indebted to the careful review of the manuscript by Bob Becking, Henry Colburn, David Carr, Shalom Holtz, Cornelius von Pilgrim, William Schniedewind, Karel van der Toorn, and Peter Zilberg. Each provided support or comments and corrections that shaped this work. Lastly, I am grateful to the late Bezalel Porten—Mr. Elephantine—who supported my work for years, including encouraging Eisenbrauns to accept my proposal of this book. I feel more a student than a colleague of all these scholars. That said, the errors of reason or content found herein—and there are undoubtedly some—are wholly my own.

In addition to the DFG's early support, this final publication is made available Open Access through a subvention grant provided by The Ohio State University Libraries, and due to the limitation on the manuscript's word count, the OSU Digital Lab for Ancient Textual Objects (DLATO; https://dlato.osu.edu) has curated the accompanying text bank. All translations of Semitic sources herein are mine unless otherwise stated.

# ABBREVIATIONS AND SIGLA

Following conventions in the field, I have cited textual objects using abbreviations of their *editio princeps* or most cited publication. For a list of all the sources' museum numbers, see the Ohio State University Digital Lab for Ancient Textual Objects (DLATO), https://dlato.osu.edu.

**Abbreviations**

| | |
|---|---|
| *ADAB* | Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked. *Aramaic Documents from Ancient Bactria (Fourth Century BCE): From the Khalili Collections.* London: The Khalili Family Trust, 2012. |
| Ahiqar Manuscript | Pap. Ber. P. 13446 pl. A–H, K–L + Pl. 13461D-P.13445C-23 (+) Pl. P. 13461D- 13445C-28 + Cairo EM JdE 43502 = *TAD* C1.1 + C3.7 (palimpsest) (+) D.Ahiqar |
| Ahiqar Palimpsest | Erased text of the Ahiqar Manuscript = *TAD* C3.7 |
| AIBL-CIS | Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Cabinet du Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum |
| Akk. | Akkadian |
| AOAT | Alter Orient und Altes Testament |
| *APO* | Eduard Sachau. *Aramäische Papyrus und Ostraka aus einer jüdischen Militär-Kolonie zu Elephantine*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911. |
| Aram. | Aramaic |
| *ATNS* | J. B. Segal. *Aramaic Texts from North Saqqâra, with Some Fragments in Phoenician*. Texts from Excavations, 6th memoir. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1983. |
| B | Texts in BaAr 6 |

| | |
|---|---|
| BaAr 6 | Cornelia Wunsch. *Judaeans by the Waters of Babylon: New Historical Evidence in Cuneiform Sources from Rural Babylonia Primarily from the Schøyen Collection.* Babylonische Archive 6. Dresden: ISLET, 2022. |
| BaAr 8 | Amna Fadhil Al-Bayati. *The Archive of Zibaba-Šar-Uṣur*. Edited by Cornelia Wunsch. Vol. 8. Babylonische Archive 8. Dresden: ISLET, forthcoming. |
| Ber. | Berlin |
| *BWL* | W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960. |
| BZAW | Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft |
| C | Texts in CUSAS 28 |
| *CAD* | A. Leo Oppenheim et al., eds. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956–2010. |
| CAL | Stephen A. Kaufman, ed. "Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project." N.d. https://cal.huc.edu. |
| Camb. | Cambridge (Library) |
| cc | Concave (side of an ostracon) |
| CG | Collection Clermont-Ganneau published in HL |
| CIS | Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum |
| CO | Classica et Orientalia |
| CUSAS 28 | Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch. *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer*. Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 28. Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2014. |
| cv | Convex (side of an ostracon) |
| DAIK / SI | Joint excavations of Elephantine by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Kairo and the Schweizerisches Institut für Ägyptische Bauforschung und Altertumskunde in Kairo. |
| Darius Inscription | Ber. P. 13447 = Pl. Kol. I (+) Pl. Kol. II (+) Pl. Kol. III/IV (= Pl. Kol. IV) (+) Pl. "Frag. zu P. 13447" = *TAD* C2.1 (Inscription) and C3.13 (Collection of Memoranda) |
| Dem. | Demotic Egyptian |
| DUBSAR 31 | Kathleen Abraham, and Peter Zilberg. *The Southern Babylonian Countryside in the Late 5th Century BCE: A View from Šāṭir*. Dubsar 31. Münster: Zaphon, 2025. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Egy. | Egyptian |
| ERC | Database numbers from https://elephantine.smb.museum/project/index.html |
| FAT | Forschungen zum Alten Testament |
| f. | Feminine |
| f.p. | Feminine plural |
| f.s. | Feminine singular |
| Gorea and Moore, SoE 2 | James D. Moore and Maria Gorea. "Phoenician Administrative Papyri from Egypt: Evidence of Phoenician Administration in the Persian Period." In *Advances in Elephantine and Persian Period Research.* Edited by James D. Moore and Petra Schmidtkunz. Studies on Elephantine 2. Leiden: Brill, 2026. |
| Heb. | Hebrew |
| HL | Joined ostraca in Hélène Lozachmeur. *La collection Clermont-Ganneau: Ostraca, épigraphes sur jarre étiquettes de bois.* 2 vols. Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres 35. Paris: de Boccard, 2006. |
| Iran. | Iranian |
| J | Texts in BaAr 6 |
| *JEA* | *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* |
| *JNES* | *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* |
| *KTU* | Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín. *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani und anderen Orten*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013. |
| MacGinnis, *AfO* 38/39 | John MacGinnis. "Neo-Babylonian Prebend Texts from the British Museum." *Archiv für Orientforschung* 38/39 (1991): 74–100. |
| *MDAIK* | *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* |
| Moore, *MDAIK* | Moore, James D. "Aramaic Ostraca from the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo's Excavations of Elephantine (Tentative Title, Contracted)." *MDAIK*, forthcoming. |
| Moore, *Semitica* 64 | James D. Moore. "New Phoenician and Aramaic Labels and Ostraca from Excavations at Syene and Elephantine Between 2010–2015." *Semitica* 64 (2022): 71–130. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Moore and Gorea, *CRAIBL 2021* | James D. Moore and Maria Gorea. "Les papyrus sémitiques et moyen-perse du cabinet du Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum." *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres (2021)* (2023): 581–608, 611–14. |
| m.p. | masculine plural |
| m.s. | masculine singular |
| *NABU* | *Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires* |
| *NAP* | James D. Moore. *New Aramaic Papyri from Elephantine in Berlin.* Studies on Elephantine 1. Leiden: Brill, 2022. |
| n.f. | noun, feminine |
| n.m. | noun, masculine |
| Padua | Museo Civico Aramaic Papyrus |
| Pap. | Papyrus |
| P.Count | Willy Clarysse and Dorothy J. Thompson. *Counting the People in Hellenistic Egypt*. 2 vols. Cambridge Classical Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004. |
| Phoe. | Phoenician |
| Pl. | plural |
| P.Ryl 9 | Günter Vittmann. *Der demotische Papyrus Rylands 9*. 2 vols. Ägypten und Altes Testament 38. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998. |
| Röllig, *SDAIK* 36 | Wolfgang Röllig. "Neue phönizische und aramäische Krugaufschriften und Ostraka aus Elephantine." Pages 185–203 in *The First Cataract of the Nile: One Region—Diverse Perspectives*. Edited by Dietrich Raue, Stephan Johannes Seidlmayer, and Philipp Speiser. Sonderschrift Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo 36. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. |
| Sem. | Semitic |
| *TAD* | Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni. *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*. 4 vols. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1986. |
| *TAOI* | Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni. *Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea*. 5 vols. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014. |
| *ThWAT* 9 | Holger Gzella, ed. *Aramäisches Wörterbuch*. Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament 9. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016. |
| WDSP | Wadi Daliyeh Samaria Papyri |

| | |
|---|---|
| WS | West Semitic |
| YOS | Yale Oriental Series |
| *ZAW* | *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* |

**Sigla**

| | |
|---|---|
| [ ] | Brackets. The reading has been restored. |
| ⌜ ⌝ | Half Brackets. Traces of the letters/signs survive and are legible to a degree. |
| { \| } | Curly brackets with intervening vertical line. Option of readings of an ancient word, letter, or sign. |
| \ / or / \ | Double solidus. Forward slashes and backslashes (solidus) are used in the translations to represent interlinear insertions, either from below the line /WORD\ or from above the line \WORD/. |
| / | Single solidus in translation. A single solidus is used to represent an option in translation due to ambiguity of the text's meaning. The reading of the word in its original language is clear. |
| [. . .] | Ellipsis in brackets. An unknown number of letters/signs are to be restored for a single word. |
| [. . . . . .] | Two ellipses in brackets. Two or more words, each with an unknown number of letters/signs, are to be restored from lost content. |

# Introduction

THE EGYPTIAN ISLAND OF ELEPHANTINE across from the ancient site of Syene has yielded one of the most important textual corpora to survive from the ancient Near East. Over 10,000 textual objects are known from the site in addition to many boxes of uncataloged and unpublished papyrus fragments. The documents attest to a continuous habitation for nearly two millennia. Unlike the finds from tombs known from throughout the Nile Valley, the Elephantine documents and a growing number of texts from Syene are documentary sources. They include troves of administrative, epistolary, and legal textual objects in addition to some religious, scholastic, and literary documents, all of which were read or used by the inhabitants. The corpus includes not only expected Egyptian documentation in Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, and Demotic but also documents from the imperial endeavors made at Elephantine/Syene during periods in which Egypt was held by foreign powers. Most notably among these waves of foreign occupation was the Persian control of the region from the late sixth through the end of the fifth centuries BCE, which is known as the Twenty-Seventh Dynasty. The Persians, their colonialists, and their imperial administrative system are evident in a significant portion of the Elephantine/Syene corpus, which survives in Aramaic and Phoenician, and the legacy of that administration was taken over by the Ptolemies, who succeeded them. The epicenter of the surviving Persian imperial finds was the colonial community of Judeans, who were loyal to the Persian state, and notably their temple, which served as the community's administrative and cultural center. The surviving corpus is only an echo of the life of these Judeans but also an example of the various other colonial plants that coexisted on the mainland of Syene but whose documentation is mostly lost. This study will attempt to interpret the Judean documents within their communal, regional, provincial, and imperial setting.

The corpus of Judean and affiliated sources has grown in waves since the turn of the twentieth century and so, too, has the scholarship. Presently, however, mainstream views are built on ideas that are over a century old and are now, I argue, indefensible scholarly suppositions. The first is the theory that

the Judeans at Elephantine were mercenaries, working for the Persians, who occupied Egypt from the late sixth through the fifth century BCE. This theory is far too simplistic to describe the complexity of the manuscripts' data. The surviving documentary evidence presents a picture of a socially complex community, under regional and provincial jurisdiction and existing within an elaborate imperial program.

Scholarship has long held that Elephantine Judeans were mercenaries hired by the Persians to protect the border of the empire. As far as I can tell, this assumption is based on the fact that the Judeans (Aram. YHWDY$^{ʾ}$) are collectively referred to in some documents by an Aramaic term, which has been translated as "troop" or "army" (ḤYL), and many individuals in the documents are said to belong to "ranks," either DGL-units or M$^{ʾ}$H-units, the latter of these is rightly translated as "century-unit" because of its base meaning "one-hundred." Hence, the Judean troop (Aram. ḤYL YHWDY$^{ʾ}$) was a military force due to the terminology. On the surface, this claim has merit because the Aramaic term ḤYL refers to armed groups engaged in military conflict in some texts, such as the Aramaic translation of the Darius Inscription, a literary source and polemical historiography found on Elephantine. The "ranks" of DGL- and M$^{ʾ}$H-units, however, are not referred to in that text. The problem with assuming that the Judean ḤYL was a military force is a rather simple one: (1) of the many hundreds of documents, none refers to Judeans performing overtly military duties; (2) no defendable evidence of weaponry that points to a military unit is found in the textual or archaeological record; (3) and the "ranks" included substantial numbers of women, who are not known to have been a fighting force in the ancient Near East.

The archaeologically richest sections of Persian-period Elephantine were first excavated by the Germans in 1906–8 and the French in 1906–11, then again by the Germans (DAI) and Swiss (SI) between 1987 and 1992.[1] The early German excavations were poorly documented, but what remains shows no sign of a military community. The records produced by the early French excavations are very detailed but, like the Germans', make no claims of having found military evidence. Apart from two antiquities acquisitions claimed to come from Elephantine,[2] only the recent DAI-SI excavations have found eight arrowheads

1. For details of the history of finds and archaeological expeditions beyond those mentioned here, see *NAP*, pp. 1–17; Van der Toorn, *Becoming Diaspora Jews*, 3–9.

2. Price, *Catalogue of the Egyptian Antiquities*, no. 2879, p. 344, and Ashmolean (No. 1883: 113) found in Sulimirski, "Scythian Antiquities," 306. The latter is from "Elephantine-Aswan." It should be noted that the Swiss Institute's recent salvage excavations of Syene (Aswan) uncovered a large number of arrowheads (von Pilgrim and Müller, "Tenth Season," 15; von Pilgrim et al., "15th Season," 7; von Pilgrim et al., "16th Season," 12). I expect military personnel to have been present at Elephantine and Syene, but there is no evidence the Judeans were part of a military community unit.

and two spear handles scattered throughout the Bauschicht 4 (Stratum 4, see below), which includes but is not limited to the Persian period. The arrowheads are of a Scythian type, which was widespread in the ancient Near East and continued to be used into the Hellenistic period. Earlier studies connected these Elephantine finds with Greek, particularly Ionian and Carian, military men in Egypt rather than the Judeans.[3] To complicate matters, two of the eight excavated arrowheads, although of an apparently "older" form, appear to have been mixed in with a pottery assemblage that postdates the Persians.[4] In light of the fact that Carians and those from the region of the Black Sea, where Scythians originate, are well attested in Elephantine documents and that other military finds are meager, it is difficult to conceive of these few arrowheads and spear handles as evidence of an active Judean military presence. This stands in contrast to the recent finds across the river in Syene Areas 2 and 15, where many arrowheads have been found in contexts that exhibit no overtly Judean connection according to the accompanying textual finds.[5] Other than these few traces of weaponry at Elephantine, which can be explained in a number of ways,[6] no military paraphernalia is recorded from the site or documents.

The mercenary theory is linked to another indefensible proposition that holds that Judeans and their temple to Yahô resided on the island of Elephantine before the Persian occupation of Egypt. The assumption goes: Judahite fighters from the former independent state of Judah inhabited Elephantine before the Persians arrived, at least by the sixth century BCE, and therefore the Persians must have "tolerated" their presence, as one scholar recently wrote.[7] That is, the Judeans lived in a relatively autonomous community, and the Persians respected that autonomy. As will be shown throughout this study, the Judeans were far from autonomous. Furthermore, scholars have based their claims of a pre-Persian Judean temple on one dubious and two misunderstood documents. First, the Letter of Aristeas makes reference to Judahite (e.g., citizens from the former kingdom of Judah) mercenaries in Egypt in the late seventh century BCE, the Egyptian Twenty-Sixth Dynasty. Some argue that Judahites who remained in Egypt became the Elephantine Judeans. There is no textual or archaeological evidence for this assumption, and the Letter of Aristeas is notoriously dubious concerning historical matters.[8] Second, the highly emotive

3. Sulimirski, "Scythian Antiquities," 309; Andraschko, "Skythen auf Elephantine?," 223–30; Kuckertz and Nebe, *Elephantine XXII*, 242.

4. Kuckertz and Nebe, *Elephantine XXII*, 242–43.

5. For the textual finds, see Moore, *Semitica* 64, and Porten and Lemaire, "Personal Names."

6. Andraschko, "Skythen auf Elephantine?," 229.

7. Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism*, 59.

8. See Wright, *Letter of Aristeas*, esp. 6–15. The arguments using this document suspiciously exclude the fact that it also claims that "already a considerable number had come previously with the Persian" (Letter of Aristeas 13). Disappointingly, Wright's criticism wanes when it comes to the

letter from Yedanyah, the priest of the Judean temple of Yahô, to the Persian governor of Yehud in 407 BCE claims that the ancestors of the Judeans had built the temple on the island before Cambyses conquered Egypt in 526 BCE (*TAD* A4.7:13–14 ‖ A4.8:12–13).[9] Bob Becking has convincingly argued that this is a case of an "invented tradition," and in support of his theory I have argued on archaeological, cultural, and literary grounds that while we do not know for sure the push-factors that led to the Judean settlement, all the current evidence suggests that the Yahô temple was a product of a Persian colonial venture.[10] Lastly, a memorandum entry from Elephantine refers to the Yahô temple and states, "[The temple] was previously before Cambyses" (*TAD* A4.9:5), which as I will show, has been misinterpreted as a temporal phrase meaning that the temple existed on island prior to Cambyses's reign. Apart from these references, the rest of the fifth-century Aramaic documentary evidence from Elephantine is clear: the Judeans were not an independent entity. They were wholly under local, and by extension imperial, Persian rule, and even if they were used by the Persians as a fighting force—and again there is no evidence for this—I do not see how they could be considered "mercenaries" in any reasonable sense of the word. Furthermore, even if we knew the origin of the settlement, it would hardly shape our understanding of the sources, which predominately come from the latter half of the fifth century BCE, at least two generations after Cambyses's conquest of Egypt.

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relevant section, and he adopts mainstream interpretations (*Letter of Aristeas*, 127, 137–38). Tessa Rajak has argued that the literary character of the letter is wrapped up in a type of myth-making that positions the Jews as Greek intellectuals ("Letter of Aristeas"). If her view is correct, one wonders whether the purported and rather vague description of the antiquity of Judean migration into Egypt is simply a claim, perhaps false, that replaces previous generations of Greek mercenaries from accounts in Herodotus with Judeans (see Wright, *Letter of Aristeas*, 138). This would be similar to the models of replacement operating internally in the disputes among ancient Jews (see Moore, "Supposed Diaspora Community") or those used by later Christian apologists arguing for the superiority of the Moses tradition over the Greek tradition, such as in Tatian's *Epistle to the Greeks*.

9. For dating Cambyses's arrival in Egypt to 526 BCE rather than the conventional 525 BCE, see Quack, "Zum Datum der persischen Eroberung."

10. First proposed in Becking, "Die Gottheiten der Juden," 206–8, esp. n. 19. Then argued in Becking, "Yehudite Identity in Elephantine," 404–5. Regretfully, Becking appears to have become ambivalent in his recent comments on the matter (*Identity*, 23, 140–42), likely due to the difficulty of changing the tide of misconception in Elephantine research. Both Reinhard Kratz ("Judean Ambassadors," 423) and Günter Vittmann ("Arameans," 432) nod to Becking's view. It should be noted that in an earlier contribution Vittmann maintained the traditional view that Yedanyah's statement was historically reliable (*Ägypten*, esp. 89). For my recent contribution, see Moore, "Supposed Diaspora Community." Recently, Marshall Cunningham ("(Re)-Constructing Judeanness," esp. 104–36) argued that Yedanyah was expressing a "mythomoteur," but apparently oblivious to Becking's argument and unaware of the archaeological data, Cunningham produced an incongruent conclusion. To paraphrase: Yedanyah was contributing to his community's ideological myth, but Judeans were also present before the Persian occupation.

Lastly and perhaps most problematic, the mercenary and pre-Persian settlement theories are linked to a disconnected and simplified view of the society of Elephantine and Syene. Nearly all propose—or perhaps better assume—Judeans were solely involved in "family" and "private" enterprises. Studies always acknowledge that the Persian Empire was a significant cultural or political factor in the lives of Judeans, but none have convincingly placed them within their imperial context. With the exception of Pierre Grelot's *Documents araméens* (discussed below), scholars have not explained how the "private" cultural dynamics worked in a system that clearly presents a pervasive state presence.[11] This under addressed integration of an imperial system into the lives of the Judean community is, I believe, the most important presupposition that must be redressed in Elephantine studies. Viewing the Judeans as active participants in the Persian Empire will, by extension, describe their status and the value of their traditions.

The Judeans were not a military fighting force, at least not an active one. The Judean troop was not a group of mercenaries; they were imperial subjects. This begs the question then: If the Judeans did not live the lives of mercenaries, what were their experiences at Elephantine? What was the social standing of Judeans relative to the empire and the native Egyptian population? This study sets out to answer these fundamental questions. To do so, I will frame the study in what seems to me to be the most logical approach. The relevant data for deducing the historical circumstances are documentary Aramaic sources. These were written by trained Aramaic administrators. The key to interpreting these texts, I argue, is to understand the administrative scribal culture that produced and used them. This approach will nuance, and in some cases drastically alter, previous observations about the documentary sources, which until now have been mostly interpreted by literarily trained scholars using literary methodologies. This study is not meant to replace previous studies, though it will undoubtedly (attempt to) rule facets of previous studies obsolete.

11. It should also be noted that Lemaire adheres to the mercenary theory and considers the Judeans' lives to be "private." Within this framework, he struggles to explain why the Elephantine documents—especially the contractual ones—are in Aramaic rather than Hebrew, and why they exhibit generally Neo-Assyrian rather than Neo-Babylonian characteristics (Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, 63–64, with references to earlier studies). I view the situation differently. Aramaic scribal culture was responding to cuneiform scribal traditions from the Neo-Assyrian period through the Persian period. This response, which began in the Neo-Assyrian period, preserved more points of interaction with cuneiform scribal practices of that era. After this period, the two traditions began to diverge as each negotiated its place under early Neo-Babylonian rule. Presumably, Nebuchadnezzar's investment in cuneiform scribal culture—particularly the revival of Sumerian as a marker of prestige—drove the two scribal cultures even further apart.

## Preliminary Remarks

Before delving into a study on administrative scribal culture followed by a reassessment of the surviving documentary data, a few preliminary remarks are in order. First, it should be asked why so many Aramaic documentary sources survive from Elephantine. If we move beyond the often used tautology that they survive due to the luck of preservation, classifying the documents by their administrative genres provides a framework for thinking about the social circumstances of their composition and subsequent survival. In the corpus, one finds mostly contracts that deal with property or the taxable status of human beings, letters focused on community business or bureaucratic matters, administrative lists that can be classified as records of income/expenditures or labor teams, and ostraca missives that mostly track the transportation of commodities. There is a surprising lack of personal documentation or even what might be called in other cultural studies, such as Assyriology, private business documentation. One may conclude, by a simple arrangement of the documents into broad administrative genres, that the corpus comprises documents that once made up temple archives and matters of temple personnel, but almost no document deals with religious matters. The early German and French excavators of the island were disappointed that they found no religious or biblical texts, and scholarship still spends a disproportionate amount of time describing the island's "Yahwistic religion"—the presumed religion of the Judeans. The Judeans are never referred to or refer to themselves as Yahwistic. There are no religious sources or significant artifacts, and scholars have not yet employed an approach that facilitates the responsible extraction of passing references to cult found in the Aramaic documentary sources.[12] The contracts, letters, and administrative sources are best explained as a product of the imperial program's oversight of a temple community and its emphasis on documenting matters of importance to the imperial state, notably matters concerning rations/allotments, (immovable) property, and the (taxable) status of human beings.

In the early decades of Achaemenid rule, likely during the reigns of Cambyses or Darius I, the Persians initiated an expansive program of Aramaic administration that reached far into the Egyptian province. Rather than overturning the conquered provincial regions by extracting their leaders and imposing martial law as previous Near Eastern empires had done, the Persians took a novel approach. They instead dissolved notions of kingship in the so-called

12. See Moore, "Administering Cult." The study of Egyptian religion before and after the Persian period is a worthwhile endeavor given that the island's Khnum temple complex has been well excavated and many religious or cultic texts survive from earlier and later periods. It should be emphasized that Egyptian sources dated to the Persian period are mostly absent, and those that do survive are administrative (see below).

Trans-Euphrates (notably Babylonia, Samaria, Yehud, Egypt, and late Idumea) and replaced it with imperially assigned gubernatorial provincial boundaries.[13] They also took over the economic system of the conquered region and introduced incentives in exchange for loyalty. In Egypt in particular, the Persians appear to have shipped in loyalists in a system akin to, though not the same as, colonial occupation as it is understood in the modern sense.[14] During the occupation of Egypt, the Persians attempted to standardize, and later monetize, economic exchange. By the final years of the Judean presence at Elephantine, the Persian administration had adopted the Greek stater, and after the expulsion of the Persian administrators from Elephantine, Syene, and greater Egypt, Artaxerxes III briefly reconquered (at least) lower Egypt between 343 and 332 BCE. Coins were then minted with his image, but in the Demotic script under a new, culturally inclusive program.[15]

During the first Persian period in Egypt, which comprises the years of the Judean settlement at Elephantine, the Persians embedded their administrative system into the local temple economies in a two-pronged approach. First, the state seized the economic oversight of the local temple economies. In tandem with this move, it set up state-owned treasuries and storehouses among the temple economies and within their newly fortified settlements, which I refer to as the fort system. Whether this move was gradual or the result of a sudden political mandate is not entirely clear. This was accompanied by a state-managed distribution of rations to those acknowledged as state dependents. It is this system of state dependency that the present study seeks to explore. The evidence of this system is found in the Aramaic sources from Egypt, though it is always assumed and never described by the sources themselves. The system is consistent with that found at Saqqara and Hermopolis. Some non-Aramaic sources, mostly those that survive in Demotic Egyptian, such as the Farandata correspondences, also provide insights into this imperial level of administration. The quality of the evidence varies on a case-by-case basis, and no single methodological approach can be imposed on the data. Instead, each document must be contextualized, as best as possible, then interpreted as an administrative source with the imperial program in mind.

13. Different regions required a different program, and it is not clear that the provincial gubernatorial model was imposed in Anatolia. Tyre and Sidon appear to have avoided it, but this is due to the strategic and economic value of these independent city-states to the Persian agenda.

14. Cleath, "Colonial Identity," interprets the so-called Jedaniah (Yedanyah) Archive (*TAD* A4) from this perspective. The study provides a useful lens through which the Elephantine community may be viewed. Many of the article's presuppositions will be challenged throughout this study, but Cleath's approach remains fruitful.

15. Vleeming, *Some Coins of Artaxerxes*. For a comprehensive historical treatment of the coinage in Egypt in the fourth century BCE, including its fifth-century antecedents, see Colburn, "Role of Coinage."

## Mercenaries or Dependents?

It is worth reiterating scholarship's long-held presumption that the Judeans had resided in Egypt prior to the Persian period, and after the Persian conquest Judean life continued generally as it was, but now Judeans were mercenaries paid by the Persian state. Scholars assume that the Judeans kept their land on their own terms and that they used a hereditary land system.[16] It is clear that the data does not support this oversimplified view of imperial conquest. It was Grelot who first tried to conceptualize an imperial model under which the Judeans existed in Persian-period Egypt. Prior to him, and mostly since, scholars have viewed the documents using familial social models rather than viewing them as witnesses to a Judean community within an imperial system. Grelot, it must be noted, based his approach on Ptolemaic Egypt. The militarized structure of the Ptolemaic program combined with its land-grant system for soldiers' service certainly echoes the Persian system, and Persian imperial models were adopted by the Ptolemies (and Selucids in Asia). Grelot's view, however, suffers from a historical fallacy: what the system became in the Ptolemaic period is not what it was in the Achaemenid period. Evolution is directional, not bidirectional. The Ptolemaic model evolved from the Persian imperial system but differed. In recent scholarship, Becking's theory, that pre-Persian oasis groups of Judeans in Egypt migrated to the Yahô temple for cultural reasons, balances the older view, that some Judeans (or former Judahites) existed in Egypt before the Persians, with the evidence that they did not exist at Elephantine before the Persians.[17] It is a compelling and realistic argument for a blended and complex development. Admittedly, however, it lacks clear archaeological and textual evidence. While in theory Becking's view may explain how a small number of Judeans immigrated to Elephantine, it lacks a defensible explanation as to how the Judeans became affiliated with the Persian state and why the Persians supported the colonial venture in the first place.

Another way out of the problem is to flex the meaning of the modern term "mercenary." In a recent contribution Christopher Tuplin has demonstrated the complexity of the term "mercenary" in an Achaemenid context. Tuplin struggles to provide a concrete definition and with lackluster writes, "But, though fuzzy at the edges, the conception of the mercenary as a paid outsider basically works."[18] He claims that the "Semitic troops at Syene-Elephantine

16. Szubin and Porten, "'Ancestral Estates,'" 3–9; Porten and Szubin, "Hereditary Leases," 283–88. But see Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," esp. 51–53.

17. Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt*, chapter 7, in response to Van der Toorn, *Becoming Diaspora Jews*, chapter 4, see esp. pp. 75–76.

18. Tuplin, "Mercenaries," 1183. He qualifies the exceptions throughout his study—particularly, the evidence from Elephantine.

count as mercenaries because they received pay/rations but not colony-style land allocations."[19] Tuplin seems to assume the mainstream view that Judeans at Elephantine resided in Egypt prior to the Persians, though he provides no explanation as to how one should view their landholdings and the relationship of those holdings to the imperial state. His study is also silent on the fact that the ranks of "mercenaries" he refers to at Elephantine include women. To assume women were "mercenaries" in a typical ancient Near Eastern context is to stretch the meaning of the term beyond what is justifiable.

The simplest solution, and one that the archaeological data does not contradict, is to see the Yahô temple as a Persian colonial plant. Its function was to merely exist as an imperial community in the troublesome Egyptian province and to contribute to the Persian's economic and labor program. To do this, the Persians secured for the Judeans, likely by charter, land and facilities, including a temple as the base of the Judean community's administrative operations in exchange for their loyalty. As will be discussed in chapter 9, this was part of a complex land-for-service system that was implemented in the Egyptian province, the evidence for which comes mostly from Saqqara and its archive of high-level administration. The Judean community living in the provincial district fort of Elephantine/Syene did not operate at this level, though they were controlled by it.

It seems pertinent to conclude with observations made of the Babylonian so-called military structure because the Aramaic administration there, with its vocabulary and models, became the basis of the Persian imperial administration. In his adroit study on the taxation system of Achamenid Babylonia, Francis Joannès observes that in reality the Babylonian military reserves were hardly, if ever, used and that servicemen were only conscripted from the state allotments that had been specially designated for conscription, those qualified as *ušuzzāyītu*, "registered," as opposed to the *paʾīṣītu*, "reserve," or *kutallu*, "back-up." While all those to whom grants were allotted were required to pay the *ilku*-labor tax, only those "registered" would supply soldiers.[20] Similarly, Kristin Kleber sees only individuals on some of the allotted estates as qualifying for military service, despite the responsibility for the full *ilku*-labor tax on the allotment.[21] Kleber also points out that the Persians confiscated large swaths of land in Babylonia (she supposes from earlier insurrectionists) and

19. Tuplin, "Mercenaries," 1184. He goes on to claim the Persians "inherited Semitic soldiers at Syene-Elephantine" (1191), followed by a discussion of what appears to be true mercenary employment of Greeks, not Semitic peoples, in the evidence pertaining to Egypt. The complex data can be better reduced to a simple observation: those hired by the state came from outside imperially controlled regions. They were mercenaries. Those within the empire were generally something else.

20. Joannès, "Fiscalité," 54.

21. Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 64.

greatly expanded the so-called military estate structure, even blending it with the temple under the *qīpu*-administrator and municipal structures, with "reforms that considerably decreased the power of the traditional urban elite in favour of a new class of royal servants (as administrators) and businessmen who subscribed more willingly to the Persian idea of empire."[22] Generally speaking, the imperial *ilku*-labor tax was either paid in silver or performed as a corvée service dedicated to public works and infrastructure projects rather than military service,[23] and this seems to also be the case at Elephantine in the Egyptian province.

## The Judean Colonial Settlement at Elephantine

In Eduard Sachau's original publication of the letter from the priest Yedanyah to the Persian governor of Yehud, he made reference to the Letter of Aristeas to support the claim that Judeans were present in Egypt before the Persian occupation.[24] It was the articulate historian Eduard Meyer who argued for waves of Judahite migration into Egypt in the seventh–sixth centuries BCE based on biblical sources and, again, the Letter of Aristeas, the latter of which served as a fulcrum around which he based his claims. Moving back in time from the letter, he held that the description of a soldier trade with Egypt in Deut 17 "ist der Ursprung der jüdischen Militärkolonie in Elephantine."[25] From this moment on, the trajectory of Elephantine research was set and has not been seriously questioned.

Sachau's and Meyer's explanation for the origin of the Judeans at Elephantine was spawned by the statement made in Yedanyah's letter to the governor of Yehud, which reads, "And from the days of the kings of Egypt our fathers had built that temple in Fort Elephantine, and when Cambyses entered Egypt, that built temple, he found" (*TAD* A4.7:13–14 ‖ A4.8:12–13). Nobody has proposed a different reading, and there is no reason on linguistic grounds to challenge this translation. The question is whether or not the statement is true. The most recent detailed argument to interpret Yedanyah's statement as historical fact was made by Dan'el Kahn.[26] He essentially recreates the argument of Meyer in more elaborate detail and by engaging with the last century of scholarship. Unfortunately, however, he, as did Meyer, relies on historically untrustworthy literary evidence, such as the Bible, to marshal his argument. I hold

22. Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 70–73, quote from 73.
23. Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 104–5, esp. n. 347.
24. Sachau, *Drei aramäische Papyrusurkunden*, iii.
25. Meyer, *Der Papyrusfund von Elephantine*, 33–34, quote from 34.
26. Kahn, "Date of the Arrival."

that the Bible must be tested before it is trusted, and unlike most Elephantine scholarship, at no point in this study do I use the Bible prescriptively.

At face value, Yedanyah's statement is wrought with historical problems as Becking showed when he proposed it was an invented tradition. Becking had originally focused on the fact that the letter's following clause, which claims Cambyses had destroyed all Egyptian temples except this one, was hyperbolic: no other sources claim the Egyptian temples in the period of Cambyses were destroyed en masse. There's no archaeological evidence to justify such a statement from Egyptian sites. Adding to Becking's observation, Yedanyah is curiously vague and uses terminology such as "king" rather than pharaoh and "Fort Elephantine" rather than simply "(the island of) Elephantine," as one would have expected when referring to the location in pre-Persian times.[27] Yedanyah's hyperbole was social currency that played on the Persian's administrative structuring around ethnic groups (see next section). It should be remembered that his purpose was not to express historical reality; instead he wanted to secure support for the repair of the Yahô temple.

As part of the long process of petitioning, Yedanyah in the name of the Judean leaders requested approval and subsidies for the temple's repairs. Many documents were composed, but only a few survive. In addition to Yedanyah's petition to the governor of Yehud is found a roster of backers *TAD* A4.10 and a memorandum entry *TAD* A4.9,[28] the latter of which has been used to further support the claim that the Judean temple existed before Cambyses's conquest of Egypt. The text reads:

*TAD* A4.9[29]
Memorandum of Bagavahya and Delayah. They said
to me: Memorandum. Quote: "It shall be to you in Egypt to say
before Aršama: 'Concerning the altar-house of the God of
the Heavens which (was) built in Fort Elephantine—
it was previously before Kanbûzî (i.e., Cambyses)

27. This is a sociolinguistic point. The Egyptian evidence refers to the site as (the island of) Elephantine or Syene, despite the site having been architecturally fortified before the Persian occupation (see von Pilgrim, "Die 'Festung' von Elephantine"). The Imperial Aramaic concept of "Fort X" (Aram. BYRH based on Akk. *birtu*), however, becomes part of the name of the location and identifies the site as a political and administrative entity. Prior to the Persians, fortifications were architectural features of a site and not generally conceived of as a conceptual feature of a site—that is, a site's name did not reflect the architectural situation.

28. Moore, "Administering Cult," 306–12.

29. For the most recent edition of the text with commentary, see Moore, "Legality of Persian Period Memoranda," 155–57. For an interpretation of the document's sources, see Moore, "'Who Gave You a Decree,'" 83–85, and for a challenge to the interpretation that the document speaks to religious concepts, see Moore, "Administering Cult," 318–24.

(and it) which that wicked Vîdranga demolished.'
(Dated) on the 14th (year) of Daryûhûš (i.e., Darius II), the king.
(It shall be to you in Egypt) to (re)build it in its place, as it was formerly.
And the grain-offerings and incense-offerings they may present on
that altar, just as formerly
had been done."

Due to the terse note style of the Aramaic, arguably the most shorthand Aramaic to survive in the corpus, the document is difficult to understand. Remarkably, scholars have uncritically held that the meaning of the text is clear despite its obviously difficult language. For this discussion, focus is on the meaning of line 5, "it was previously before Kanbûzî (i.e., Cambyses)." The subject of the line's verb, which is a form of "to be" (Aram. HWY), is "the altar-house of God" found in line 3.[30] What follows is a difficult syntax using an adverbial phrase (Aram. MN QDMN), meaning "(from) formerly," and a prepositional phrase (Aram. QDM KNBWZY), meaning "before Kanbûzî." Although it is curious to see this adverbial phrase immediately preceding a prepositional phrase, the adverbial phrase poses no major challenge. It is a temporal phrase. What is striking is the preposition "*before* Kanbûzî." As in English, the Aramaic preposition bears either a spatial or temporal meaning (CAL, prep. "qdm"). The question is: Is its use here meant to emphasize time and that the temple existed before Cambyses entered Egypt, as Yedanyah supposedly wrote to Bagavahya?[31] Or is the preposition meant to be interpreted spatially, as it must be in lines 2–3 of the same memorandum, where "*before* Aršama" is found and functionally means "by the decision of Aršama"? The answer to this problem has significant ramifications for understanding the tradition of the Yahô temple in both the Judean community and the Persian administration. It is clear that the reference to the history of the Yahô temple in the lost Persian decree, which the memorandum cites, was used to justify the approval for its repair during a time of internal uprising, but does the Persian administration's view of the history of the temple align with or correct Yedanyah's view? Yedanyah may have

30. Focus here is on the building itself. See Moore, "Administering Cult," 324, and Becking, "'That Evil Act,'" 197.

31. Here one must be cautious. I write "supposedly" because the two copies of Yedanyah's letter could be construed as drafts. We do not know exactly what was sent to Bagavahya; this document, which would have resided in Samaria or Yehud is lost. That said, the two surviving copies are near duplicates and so presumably also replicate the wording of that which was sent. How Delayah became involved is unclear, and it is not known what his impression was of the history of the Yahô temple at Elephantine. For theories of Delayah's involvement and what can be called the Samarian hypothesis of the community, see Van der Toorn, *Becoming Diaspora Jews*; Barnea, "Yahwistic Identity," 11–12. Yedanyah's letter indicates that Samaria was a recognized imperial province, but surprisingly no one at Elephantine identifies as Samarian.

very well—albeit mistakenly—believed that his temple preexisted the imperial conquest. Given that the statement appears at all on a memorandum and that reading the prepositional phrase "before Kanbûzî" would be redundant and awkward if interpreted temporally, it seems better to understand the phrase spatially as it appears only three lines above, in the phrase "before Aršama." Thus, the shorthand administrative speak means *formerly by the decision of Cambyses*.

This memorandum is a précis of likely two documents that the administrator is referencing in shorthand Aramaic, an original petition and the responding decree, and without knowing those documents one must be cautious. It is nonetheless surprising that the decree that lay behind the memorandum entry would engage the original petition's administrative history of the temple, and even more surprising that the writer of the memorandum would consider it worth noting. The strange wording in the memorandum suggests the administration *corrected* Yedanyah's view that the temple predated the Persians. We must bear in mind how the administrative process works: the Judean tradition of a pre-Persian Elephantine temple was used to convince the governor of Yehud that the Judean settlement was worth preserving and to express frustration with the Egyptian priests,[32] so that the governor might influence Aršama's bureau in Egypt to approve the repair. Aršama's bureau acquiesces, though neither the petition nor the decree survive. But the memorandum that knew the petition and decree appears to have justified rebuilding the temple *because it was formerly a Persian investment mandated by Cambyses*. One cannot oversimplify the political dynamics and the administrative protocol of the period.[33] Thus, it is compelling to paraphrase line 5 based on the spatial interpretation of the prepositional phrase and within its context as "Previously, (it was said) before Cambyses (that it shall be to you in Egypt) to build the temple." This interpretation is the first to recognize the nuances of the administrative scribal culture that produced the text; it preserves the sense of the document's administrative shorthand by correlating the language of lines 2–3 with line 5 and acknowledges that after Cambyses's conquest, the site where the Yahô temple now stands was

32. Due to the cultural wars between the Judean and Egyptian priests, one can easily imagine that the Egyptians claimed the site as an Egyptian sanctuary and saw the Judeans appropriating it to their own history. See Moore, "Supposed Diaspora Community." Unsurprisingly, the period of Cambyses is a topos referring to a reconstruction period. Compare *ATNS*, no. 34, which refers to the days of Cambyses and (re)construction (Aram. MŠ$^{\nabla}$, following *ATNS*, p. 53n1).

33. Recently, Kottsieper, "From יהה צבאת to יהו מרא שמיא," has suggested that Yedanyah's statement is historically accurate because otherwise Yedanyah would have appealed to the Achaemenid administration's sanctioning of the Yahô temple. He holds that misrepresenting the antiquity of the temple would have been bureaucratically dangerous and assumes the prepositional phrase is a temporal statement. Although usually one of the keenest scholars of the administration process (e.g., see "Briefe als Rechtsurkunden"), here Kottsieper oversimplifies the purpose of Yedanyah's letter.

the product of Cambyses's imperial administrative decision rather than a legacy site of the Judean community. If this interpretation is correct, then contrary to previous views, we have in these terse statements the Persian authorities' claim that the Judean temple was a colonial venture for a loyal community and that its colonial history justified state reinvestment.[34]

Finally, despite the remarkable discovery of the foundations of the Yahô temple, its meager surviving features and its poor preservation do not shed much light on the history of the Judean colony.[35] The temple's foundations and mudbrick pavement form a small precinct in what was otherwise a residential quarter.[36] It lacks the deep stone foundations of major and permanent temples, and while private chapels are found in this quarter,[37] the complex is clearly a temple—not a chapel—built with Syrian/Levantine features.[38] Below the temple is a Twenty-Fifth Dynasty residential stratum. Thus, the earliest possible date for the complex is the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, and according to Cornelius von Pilgrim, it cannot be earlier than the reign of Amasis.[39] Therefore, its earliest possible date would place the temple approximately one generation—at most two generations—prior to the Persian occupation of Egypt. The Aramaic documents, however, identify the temple as a structurally integral part of the buildings around it, and in his recent assessment of the archaeological evidence, Achim Krekeler attributes these urban dwellings to the Persian

34. Compare Becking, "'That Evil Act,'" 202, who arrives at a similar interpretation by a different means.

35. Until recently, only von Pilgrim has given a critical assessment of the archaeological data. (Noteworthy is Rohrmoser, *Götter, Tempel und Kult*, which considers the archaeological evidence heavily but does not critique it.) Kottsieper's rebuttal to von Pilgrim's assessment speaks to the complexity of the archaeological data ("From יהו מרא שמיא to יהה צבאת," 148–51). His argument about archaeologically identifying the "way of Khnum" with Quack's view seems sound. His careful critique rightly dissuades one from believing that the small road leading into the Yahô complex was a major processional way, but it does not solve the problem he raises: the relatively open access from the Khnum temple to the Yahô temple still existed. Kottsieper's arguments for a pre-Persian Judean temple based on statements in the Ns-Ḥr inscription (so too Barnea, "Migration of the Elephantine Yahwists," 107–8) are speculative. The inscription does not suggest, much less prove, the existence of a pre-Persian Yahô temple on the island.

36. Until recently it has remained difficult to understand the excavation reports published by the DAI. For instance, Krekeler's early reports of private chapels in the residential quarter from the Ramessid period until the third century BCE could be mistaken as evidence for a preexisting temple; see Schipper, "Die Judäer/Aramäer," 60–61, 63, 72, and n. 13. The recent evidence, however, indicates that the site of the Yahô temple was a new development.

37. Kaiser et al., "23./24. Grabungsbericht," 180–82; von Pilgrim in Kaiser et al., "25./26./27. Grabungsbericht," 142–45.

38. Von Pilgrim, "On the Archaeological Background," 11.

39. Personal communication. I thank Cornelius von Pilgrim for patiently working through my interpretations of the dense *Grabungsberichte* and for correcting errors. For other renovations dating to Amasis, see von Pilgrim, "On the Archaeological Background," 13.

occupation.[40] Von Pilgrim has been careful to never exclude an early Persian-period date for the temple's constructions.

## Ethnicity

The term "ethnicity" will be used often in this study. Scholars have theorized at length about the relationship between imposed ethnonyms (exonyms) and self-identified ones (endonyms). The Persian Empire was the largest and most diverse the world had seen up to that time, and apart from Alexander's short-lived rule, it was arguably not matched in size and diversity until the early modern period. It was held together by an expansive bureaucratic system transmitted through ideology and a pragmatic public infrastructure. The peoples under this umbrella were linguistically and culturally diverse, and the Persians had inherited in Mesopotamia and the Levant mixed social landscapes carved up by ages of forced deportation, emigration, and immigration. One of the great accomplishments of the Persians was that they let idiosyncrasies of the regions they controlled persist—so long as peace was reasonably kept and populations paid taxes. The Persians seem to have seen all those "beyond the river" Euphrates as both a confounding conglomerate of peoples and an economically rich and diverse culture. They mastered the appearance of power that kept regions subjugated with relatively little military action, though to be sure this appearance was not a facade. They had very real power to subdue provinces, but they also managed a level of perceived sovereignty in the provinces they ruled through a cultural infusion.

In the diverse landscape of the Persian Empire, exonyms, the labels ascribed to a group by those outside that group, and endonyms, labels that a group ascribes to itself, are not clearly differentiated. Thinking in an us–them dynamic is inevitable. But the bureaucratic, clerical, and administrative leaders, through whose texts we now reconstruct history, were themselves transient and either operating in languages that were not their native tongue or, if native, not writing in the language of their ancestors. So, while one could write at length about ethnicity, the simple matter is there was no unifying notion of it in the surviving Imperial Aramaic sources. That said, one can make some general working statements about ethnonyms that appear in the data.

The ethnonyms that appear in Aramaic sources from Egypt are based on the imperial system's recognition; ethnicity was foremost an administrative construction in the Persian Empire. While the labels historically derive from geographical locations, in the Persian period identity shifts from a location to a

40. Krekeler, *Elephantine XXI*, 176.

community regardless of its location. These communities are state recognized and, as I will argue, administered through temples. Unlike geographical markers of identity, temples are moveable, and so a new sense of the meaning of ethnic categories divorced from state-defined boundaries emerged. Any state-recognized ethnic temple community could exist in any province.[41]

While prejudice or bias based on the notions of ethnicity were undoubtedly present, we have very few insights into the dynamics of such matters. It would be naive, however, to assume that racial, cultural, economic, or linguistic markers of "difference" were not stereotyped and included in an ancient's perception of a particular ethnonym.[42] These perceptions were the result of complex social interactions that are well beyond this study or what the limited data can show. Nonetheless, there was an ethnic hierarchy that was known and probably felt by all in the multicultural landscape of Persian-occupied Elephantine/Syene. As an administrative construction, ethnicity provided access to social gains based on one's proximity to or distance from recognized communities. Thus, those ethnicities perceived to be associated with the administration, such as Babylonians who spoke Aramaic natively, or empire, such as those from the Parsu, held more social capital.

For example, at Elephantine we find a diverse range of positions held by those with Egyptian names. But in the personnel who make up the fort system's permanent leaders, one finds more frequently those with names of Iranian or Babylonian origins. The Judeans generally interacted with these leaders, and while many Judeans engaged with local Egyptians, it is noteworthy that the class of Judean servant is (so far) only attested to be held by local Egyptians, never by colonially affiliated ethnicities. That said, of the examples known to us, Tapemet the servant of Maḥseyah was eventually emancipated, adopted, and married off to ʿAnanî, the servitor of the Yahô temple; Tapemet then becomes the female servitor of the Yahô temple. We know of this because her change in status was documented by Persian state-approved legal processes. The political complexity of this marriage arrangement in the social psychology of the Judeans and Egyptians cannot be fully appreciated given our limited view, but it is incredibly enticing to speculate about.[43] The point to be made by this example is that ethnicity was foremost an administrative construction that was

41. I propose this in Moore, "Supposed Diaspora Community."

42. Most recently Christopher Parmenter has shown that in the period of Archaic and Classical Greek expansion in the Mediterranean, ethnicity encompassed larger perceptions (*Racialized Commodities*, esp. the introduction).

43. For example, both Nutkowicz, *Destins de femmes*, and Azzoni, *Private Lives of Women*, focus on Tapemet throughout their monographs. Neither, however, focuses heavily on the fact that the Persian administration mediated Tapemet's marriage arrangement because they were concerned about her taxation status.

reaffirmed internally by the leaders of the ethnic groups, but ethnicity was also a community response to the complex globalism brought by imperial occupation.

## Thesis: The Structure of the Administration in the Province of Egypt

The primary objective of this study is to provide a historically accurate glimpse into the social and historical reality of Judean experiences of the empire at Elephantine and Syene. Apart from Grelot's flawed, but admirable, study, no scholar has provided a framework into which all of the textual data from Elephantine and Syene fits. Nearly all of the documents from Persian-period Egypt are administrative and relate to the communities, forts, or royal estates of the Egyptian province. Therefore, an imperial-administrative framework—rather than family or city-state models—will provide the most accurate representation of the Judeans' experiences. It is important, however, to frame one's thinking around the data and against misconceptions that are rampant in the field. Foremost, the reader will recognize the absence of a "satrap" or "satrapy" as an administrative organizational category. This is due to the fact that scholars have imposed Herodotus's misunderstanding of the Persian imperial structure of Egypt onto their studies rather than deducing the structure from the surviving data. Simply put, Imperial Aramaic does not use satrap or satrapy as operative administrative categories in ancient Egypt, and neither, therefore, will this study. Like the Aramaic term ḤYL, which serves two similar but sociologically distinct functions—namely, "troop" and "community"—so too the term or concept "land" when referring to a politically definable region, such as "Egypt," is somewhat ambiguous. I will always use *region* as a general term. The ambiguity rests on the different political agreements the empire made with political entities. The fundamental difference comes down to the imposition of a provincial model in which a governor was appointed, or a statehood model in which the Persians allowed a local "king" to preside over the political entity. There was no king of Egypt other than the imperial overload during its Persian occupation; the Persians instead imposed a gubernatorial model. Thus, this study will refer to Egypt as a *province*, even though in Aramaic Egypt was recognized as a "land," so as not to confuse the term with delimited units of property, such as landholdings.

Throughout this book I aim to discuss the Judean community at Elephantine within a five-tiered institutional administrative structure that constituted the bureaucratic organization of the landholdings in the Persian province of Egypt. This bureaucracy was managed by a staggered hierarchical order of individuals. Each of these individuals represented a bureau. For reasons discussed

in chapter 1, the empire's administration prioritized letter writing, and therefore, by metonymy, letters addressed to managing individuals were, in practical terms, to the bureau of that individual. Each institutional level was led by a mediating figure/bureau that existed in the higher administrative level but oversaw the lower level. Within any institutional level was a leader reporting directly to the mediating figure. The first two higher institutions are purely bureaucratic and administrative imperial units, while the lower three institutions constitute administrative levels that work directly with the populace.

Over all the states and provinces stood the imperial king and royal court, the embodiment of the abstraction we call government. While the idea of the king was ever present at each institutional level of the landholdings system in Egypt, the royal court's operations existed above and outside the provincial system. Only through interlocutors did the king's power reach those physically living in Egypt, and therefore discussion of the king and royal court is beyond the scope of this study. In the surviving documentation from Elephantine and Syene, the king is essentially absent, with the exception of one reference to an order issued by Darius II that was funneled through Aršama's bureau and disseminated by the regional forts to the colonial communities, who then called on their own network in the province to discuss the ramifications of Darius's order.[44] Generally, however, the reach of the king had little practical effect on colonial communities or the native population. This was the brilliance of the Persian administrative structure: it gave provincial colonists and native populations a sense of autonomy. In reality, however, the empire's administrative presence cast its shadow on every soul within the provinces, and the surviving Aramaic is a testament to the success of this imperial program.

The highest level of provincial administration and that which ultimately owned or managed all landholdings in Egypt was the royal estate (fig. 1, no. I). In Aramaic, royal estates were identified as "the house belonging to" the prince (Aram. BYT ZYL, "prince") or simply "estate" (Aram. BG from Iranian *baga*).[45] In the reign of Darius I, Farandata was the Persian prince of Egypt, while for most of the second half of the fifth century, Aršama the prince managed Egypt. More evidence of Aršama's reign survives than of Farandata's, and the Aršama dossier demonstrates that a network of lesser royal estates of lesser princes, such as that of Varuvahya (*TAD* A6.13), were delimited landholdings that were nonetheless ultimately managed by Aršama's bureau. It is unclear if these lesser estates were purely royal land or fully or in part within the

44. The evidence comes from the letter of Ḥananyah to Yedanyah (*TAD* A4.1). See discussion in Moore, "Administering Cult," 296–301, and chapter 9 below.

45. The term *baga* was essentially an allotment and purely an economical unit (Tavernier, "Religious Aspects," 104–5). Officials or (temple) communities could own/manage their own partitions, each of which could be identified as a *baga* (e.g., *TAD* C3.6; Xanthos Inscription).

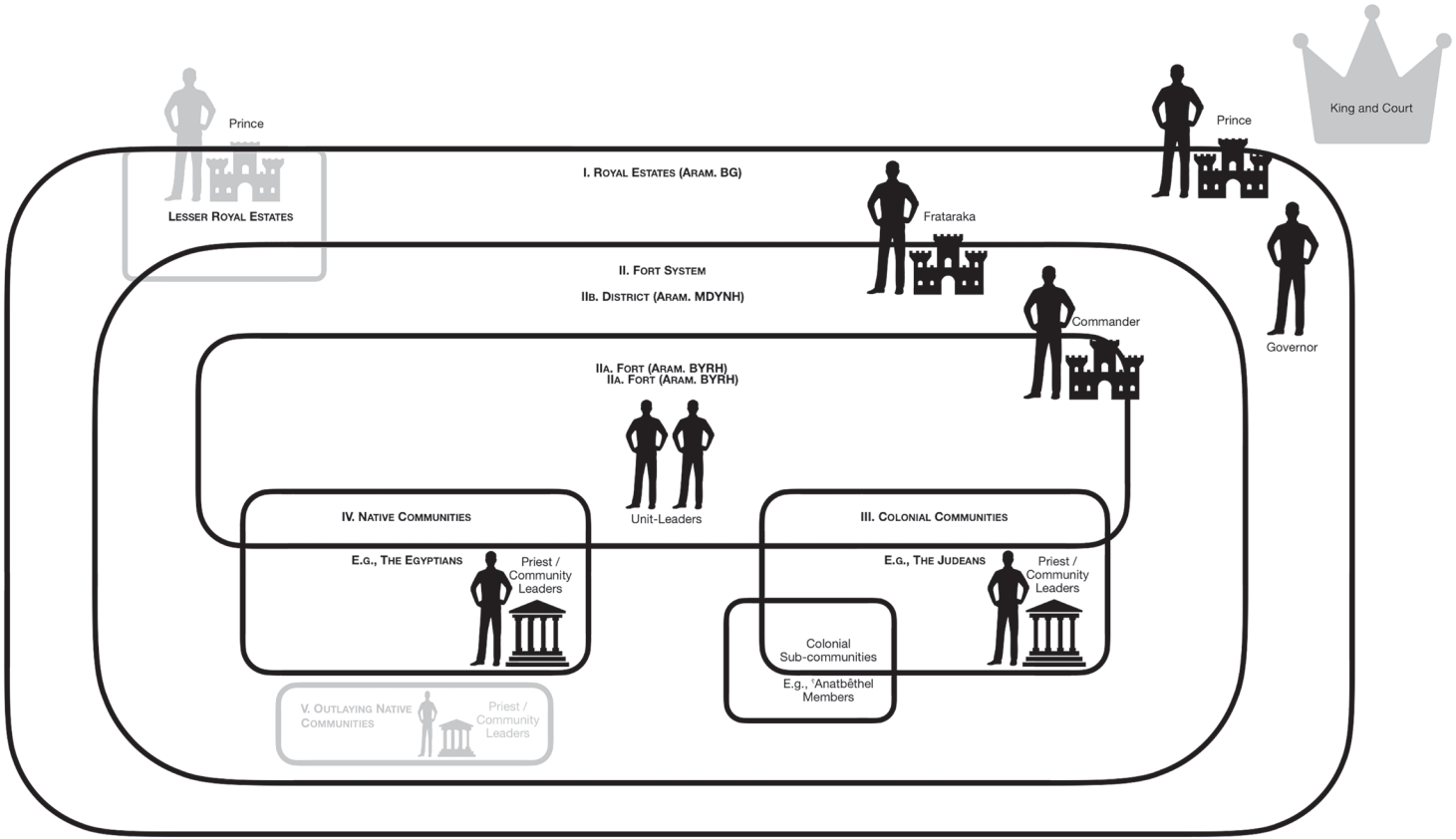



FIGURE. 1. Five-tiered structure and bureaucracy of landholdings in the Egyptian province.

jurisdiction of the fort system. The prince's position mediated between the royal court and the province, and directly under him was a dedicated manager for the province, the governor (Aram. PḤH). When Aršama was physically outside of Egypt, the administrative documents would express this and his governor would rule in his place.[46]

Second, below the imperial administration stood fortified settlements of various state-organized labor and military troops of the regional districts—the fort system. The system consists of two parts. First, the capital of the fort system was the fort itself (Aram. BYRH; fig. 1, no. IIA). The forts were state-owned cities or fortified settlements. Second, the fort bureaucracy oversaw a region beyond its walls; this was known as the district (Aram. MDYNH; fig. 1, no. IIB). The district would have included various urban and rural settlements in addition to the fort. It is even possible that smaller satellite fort structures were installed throughout the district. The leader of the district was the Frataraka (Aram. PRTRK). The bureau of the Frataraka would have answered to the bureau of the royal estate. He appears to have been responsible for social and political decisions at the fort, where he likely resided, in addition to managing the settlements in the district.[47] Forts were populated, at least in part, by various recognized communities, who took turns in obligatory public service as members of the fort's ranks of state dependents. These state-organized troops/communities were led by full-time state-labor and military leaders. The most notable fort troop in this study is the troop of Syeneans, which was led by a full-time fort commander (Aram. RB ḤYLʾ), under whom were lower ranking, but seemingly permanent, commanders of units, the DGL-unit commanders (Aram. RB DGLʾ) and the century-unit commanders (Aram. RB MʾTʾ). The fort troop appears to have been composed of trusted administrators recruited from the colonial or native communities. They served their occasional tax service obligation (HLK/*ilku*-labor tax) in the district's troop (Aram. ḤYL [of Fort]). Depending on the needs of a district's settlements or those of a neighboring district and on the skillsets that those serving their *ilku*-labor tax may bring, people were sent in groups from far away to serve in a unit for a designated term. The term itself is unknown from the surviving Aramaic data. Presumably some of the most skilled served permanently or semipermanently as officials in their forts. Parsing the fort's administration from the district's is difficult in light of the sparse evidence. Given that the landholdings system was bound to a two-pronged income/assessment and labor taxation model (see chapter 9), it is compelling to suggest that perhaps generally the Frataraka managed social, judicial, and income-related matters, while the commander managed labor and personnel.

46. For discussion, see Moore, "Persian Administrative Process," 51n10.
47. See Tuplin, "Serving the Satrap," 629–30.

The more trusted conscripts into the fort's district troop came from the third institutional level (fig. 1, no. III), the state-recognized colonial foreigners and state dependents. These are also identified as ḤYL, but rather than the ḤYL of a specific fort, as in the case of Syene, these communities were identified by a provincial ethnic classification, the troop of [ethnonym], such as the troop of the Judeans. The state allowed these troops to organize their own social structure, and in the case of the Judeans—and likely other colonial supported ethnic communities—their leader was not a commander.[48] The Judean community was led by Judean administrative temple personnel who mediated between the Persian state authorities and the Judean community of state dependents. As state dependents, this group was allotted community land, likely outside the fort of Syene, which it managed. The allotments were taxed in the form of a *mandattu*-tax monetary payment (Aram. MNDH) by the district troops and ultimately the royal estates. This monetary tax was channeled through the temple administration to the fort, which served as a local chapter and extension of the royal estate system. The taxable members of the Judeans, including the temple's personnel, served their terms leading the Judean labor contribution to the fort troops as well as serving in the fort system's state judiciary as witnesses and notaries for the needs of (usually their own group's) colonial parties. The temple and therefore the god of the recognized community constituted the ethnic and therefore administrative identity of the individuals. Yahô was the abstract representation of the state's concept of a Judean. Judeans were not Yahwists; Yahô was Judean. Affiliated subcommunities, which were managed by the Judean personnel, at least as necessity permitted, were identified by other deities: Anatyahô, ʿAnatbêtʾel, and ʾEšembêtʾel.[49] The diversity of the recognized status of the Judeans allowed for a variety of peoples whose language and traditions could be managed as a unit

[48]. Scholars holding to a military model are nonetheless forced to acknowledge the term's nonmilitary meaning, though this has not been developed in scholarship (e.g., Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 28–29, or Temerev, "Social Organizations," 521 [in observation on DGL-units]). Since 2020, I have been publicly arguing that the term refers to a community rather than an army. Since then, at least one scholar appears to have arrived at a similar conclusion (Kottsieper, "From יהו מרא שמיא to יהה צבאת").

49. This practical proposal adduced from viewing the data from an administrative scribal perspective solves a century-long debate over the meaning of the other Canaanite names appearing in the documentation of the Yahô temple. Approaching the sources from a literary or religious studies perspective, as other scholars do, has yielded no fruitful historical observations. To cite only a recent example: after a long study on the "religious interactions" at Elephantine (with albeit interesting statements regarding sources from Saqqara), Giulia Grassi concludes, "Few other Semitic gods are recorded, two of them, Ḥerem/Ḥarim and Betʾel/Baytʾel, *are probably somehow connected with the temple*, which was the centre of the Judaean cult" ("Religious Interactions," 75, emphasis added). To speak of these documents as foremost "religious" is anachronistic, a misunderstanding of documentary genres, and a fallacy that has detracted from the historical investigation of the Elephantine sources.

in addition to those few who convinced the community that their ethnicity had changed to the status of Judean.[50] The Judeans were apparently granted land as a colonial venture for which the Yahô temple managed its taxations. The system allowed the temple to monitor the quasi-capitalistic model of (likely) onerous debt cycles that the community members imposed on each other, to store the taxable products of those lands, and to redistribute them to the Judean labor teams working in the region as they fulfilled their HLK/*ilku*-labor tax obligations.

Below the colonial communities existed the fourth institutional level (fig. 1, no. IV), the native Egyptian major temple economies. Naturally, these were established before the Persian occupation, but the Persians introduced innovation and imperial control by injecting their administrative oversight directly into the native population through the position of the *lesonis*-priest, which is included in a network of Egyptian administrators loyal to the Persians. Above the *lesonis*-priest was a state finance minister (Dem. *snty*) to whom complaints of derelict *lesonis*-priests could be brought (P.Ryl 9, p. 2:296).[51] The term *snty* is introduced into Egyptian in the Persian period and continues in Demotic into the Ptolemaic period, when it is translated into Greek as διοικητής.[52] It is not clear if this figure belongs to fort-, district-, or estate-level personnel because the term used refers to rank within any institution. The ventures of colonial communities such as the Judeans also stood administratively above the native Egyptian temple administrators, but this relationship had to be carefully navigated with a presumed air of equality. The Khnum temple economy on Elephantine was the center of administrative oversight of the native Egyptian population for the district of Syene for select resources, such as firewood. Just as the colonial communities were self-governing taxable entities organized by community deities, so too through native Egyptian temples the Persians monitored, exploited, and taxed the natives for labor and resources. The colonial communities and the native temple economies appear to have had comparable administrative structures and roles. Access to the imperial administration and its economic benefits were mediated ultimately by the fort system, but on a pragmatic level the colonial community of Judeans, as a representation of the Persians in Syene, became a vehicle for channeling state resources in the form of rations and product subsidies to the Khnum temple economy. The Egyptians' labor contribution to the fort and ultimately the royal systems, however, remained under the direct auspices of the Egyptian temple administrators. Like the colonial communities, the Egyptian community may have been subdivided by deities into smaller taxable entities. For instance, the Khnum administration

50. Moore, "Supposed Diaspora Community."
51. See excursus 1 below.
52. Rashed, "Two Statue Fragments," 6–7.

may have overseen the state obligations of those affiliated with the communities represented by the gods Ḥor or Sati. A few of the most trusted natives rose to the permanent positions in the fort-troops or royal-estate systems, thereby effectively becoming imperial citizens who were not ethnically "Persian," which may be ultimately what the term Aramean came to mean. In order to maintain this institution's administrative stability within the province, after the accession of Xerxes the native temples of the Nile Valley were required to work in the Aramaic language of the other institutional levels. Although the empire effectively took control of some of the ancient Egyptian temples' landholdings, they required all of a temple's holdings to be monitored regardless of who ran them.

The final institutional level formed around landholdings that I can deduce from the data were the subsidiary small or outlying native border communities. Unlike the landholdings organized within proximity of the Nile's fort system, these native enclaves received less oversight, and unlike those in the Nile Valley and Nile Delta, they were allowed to operate in their native Egyptian language. These communities were still taxed and, therefore, had access to the Persian administrative support system that engaged in public works projects. While it was in the best interests of the Persians to ensure that local loyalists held administrative power, the communities were generally overseen by traveling regional administrators, presumably dispatched from the nearest fort. The best surviving evidence of such a community comes from a site in the Kharga Oasis called Ain Manawir, which was centered around the temple economy of Osiris-iou.[53] This institutional level does not appear in documents from the urban fort of Elephantine/Syene or its environs of community farmlands.

Most of the time each institutional level of the populace (levels three through five) functioned daily without intervention; only the administrative leaders worked across the institutional divides. The bulk of the data from Elephantine focuses on and was produced at the third institutional level, the state-recognized colonial community of Judeans. The data concentrates on internal community matters but exhibits interactions with the superior fort system. Few data show interactions with the royal-estate system, and evidence marshaled in this study demonstrates some interaction with the Khnum temple (discussed mostly in chapters 7 and 8). Currently, I fail to see evidence of privately owned property in the Egyptian province, that is, property that was managed by individuals or entities who are not part of the imperial taxation system.

Of less importance to the Judean settlement, but worth mentioning, are the administrative structures of the intercolonial maritime and land shipping industries, which ultimately affected Elephantine. These industries existed outside the landholdings system described so far, but they were integrated into the

53. Agut-Labordère, "Ain Manawir Ostraca."

two-pronged taxation system. The *mandattu*-tax that was extracted from colonial settlers and natives was also extracted from merchant ships at ports of call as indicated by the import and export account on the Ahiqar Manuscript's palimpsest (*TAD* C3.7). The *mandattu*-tax was ultimately a usage fee: when levied on property, it was deemed rent, but when levied on ships, it was a tax on access to business in a particular region (see chapter 9). The merchants who operated outside the state-sponsored boat system were truly private entrepreneurs who paid for protected access to a market.[54] Study of the Persians' support of the Phoenician Mediterranean market economy is still in its infancy,[55] but two important features of the Persians' Mediterranean program are important to bear in mind for this study. First, as will be argued in chapter 2, Phoenician administrative scribal culture was active in the Egyptian province, even at Elephantine and Syene. The Phoenician administration operated through the official channels of the province. Much like a colonial community, the Persian Aramaic administration co-opted trusted individuals who could monitor the Phoenician market as it moved through the province. Intermediate-level Phoenician administrators appear to have been the face of accounting for the Aramaic accountants, and there was a vested interest at Syene in individuals who knew Phoenician and could write in the Imperial Aramaic script. Clues in the Elephantine Aramaic ostraca point to minimal—perhaps even restricted—interaction with this administrative system and the products it brought. Second, while there does not appear to have been direct Judean involvement in the repair of the Carian ship that was dry-docked at Elephantine (*TAD* A6.2), the state sponsored that ship. Carians were likely some of the merchants operating in the Phoenician shipping industry. So, while Judeans do not appear to have been involved in these state-protected industries, they affected Judeans and the greater society in which they existed.

## Excursus 1: Unnamed *snty* in P.Ryl 9

The unnamed *snty* in P.Ryl 9 resembles what one would expect the deputy—the second-in-command—to perform. I suggest the term derives from Semitic,

54. So far, the only clear examples of merchants in the Egyptian evidence are those who use the Phoenician language. One cannot exclude others, such as Arabs who appear to have been vital in securing the safety of ground transportation. By comparison, consider the small dossier of tablets referring to the Judean Ariḫ family of "royal merchants" (*tamkārī šarri*) in Babylonia (see Alstola, "Judean Merchants," esp. 29–35; Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, chapter 3; and Zaia, "Another Attestation"). Tero Alstola, in particular, has argued that such a family may have been an interlocutor for trade between Judah and Babylonia (Alstola, "Judean Merchants," 47). While different Judean communities were probably aware of each other's existence, there is no evidence that they maintained relations across provincial boundaries in the Persian period.

55. For example, Briant and Descat, "Un registre douanier."

probably Phoenician. Semitic cultures had long used forms of the word "two" as official titles meaning "(the leader's number) two (man)." Akkadian uses $^{lu2}2 = šanû$, while Ugaritic prefers the form *tnn*.[56] In Late Biblical Hebrew—that is, Hebrew dating from the Persian period and later—the related title *mīšnēh* often refers to the vizier of the king/pharaoh (e.g., Gen 41:43; 2 Chr 28:7) but may also refer to the second in command of a state-level administrating officer. In one such instance is found "Yôel son of Zikrî an administrating state official (Heb. PQYD from Aram.) and Yihûdah a son of Hassenû'ah over-the-city, second-in-command (*mīšnēh*)" (Neh 11:9). The title "over-the-city" is an official title.[57] As for the biblical name Hassenû'ah, it has been suggested that one should read "The Sena'ah" instead,[58] though one would expect the gentilic -î ending. The difficulty regarding names and titles in the Ezra-Nehemiah memoirs is beyond the scope of this excursus, but suffice it to say that the structure "sons of" can refer to members of an organization, location, or office, and in Ezra 2:35 "sons of Sena'ah" are a labor team from a location by that name tasked with rebuilding a gate (compare Neh 7:38). The city of Sena'ah is identified as Khirbet el-Beiyudât—called by Eusebius "Migdalsenna" (lit. "Fortified Tower of Senna" from Aram.)—which bears no pre-Persian occupational strata. Sena'ah was later near a location selected for royal investment by Herod's son.[59] It should be noted that among the fragmentary texts from Elephantine is found the reading BḤYL SN'WH (CG no. 53 cc 5); the reading is certain in the new infrared photographs. The syntax and grammar are best translated as "in the troop of Sn'wh/his enemy [. . .]." The name or title Sntw appears in *TAD* B8.5:11, and the proper name Snt' appears on the Phoenician account Moore and Gorea, *CRAIBL 2021*, no. 3 v 4. Additionally, there is a broken string [. . .]⌜S⌝NT' in CG no. 94 cc 2. These attestations represent the Egyptian proper name Sm3-t3.wj, and the variant spelling is owed to the conventions of the two scripts; final /o/ or /u/ is written with ' in Phoenician.

Likewise, I have argued that the legendary Ahiqar is referred to in Aramaic as "(number) two" to king Esarhaddon (Aram. TNYN; 4Q196 frag. 2.7–8).[60] While some words in Aramaic pertaining to the numeral 2 such as ŠNN "pair (of sandals)" use the sibilant form of the Semitic root, it seems unlikely that Aramaic was the source for Demotic *snty*. Babylonian also seems an unlikely source since it is difficult to explain the -ty ending. Instead, Phoenician seems the best candidate for the source of the loanword, and the term could be interpreted as

56. Olmo Lete et al., *Dictionary*, 2:921 (*tn*-II, 3).

57. See 2 Kgs 10:5 and discussion of the related title "one-over-the-palace" in Moore, *Literary Depictions*, 127–28.

58. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 2:761.

59. Fried, *Ezra*, 107.

60. See Moore, *Literary Depictions*, 56.

a feminine construct form of the noun. It should be remembered that numerals behave in a grammatically unusual manner in Northwest Semitic languages, whereby the numeral disagrees with the grammatical gender of the noun to which it refers.

## Book Sections

Part 1, "Finding the Administrator: Scribal Conventions Within an Imperial System," is the first study devoted to Persian-period administrative scribal culture. It aims to show how we can read the documentary sources from Elephantine more effectively. It contains three chapters, which are mostly expository, though they also present minor historical arguments. The first, "Aramaic Administrative Practices in Egypt," introduces the reader to the many types of Aramaic administrative documents that survive from Persian-period Egypt and, by example, recapitulates recent arguments I have made for reinterpreting particular documents, such as memorandum entries or decrees. Chapter 2, "Phoenician Administrators in Egypt in the Achaemenid Period," introduces the reader to the little-known but significant evidence of Phoenician scribal culture and its interactions with Aramaic scribal culture throughout the Egyptian province. Chapter 3, "Aramaic Administrative Practices in the al-Yahudu Documents," shows how a Judean settlement in Mesopotamia adapted to the Persians' introduction of Imperial Aramaic administration into their rural community and serves as a model for thinking about the rural administration of the Judean community in Egypt, for which little evidence survives. This chapter also argues, for the first time, that the rural storehouse (Akk. *kalakku*) in al-Yahudu served as a state-run administrative center and suggests that it was the site from which the unprovenanced al-Yahudu sources derive.

Part 2, "Identifying and Organizing the People," examines the three major documentary genres from Elephantine: contracts, accounts/lists, and letters, and it reinterprets them through the lens of administrative scribal culture. This part provides the evidence for replacing the "mercenary" theory with my "state dependency" theory by solving long held problems in Elephantine studies. Chapter 4, "Contracts and Administrators Whom We Know," presents the notaries named in the contracts, their relationships to the contractual parties and witnesses, the inter- and intra-ethnic labels they use, and the taxation status data found in their documents. This approach provides, for the first time, a comprehensive solution to the century-long problem of changing ethnicity evident in the contractual data by showing how the administration's structure forced internal changes to group and individual identities. Chapter 5, "Accounting for the People According to Administrators Whom We Do Not Know," reassesses

the accounts and lists written by mostly unidentified administrators in order to understand how the community and the system of state-recognized status and labor distributed rations and monitored taxation collection. A number of previously held views about the Judean temple are challenged, and for the first time a practical and administrative solution is offered to explain the complex diversity that scholars of the Bible and religion have long struggled with. This shifts the discourse from viewing the Judean temple and its personnel through a religious lens—for which there is hardly any data—to a temple-economy lens. Chapter 6, "Correspondences and References to Peoples and Groups," studies community- and state-assigned social terminology and makes important observations in each domain. For example, it argues that the community's administrative terminology is based on a family model: terms such as "brother," "son," "father," "mother," and "children" operate as social rather than familial markers. This observation reshapes our view on the community business letters, which are mined in this chapter for the social features they will infer in part 3.

Part 3, "Judean Experiences of the Economy and Empire at Elephantine," focuses on the social networks and economic features that can be teased out of the documentary data. Chapter 7, "The Network of Yahô Temple Administrators According to the Ostraca," looks at the growing number of presently nearly 350 Aramaic ostraca, many of which I and others have recently published, to build a social network of Yahô temple administrators and the commodities or tasks they were associated with. This paints vignettes of four key administrators, whom I describe as the core team, as well as their extended network and interactions with the Khnum temple personnel. Chapter 8, "Local and Imperial Dynamics of the Production Process and Use of Commodities," describes the *chaîne opératoire* of commodities and goods that were farmed or acquired by the Judean temple personnel using community lands or that were issued to the community due to their status as state dependents. The chapter argues that the surviving ostraca mostly record the uses of temple resources to supply the active Judean labor teams off island. It also proposes that the Yahô temple was engaged in the fashion industry as part of the Persians' colonial program of inducing a cultural revolution. The final chapter 9, "Taxation and the Judean Community's Place in the Imperial Program," focuses on the system of taxation in the Egyptian province. The chapter attempts to describe the continuity between the higher-level administrative documents from Saqqara and the community-level documents from Elephantine.

## Excursus 2: Preliminary Remarks on the Egyptian Administration

Before moving into the research on administrators working in Aramaic or Phoenician, I will remark on what looks, at first glance, to be an oversight in this

study. Absent in this discussion is a detailed assessment of Egyptian administrative scribal conventions or administrative schooling traditions. The reason for this is simple: little evidence indicates that Demotic Egyptian was used at Elephantine or other major centers in the fifth century BCE during the Persian period. A small corpus of a few hundred administrative Demotic ostraca is known from Ain Manawir in the Kharga Oasis.[61] Its existence demonstrates that Demotic continued during the period as an administrative language in small communities outside of the major metropolitan centers of the Nile Delta, Thebes, and Syene/Elephantine.

In fact, according to Jan Moje's recent survey of Demotic Egyptian manuscripts from Persian-period Elephantine, only eighteen documents use the Demotic script and language from the site.[62] Of those identified by Moje, only documents written prior to the ascension of Xerxes are written completely in Demotic, without also using the Aramaic script, except one (Pap. Vindob. D 10151).[63] Prior to Xerxes, Demotic was recognized as a language in which the Egyptians could communicate with the Persian imperial administration. The Farandata correspondences (493–92 BCE) from Elephantine as well as possibly the Treasurer's Letter from Saqqara (Pap. Ashmolean 1984.87, ca. 521 BCE)[64] are excellent examples of the early imposition of Aramaic administrative practices on Egypt in a period in which the documents could be translated into the province's native language. In addition to the Farandata correspondences one finds from Elephantine an unpublished letter regarding an order of exchange of *rtm*-juice for emmer and palm (Pap. Ber. P. 23584);[65] a tax payment to the Persians by a Khnum *wab*-priest (Pap. Ber. P. 13582);[66] and a report of a large

61. See Agut-Labordère, "Administrating Egypt."

62. Moje, "References to Persians." It is unclear if the newly discussed K 11091, Niv. 107,63 are Demotic papyri from the Persian period (Krekeler, *Elephantine XXI*, 110).

63. For translation, see Martin in Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, no. C29.

64. Published in Vittmann, "Two Administrative Letters." If the seal on the letter is an indication of the name of the treasurer issuing the statement in the letter, then his name was Psamtjek. Vittmann notes (p. 439) that the introductory formula of Pap. Ashmolean 1984.87 is only comparable to the Farandata correspondences. The formula "PN says thus" is prevalent in authoritative (or in the case of the Darius Inscription pseudo-authoritative) Aramaic government documents from the Persian period.

65. The text of this document is forthcoming by Karl-Theodor Zauzich, posthumously, but photographs are found here: https://elephantine.smb.museum/objects/object.php?o=10051I. This document is one of approximately forty-three newly edited sources (https://elephantine.smb.museum/project/work.php?w=99WKBPK4). So far, this is the only one that has been identified as having an illegible Aramaic postal note on the end of the address line. The other documents may or may not date to the Persian period. The king's eponym is not included, but the date 14.v.30 is written on the last line of the recto, and Zauzich dates the manuscript to 492 BCE (Dar I), that is, the time of the Farandata correspondences. The official Ravaka named in the Demotic document is found in Aramaic on *TAD* B5.1, which is internally dated to 495 BCE (= Dar 27).

66. For translation, see Martin in Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, no. C35.

commodity shipment of grain, which was overseen by Persian administrators (Pap. Loeb 1 from 486 BCE).[67] These illustrate that Aramaic was translated into Demotic when applicable and, by implication, Demotic could be translated into Aramaic. From Xerxes onward, however, the Demotic writing from Persian-period Elephantine is limited: (1) A legal dispute over Egyptian priestly stipends survives (aforementioned Pap. Vindob. D 10151). This dispute from 460 BCE was based on the history of the stipend's ownership, which was recorded in Demotic fifty years earlier in papyrus (Pap. Vindob. D 10150[68] and D 10152+10153+[frg.] from 510 BCE). Although the Persians would have been interested in the results of such disputes, the proceedings relied on older Demotic documentation. Presumably, also the arbitration of the updated circumstances was conducted in Demotic and probably before the priests themselves rather than before state officials. Thus, the new contract was also drafted in Demotic. It is unclear whether the Persian authorities would have recognized the contract should a dispute over the stipend have been taken to them. (2) A document dated to Artaxerxes contains an Aramaic docket on the verso, which identifies it in contractual jargon as an oath document (*TAD* B7.4). It served specific social and legal purposes during a multicultural legal dispute between families of Judean/Arameans and Egyptians. (3) Lastly, from signatures and administrative notes, it is clear that some were more comfortable writing in Demotic than in Aramaic in the last half of the fifth century, but at least in two cases they were Egyptians in charge of a local Egyptian labor force.[69] These examples, along with a signature in Demotic on an Aramaic contract dealing with local Egyptian matters (*TAD* D2.25), indicate that a relatively small number of Egyptians who were not comfortably literate in Aramaic interacted with the Persian Aramaic administration.[70] *TAD* D2.25 illustrates how disputes among Egyptians were

67. For translation, see Martin in Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, no. C4.

68. For translation, see Martin in Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, no. C28.

69. Both are provincial decrees (Aram. ṬʿM). The first, *TAD* A6.2, is clear and contains the Demotic signature of an Egyptian, presumably a foreman, and an administrative note, "the baris ship" (trans. Moje), written in a different hand. The second, *NAP* no. 1.1.11, is a fragment that on material and textual grounds has been identified as a decree. Where one finds the administrative note "the baris ship" on the other decree, here one finds in Demotic "copy" (trans. Moje). The wooden tag CG no. E3 (discussed below) was also written in administrative Demotic, probably at Syene.

70. Although not systematically studied, there appears to be a development in the way in which the Achaemenid kings are represented in Demotic royal epigraphic evidence (see Westenholz and Stolper, "Stone Jar with Inscriptions," 9–10). Such changes are thought to stem from the Egyptian revolts during the accession of Xerxes; see Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, esp. 517, 525, 543, and 545–47; also see Betlyon, "Egypt and Phoenicia," 462–65. Demotic is also know from two sherds at Persepolis. There too the Demotic is so terse that it must have been used for a very specific administrative purpose among those who could read Demotic. Similarly, Azzoni et al., "Demotic Tablet or Two," 6.

arbitrated in Aramaic—at least those recognized by the Persian authorities. Reference to Egyptians interacting with the Persian authorities (after Xerxes) are known from the Aramaic sources, but it seems that these Egyptians interacted mostly in Aramaic. This means that we find Egyptian administrators writing Aramaic (see discussion in part 2). Egyptian content in Aramaic texts was once thought "remarkable"—as, for instance, Cowley stated concerning CIS II no. 147 (= *TAD* C3.19)[71]—but the Saqqara Aramaic data and the Elephantine Egyptian data now show that Egyptians writing in Aramaic in the Persian period was not the exception but the rule. In the Nile Valley, Demotic was relegated to internal community matters or to professional sectors run mostly by Egyptians.

Further support for this view comes from Saqqara (i.e., Memphis), where in recent decades administrative fragments from the Persian period were discovered in a tomb shaft. One of these fragments is unique in that it presents Demotic and Aramaic written interlinearly on the same manuscript.[72] The fragments represent the second known batch of Aramaic sources from Saqqara with Demotic writing on them, bringing the total known fragmentary manuscripts to five.[73] The editors of the fragments noted that their existence attests to the learning of Demotic epistolary and judicial formulas in the period. From my perspective, the fragments are too broken to describe the direction of transmission of scribal knowledge, whether Demotic to Aramaic or Aramaic to Demotic. Nonetheless, the texts illustrate that a shared scribal tradition did exist, particularly at the prince's bureau, as one would expect—a tradition to which the Elephantine community documents hardly attest. One of the Demotic-Aramaic fragments is of particular interest. It reads:

Pap. dém.-aram. LSA 03/143-a[74]
Recto
Aram. 1. . . .
Dem. 1. . . .
Aram. 2. [. . .]and his colleagues the judges and the scribes of the province [. . .]

71. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, 184.

72. Lemaire and Chauveau, "Nouveaux textes," fragment a.

73. *ATNS* notes that four Aramaic texts also include Demotic writing on the side opposite that of the Aramaic, nos. 48b, 57b, 127b, and 167a (see *ATNS*, 3n1), but Segal neither edited the Demotic nor published photographs of it. While *ATNS* notes that the majority of the papyri found with the Aramaic sources Segal edited were Demotic, the stratigraphy of the site is unclear, comprising a date range from the sixth century BCE to the first century CE. Since Ptolemaic and later Egyptian sites yield many administrative Demotic sources, it is possible that most of the Demotic papyri to which *ATNS* refers also date to the late fourth century BCE and after. To my knowledge the Demotic sources were never published.

74. The Aramaic translation generally follows Lemaire's French edition, while the Demotic is simply my translation of Chauveau's French translation.

Dem. 2. I have finished [your?] blessings (?) . . .
Aram. 3. [. . .]⌜in the province of Pmb[◦(◦)]t (of) officials⌝[. . .]
Dem. 3. The . . .
Aram. 4. [. . . PN-]◦š the king, just as [a decree] of [. . .] was set [. . .]
Dem. 4. O may Ra prolong [the length of his life]
Aram. 5. . . .
Verso
Dem. 1. Year 1, month of [. . . of Pharaoh]
Dem. 2. Arta \life, prosperity, health/ [. . .]
Dem. 3. The chancellor Peftjaou[. . .]
Dem. 4. The chancellor Péou(?)tjaoukhons [. . .]
Dem. 5. The chancellor [Pefjtjaoukhons [. . .]

André Lemaire rightly estimated that the language of the document resembles a legal decision. Unfortunately, the edition does not indicate the direction of the papyrus's fibers in relation to the direction of the writing, but from the photographs it seems that the recto contains a sheet-join and the text runs parallel to the fibers on the recto, then perpendicular to them on the verso. As the extensive studies on Aramaic papyrology have shown, the orientation of the papyrus for writing played a crucial role in the training of the Aramaic administrator.[75] It is important to note that this manuscript was written parallel to the recto's fibers, then flipped bottom-to-top, and a composition was written on the verso. If this document was a "legal decision," as Lemaire concluded, then this would be the only such document to have been formatted this way. While it is possible that the Aramaic administrators of Lower Egypt had different formatting practices than those of Upper Egypt, it seems more likely that this is an example of a scribal exercise, as Michel Chauveau convincingly argues for the Demotic text on the document. One may assume then that this is formatted on the recto parallel to the fibers and on the verso perpendicular to the fibers to indicate to a reader that this is certainly not an official document. Chauveau sees the Demotic text on the verso as a scribal exercise of contract drafting, but he identifies the interlinear Demotic notes on the recto as typical epistolary formula. The location of the Demotic formula on the recto does not seem to relate clearly to the Aramaic, and he rules out the possibility that the Demotic interlinear comments are notes that aid translation. That said, it is reasonable to assume that the recto is an Aramaic model decree with Demotic annotations. The verso is the continuation of the model and presents the signatory formatting, which is unique to Aramaic decrees. It is noteworthy that the Persian Aramaic decree, which is a judicial decision by a bureau and formatted as a special type of letter, cites

75. *NAP*, pp. 17–29. Note the references to the many earlier studies by Porten therein.

previous petitions as a feature of its format. Thus, the Demotic interlinear notes could be epistolary labels for the sections of the Aramaic text. Unfortunately, the Aramaic is too fragmentary to confirm this hypothesis, but it helps make sense of the Demotic notations. The Demotic references to "chancellors" (Dem. *mr-ḫtm*) on the verso are further indication that this may be a scribal exercise in Aramaic decree writing. Every Aramaic decree known must indicate both the chancellor (Aram. BʿLṬʿM) and the scribe (Aram. SPR) under whose authority the decree's legal decision is to be enacted. In some cases two individuals hold these titles, while in other cases one person bears both titles. Regardless, both titles always appear at the end of the Aramaic decree.[76] Three people holding these titles, however, would be unusual. On this point, it is worth noting that in Pap. Ashmolean 1984.87 Günter Vittmann translated the same Demotic phrase as "treasurer," and he supplies a long discussion of the meaning of the term.[77] Treasurers in Aramaic may fall within two categories of known Aramaic officials, the SPR or the HMRKR, the former is a native Northwest Semitic title and the latter an Iranian loanword into Aramaic in the Persian period. Generally speaking, institutions in the Persian period had one SPR "Scribe/Secretary" but could have many HMRKR, "accountant(s)."[78] As the Aršama decree from Elephantine *TAD* 6.2 indicates, depending on the context of the judicial decision, institutional players of both types may be involved in the processing and fulfillment of a decree, and each of those individuals would sign the decree on the verso. These individuals were separate from the chancellor or scribe under whose authority the decree was enacted. The names of treasurers that appear on the back of Pap. dém.-aram. LSA 03/143-a may be an exercise in the signatory list of institutional officials who would have signed off on a decree.[79] Furthermore, as many of the surviving Aramaic decrees indicate, one of the leading signatories would sign *and date* the document, in the same way as is found on the verso of Pap. dém.-aram. LSA 03/143-a.

Lemaire and Chauveau could not overstate the remarkable value of this little fragment. It stands as the best and only example of the type of training that Demotic administrators had in the process of becoming Aramaic administrators. It is worth further emphasizing that this process occurs at a high level of education, after an individual had already learned Demotic accounting. This is not a document for a child or young student in training.

As for the date of this exercise, unfortunately, the name of the king in the Aramaic text is broken and could be either Darius, Xerxes, or Artaxerxes.[80]

76. Moore, "Persian Administrative Process," 51–52.
77. Vittmann, "Two Administrative Letters."
78. Moore, *Literary Depictions*, 125–28.
79. Moore, "Persian Administrative Process," 56–58.
80. Curiously, the edition's discussion leaves out the possibility of restoring Xerxes.

The Demotic on the verso refers to Arta, which is a short form of Artaxerxes. Chauveau hesitantly chose to date the document to Artaxerxes II (404 BCE). But the name of the king may simply be fictitious in the Aramaic (or even in the Demotic) because this is a scribal exercise.[81] If my theory above is correct, then Demotic decrees would not have been legally binding documents after the reign of Xerxes, and this document would provide good evidence that local Demotic administrators were tasked with learning high-level administrative Aramaic, perhaps because the administration required more facility in Aramaic after Xerxes's reform and into the period of Artaxerxes II.

Lastly, it is worth noting that a fragmentary Aramaic ostracon missive (CG no. 9 + 23 = HL no. J1) from Elephantine appears to refer to Egyptians writing basic lists of names. The relevant lines read:

CG no. 9 + 23 (= HL no. J1) cc 1–4[82]
cc 1. [. . .]Now, go to Peṭemnapî
cc 2. [. . .]son of Ḥarûḏ the documents of
cc 3. [. . .]they [shall] write you (m.s.) the names of
cc 4. [. . .]⌜M⌝Y we wrote

Only here is Peṭemnapî mentioned in the corpus. Later in the missive the Judean lead courier Natan is addressed (cv 3). Here we seem to have an Egyptian administrator referred to in a Judean document with regard to a mutual administrative task. It is quite likely that an interaction between an Egyptian foreman Peṭemnapî and the Yahô temple administration prompted a payment related to the Judean storehouse and this transaction would have been fulfilled in Aramaic documentation. One can even envision a short name list like *NAP* no. 2.2.2 having been composed in such a circumstance (see part 2, chapter 6).

81. I am inclined to date the document between 465 and 404 BCE under Artaxerxes II, but we cannot rule out the possibility that as the Egyptians reinstituted the use of administrative Demotic in the fourth century BCE, such a document was used or even written.

82. The remaining text is frustratingly difficult. It continues: "[. . .]◦Y [. . .]◦L which he saw. If he wrote them[. . .] Yigdal. Indeed, I/you/she commanded [. . .] Greetings Nathan. N⌜o⌝[w, . . .] which ⌜I/you/she⌝ \ga/ve[. . .] in the house[. . .] this[. . .] 2[. . .]" (cc 5–cv 7).

PART I

# Finding the Administrator: Scribal Conventions Within an Imperial System

CHAPTER I

# Aramaic Administrative Practices in Egypt

THIS CHAPTER SURVEYS the documentary text types that are attested in the corpus of Aramaic sources known from Persian-period Egypt. The three primary text types include correspondences, contracts, and administrative record rolls in addition to administrative labels, tags, and writing boards or palettes.[1] The following sections discuss the material, formatting, and function of each text type or administrative genre. The objective is to deduce the scribal habits that were used to create the documents. The chapter ends with a short discussion of the two educational levels to which the documents allude: lower-level administrators, who received a limited amount of scribal training to function in their professional domain, and the functional accountant, who was trained in all domains of administrative writing.[2]

## Correspondences

Ancient Aramaic administrators understood that correspondences were special types of documents and, therefore, ascribed an emic administrative genre classification for letters (Aram. ʾGRH). They also identified a subtype of administrative letter, the provincial decree (Aram. ṬʿM).[3] The content of all surviving

1. I have excluded the one Aramaic inscription known from Elephantine (*TAD* D17.1) as well as any (suspected) graffiti.

2. Notable mention goes to Gzella, "Scribal Habit," which has valuable observations on the Achaemenid Aramaic administration. The study is organized by abstract concepts, including "the intellectual context of Achaemenid Aramaic epistolography," "control, directive style, and motivational rhetoric," and "educational underpinnings of the ideal of the loyal clerk." The study lacks engagement with the main works on the matter, notably those by Folmer, Lemaire, Porten, and Tuplin cited herein as well as the insightful study by Ingo Kottsieper, "Briefe als Rechtsurkunden" (engaged in Moore, "Persian Administrative Process").

3. In the Persian-period evidence from Elephantine and Saqqara, each instance of the term ṬʿM is best understood as a reference to a physical document. The same holds for the Bactrian evidence. Despite this, recent dictionaries continue to misunderstand the term (Nebe, *ThWAT* 9:325–27).

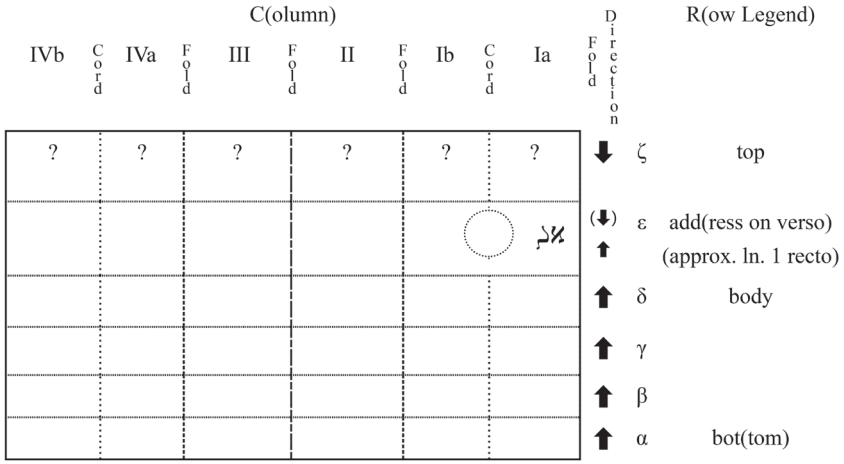



FIGURE 2. Heuristic map of the physical features of a letter package (*NAP*, p. 24).

correspondences is administrative; so far, no personal letters of an intimate nature that articulate matters of interpersonal relationships have been found, such as "Dear John" letters, though occasional intimate remarks accompany the administrative content of some papyrus or leather letters, and interpersonal professional feelings are sometimes expressed in the ostraca missives. All written correspondence between parties survives in Aramaic on three types of writing media in Egypt: papyrus, leather, and ostraca. Each writing medium tells us something unique about the sociohistorical circumstances in which the documents were composed and read.

The papyrus correspondences from Persian-period Egypt have been collected and edited in *TAD* volumes A and D (nos. D1.1 and perhaps D4.1) and those published since 1999 in *NAP* nos. 1.1 and perhaps 1.3.[4] Writers who composed these documents held to fairly consistent scribal conventions. There is no reason to assume that these conventions were taught to the writers in a single localized place, but the curriculum must have been generally standardized across the learning centers. Aramaic papyrus letters were written on the recto of the papyrus perpendicular to the recto's fibers, and if continued onto the verso, the papyrus was turned bottom-to-top so that the writing on the verso runs parallel to the papyrus's fibers (fig. 2).

4. Additionally, one unpublished opisthograph—likely a letter—is known from the Brooklyn Museum (47.218.44 [three fragments that join]). It reads, "{[. . .]ʿPRṬ[◦]◦ | [. . .]ʿWRṬ[◦]◦} / [. . .]◦M / [. . .] PNTHʾ / [. . .]barley / [. . .]H he shall do / [. . .]saying, "we built/it is built" / [. . .]look ⌜t⌝o / [. . .] Y buy/he sold."

The opistographic letters—that is, those written on the recto and verso—suggest that the writer had a fixed papyrus size for composing the document. This may be due to either having cut the papyrus from a roll prior to writing or to having used a leftover or previously used papyrus sheet. In fact, many of the Aramaic papyrus letters are palimpsests, that is, they had been used at least once previously and the original composition erased. That so many papyrus letters were palimpsests indicates that writers were taught to preserve papyrus when possible. The writers needed to choose their words carefully so that the correspondence would fit on the precut sheet, and therefore it was incumbent on the writer to anticipate word choice and syntax within a limited compositional area. Additionally, the writer needed to leave approximately one or two lines' worth of text blank on the verso in anticipation of how it was to be folded and addressed. Once the letter's content was written, the papyrus was then turned back to the recto and folded bottom-to-top in narrow papyrus rows, normally between 1 and 2.5 cm tall. The folding continued until one or two papyrus rows were left. In many cases, the top of the letter was then folded down one row of papyrus, then again, to form a small narrow package, with the blank portion of the verso exposed. Sometimes the writers of letters would only fold the final narrow row of papyrus downward. In either case, the writer would then address the letter in a standardized way, fold the narrow package in half, bind it with cord near the end opposite the fold, pack clay onto the cord to form a bulla, then stamp the bulla with a stamp seal.

The standardized formatting, folding, and addressing of the papyrus letters points to an imperial curriculum within a single administrative scribal tradition. The Aramaic leather correspondences support this view because they exhibit the same physical traits as the papyrus letters. A collection of around twenty-six letters written on leather survive from Egypt, and all together constitute the majority of a larger dossier of material associated with Aršama the Persian prince.[5] It has long been known that Aršama's bureau sent the leather correspondences from somewhere in the east to Egypt, and recent research has identified the exact seal used on seven of the surviving bullae in Egypt as having also been used on two Elamite documents found at Persepolis.[6] The seal itself was an heirloom in the eastern bureau of Aršama during the fifth century BCE; it was part of a long-standing tradition of scribal activity. Here I use "bureau" without a geographical locator as a metonym to represent the various offices that must have existed on Aršama's royal estates across the empire, which are known from the Aramaic documents. The seal itself was used previously by Aršama son of Darius and by a royal woman named Ṛtastūnā between 509 and 493 BCE, this former Aršama may have been a forebear of Aršama who ruled Egypt in the late fifth-century

5. Tuplin, "Aršāma: Prince and Satrap," 3–31.
6. Garrison and Henkelman, "Seal of Prince Aršāma," 50.

Egyptian evidence.[7] It seems now reasonable to assume that at least some of the Aršama leather correspondences were written in Persepolis by an imperial bureau that maintained a scribal tradition by using the same seal. It is important to emphasize that the seal's/bulla's impression bears an Aramaic rather than an old Persian or Elamite inscription and reads "Sea[l of ʾA]rša[m] / Son of the House."[8]

The formatting of the address line of papyrus and leather correspondences was remarkably consistent. It began with either ʿL or ʾL, both meaning "to." The latter of these was a historic usage from a linguistic point of view, as Margaretha Folmer has rightly observed,[9] but aside from this linguistic datum it can be deduced that such minor differences allude to nuance and variation within the imperial curriculum. Some educational traditions appear to have taught writers to use the historical ʾL in the address line while others promoted the more contemporaneous diction, ʿL. After the preposition "to," the writer left a large word break where he anticipated the cord and seal to sit once the letter was bound. Following this large space, the text continues with the addressee's name, which may be either only a first name, a first name and a patronymic, or a name and title. The addressee's name is then followed by MN, "from," and the sender's name and sometimes a title. If the sender is clearly of a higher class than the addressee, the address may begin with MN, "from," followed by the seal's space, then continued with "to (addressee)." The variation of the address formulas points to the varying levels of formality expected for the social exchange between a sender and an addressee, as others have noted, but it also alludes to the variation within an imperial administrative curriculum.

The consistency of Aramaic scribal practices regarding correspondences is evident throughout the Persian period and from across the whole empire. These consistent folding and sealing practices are found also on the unprovenanced leather correspondences from Bactria, which date to the end of the Persian Empire and into the reign of Alexander. Among the three collections of letters—the Aršama leather correspondences, the Egyptian papyrus correspondences, and the Bactrian leather correspondences—is found a subgenre of the letter, the provincial decree (a ṬʿM-document). I have argued elsewhere that the decrees illustrate the remarkable consistency of the Persian-period Aramaic scribal practice over nearly two centuries.[10] This evidence can now be combined

7. Garrison and Henkelman, "Seal of Prince Aršāma," 50, 53. The seal may have been carved around the end of the sixth century BCE (74).

8. Garrison and Henkelman, "Seal of Prince Aršāma," 66.

9. Folmer, *The Aramaic Language*, 621.

10. Formal correspondence occurred in the form of petitions, intended to invoke a provincial decree (ṬʿM-document); such decrees are the only identifiable subgenre of letters (Aram. ʾRGH) used by the Aramaic administrators. For a discussion of the administrative process of writing and issuing decrees, see Moore, "Persian Administrative Process"; Moore, "'Who Gave You a

with the evidence that a single seal was used across administrative epochs to demonstrate the length and great reach of a standardized scribal educational tradition across the imperial administration.

This scribal educational tradition needed a vehicle to connect the various learning centers throughout the empire, and the Achaemenid postal system appears to have been that vehicle.[11] The Achaemenids used an efficient imperial postal service, on which Herodotus famously remarked: "The whole idea is a Persian invention, and works like this: riders are stationed along the road, equal in number to the number of days the journey takes—a man and a horse for each day. Nothing stops these couriers from covering their allotted stage in the quickest possible time—neither snow, rain, heat, nor darkness" (8.98).[12] The Persian postal system was a development of the one that the Neo-Assyrians had already put in place centuries earlier.[13] While the early Neo-Assyrian postal system certainly transferred cuneiform documentation, I would argue that it favored Aramaic over cuneiform languages for pragmatic reasons: Aramaic documents are lighter, easier to transport, and their content is more secure when folded and sealed. I suspect that it was this postal service that contributed in some way to the ability of the Aramaic administration to maintain imperial standards, which, after continuing through the Neo-Babylonian period, the Achamenids fine-tuned. The end of the address on many of the Aršama decrees contains Aramaic or Demotic postal notes. This postal note-writing practice appears to have been in place half a century or more earlier, according to the Aramaic note on the Demotic document from the early Persian period (Pap. Ber. P. 23584).[14] The function of these notes is not entirely clear but may have helped to direct the letters to the correct bureau, which would read and process them. It is clear, however, that administrative instructions were sent through this system and funneled down through the institutions, and it stands to reason that the postal system was a vehicle for instructions regarding the imperial administrative educational standards and their propagation.

In general terms, the difference between papyrus and leather is mostly a geographical difference: papyrus was used in Egypt and the Mediterranean, while leather was used as an Aramaic writing medium in Mesopotamia and Persia.[15] Certainly, general educational traditions based on writing media can

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Decree.'" To my study should be added the Akkadian paraphrastic translations of Aramaic decrees in MacGinnis, "Judgment of Darius the King."

11. The postal system operated on the network of roads that the empire made and maintained. See Briant, "From the Indus"; Colburn, "Connectivity and Communication."

12. Translation according to Sélincourt, *Herodotus*.

13. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 928.

14. See introduction, note 65.

15. In fact, the Akkadian word *šipirtu*, "letter," mostly bore the determinative sign IM, which means "clay object," but when referring to an Aramaic document, the determinative KUŠ, which means "leather object," was used (*CAD* Š3 66).

be deduced, such as the fact that the Aršama leather collection, and so too the Late Persian Bactrian leather collection, exhibits a high frequency of Iranian loan words in Aramaic where a general Semitic term could have been used.[16] That said, the lack of leather documents at Elephantine may be due in part to the value of leather as a recyclable resource. While Elephantine was not a center of leather production, a number of leather artifacts survive from the site, and the documentation suggests that leather, as a raw material, was stored on island (see chapter 8), so it stands to reason that writers on island had access to leather. Leather, however, is readily recyclable, and it could prove functional for a variety of applications after it had served as a writing medium. One leather object from Persian-period Elephantine contains writing and even shows signs of reuse (a palimpsest) (*TAD* D6.1–2). It is written in a well-trained Imperial Aramaic hand, but it remains cryptic. The language is now thought to be Egyptian in Aramaic script, but this is not definitive.[17]

The third type of correspondence is the ostracon missive. Ostraca differ from jar/vessel labels in that they are sherds of pottery that were repurposed for writing. I prefer to refer to Aramaic messages on ostraca as "missives" in order to distinguish them from papyrus and leather letters, which are typically more formal, generally convey more (precise) information, and travel a greater distance.[18] Elephantine and Syene have yielded a large number of ostraca, and in fact, the majority of them are formatted as missives, though some administrative lists and a few aberrant texts are also known from the ostraca corpus. These missives stand in stark contrast to the large collections of Greek and Egyptian ostraca from Elephantine and Syene, which are mostly tax receipts and date to the Ptolemaic and later periods. Apart from a few of the Aramaic missives, the ostraca have been generally ignored by scholarship. Only recently has there been an attempt to study their linguistic formulae and features in relation to their media,[19] and the vast majority of them has been overlooked in historical studies.[20]

16. Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," 42.

17. Vittmann, "Arameans in Egypt," 263; Vittmann, *Ägypten und die Fremden*, 116–19. Vittmann interprets the fragmentary Egyptian words and names he sees as a divination text, but one wonders whether a reassessment of the document through the sociohistorical lens of the island's leather industry might produce a different assessment, especially in view of the proposal in this book that Egyptians operated in Aramaic.

18. The term "letter" has long been used for the papyrus and leather correspondences. I realize that missives are sometimes characterized by formality, which we do not generally encounter in the ostraca correspondences, but in modern American English, "missive" sometimes refers to short messages conveying orders. The terms "memo" or "memorandum" are entirely misleading (see discussion of memoranda below), and "epistle" is far too formal. The term "note" is too vague.

19. Folmer, "Hi Aḥuṭab"; Schwiderski, "Epistolographische Elemente."

20. The vast majority of them was published in 2006 in Lozachmeur, *La collection*, and a smaller, yet significant, collection in 2013 in Röllig, *SDAIK* 36; but studies such as Azzoni, *Private Lives of Women* (2013); Nutkowicz, *Destins de femmes* (2015); Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism*

The content of the ostraca missives varies, but as Lemaire has shown, they tend to deal mostly with aspects of daily life.[21] Specifically, they report on or request the shipment of commodities across the river. In this sense, the genre of missives/correspondences is somewhat deceptive because, in fact, many of the missives are better classified as promissory notes, receipts, or orders structured as correspondences. With rare exceptions the missives do not include the names of the sender(s), and many times a single ostracon can contain multiple short messages on different subjects—even to different addressees—divided by the topical marker spelled K$^{\text{ʾ}}$N, K$^{\text{ʿ}}$NT, or K$^{\text{ʿ}}$T, "now." In his study on Aramaic paleography, Joseph Naveh contrived a narrative in which he saw "illiterate" and "simple persons" (pp. 38–39)—and for him this means unsophisticated/unintelligent folk—employing the services of a scribe at the "wharf of Syene."[22] He writes, "They dictated the contents, and the scribe prepared the messages, which were turned over to the crew of the ferry for dispatch to the island." Unbelievably, he provides no paleographic analysis of the ostraca but concludes that most of them were written by a single person in the first quarter of the fifth century BCE.[23] This is why he imagines a single scribe working at Syene. The reality may be very different. While mainstream scholarship has accepted Naveh's unfounded idea,[24] neither challenges to it nor better approaches have been proposed.[25] Naveh provided no clear indication in his study that he could distinguish effectively between hands. This is exceptionally difficult if educational traditions in the empire sought to standardize the script for administrative purposes, as it seems to have been the case (see "Chancellery Script," chapter 2). That is to say, educational traditions may be identified by paleographic features, but the dataset is too fragmentary to identify unnamed individuals, much less the time that those individuals were writing within the fifth century BCE.

That said, a few of Naveh's ideas, which he appears to have adopted from André Dupont-Sommer, are reasonable deductions. Notably, the ostraca missives were sent by people who knew each other.[26] The missives' implied senders are evidence of this. The missives were sent only a short distance. It is impractical to carry heavy and rigid ostraca long distances, when papyrus is available

(2016); and Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt* (2020) are missing references to one or both of these important collections, which contain texts relevant to the arguments made in those studies.

21. Lemaire, "Judean Identity."

22. Naveh, *Development of the Aramaic Script*, 4.

23. Naveh, *Development of the Aramaic Script*, 37.

24. Van der Toorn, *Becoming Diaspora Jews*, states Naveh's dating as fact and *TAD* appears to also rely on it.

25. Lozachmeur, *La collection*, 1:145–68 challenges Naveh's view, and Van der Kooij, "Artifactual Aspects," proposed a much more rigorous and scientific approach to paleography.

26. Naveh, *Development of the Aramaic Script*, 39n88.

(even though papyrus is more expensive). The missives refer to very short periods of time, often insisting that the addressee fulfill a task MḤR "tomorrow" or that something occurred ʾTML "yesterday."[27] This datum is important because it suggests that missives were not intended to be stored or kept long-term. This is further supported by the fact that many of the missives are overwritten texts on palimpsests. The ostraca missives represent, by far, the largest number of Aramaic texts of a single genre to survive from Elephantine and Syene, and we must assume that those that survive represent only a small fraction of the many messages that were sent daily across the Nile. The security of the ostraca missives will be taken up in part 3, but I assume that the missives were often packed in sealed packages or vessels, when the content of the message was intended to be privately read. To be sure, aberrant usages of the criteria discussed above appear, but rarely.

## Contracts

Aramaic contracts from Egypt were the most authoritative legal documents that an individual person acting outside of a high office could possess. They survive only on new and high-quality papyrus, and their content was written on the papyrus's recto, perpendicular to the fibers. Those available before 1999 have been collected and published in *TAD* volumes B and D (D2 and perhaps D4) and those after 1999 in *NAP* nos. 1.2 and perhaps 1.3. Similar to today, trained Aramaic administrators would write contracts using templates as structuring aids.[28] These writers are never given a title, but I refer to them as "notaries" when serving in the capacity of a contract writer. While female administrators were not rare, all known notaries were male (so too were the witnesses who signed the contracts). When writing a contract, the writer would begin the composition on a roll and not cut the document from the roll until he had finished. Ideally, he would leave room at the end for the witnesses to sign the document, but on occasion witnesses appear on the verso, perhaps because the writer had come to the end of a blank roll. No contract exhibits evidence of repairs as doing so may have voided the document's content and perhaps left the repairer open to charges of perjury. Contracts were folded much like letters: recto on the inside,

27. So too Lemaire, "Ostraca of Elephantine," 45.

28. Various scribal features point to the use of templates, whether previously written contracts used as models or actual mock contracts available to a notary. For example, the use of MNKM (m.p.) for the singular on *TAD* B2.10:4 indicates the notary was copying from a different manuscript. This was written by Maʿûzyah, whose contracts exhibit many such grammatical inaccuracies that suggest copying the structure from another document while trying to compose a new one. Perhaps the best example of this is the "false start" on B3.12 (see *NAP*, p. 22n81).

from bottom-to-top, and into a narrow package. They were then inscribed with a legal genre marker beginning "Document of [genre] [contracting parties]."[29] A similar system of Aramaic genre labels is attested in Mesopotamia in the epigraphs written on cuneiform legal documents, but the Mesopotamian evidence is not nearly as systematically organized as the Egyptian contractual evidence. After the contract document had been written on the package, the papyrus was folded into thirds, bound, and sealed. This formatting distinguishes contracts from letters so that a trained administrator could determine the type of document simply by glancing at how it was folded.

The content of the contracts is highly formulaic and has been the subject of numerous studies, so these details will not be rehashed here. Most studies, however, work on the legal formula from the point of view of legal theory. I wish to remark, instead, that the highly formulaic nature of contracts written by a variety of individuals—who were probably not educated in the same institutions, perhaps not even the same province!—suggests that templates were used by the notaries when composing the contracts. To be sure the Demotic legal code of Hermopolis West (a.k.a. the Legal Code of Hermopolis) and the *Zivilprozessordnung* show an effort to compile legal material for guidance, but these documents exhibit legal principles rather than administrative templates that should be followed.[30] While witnesses in court proceedings or contract arbitration and writing were clearly literate, as indicated by the fact that they sign the contracts with their own hands, the quality of their handwriting varies from well-trained imperial penmanship (i.e., the chancellery script) to less elegant hands. That is to say, while administrators may have also been trained to engage in legal activity beyond merely writing up the contracts, not all those engaged in legal activity were trained to the same degree in the imperial administrative school traditions.

This observation may help explain why contract formulas differ across regions. For example, a second smaller and slightly later corpus of contracts survives from late Persian-period Samaria. These are known as the Wadi Daliyeh Samaria Papyri (WDSP). While the Aramaic legal papyri from Egypt and the WDSP share legal concepts and principles, they diverge surprisingly in formula and administrative handling. For instance, folding and sealing practices of the WDSP differ greatly from the legal papyri known from Egypt. Moreover, from the content of the formulas themselves it seems quite obvious that the two regions used different templates, which were probably derived from local common law proceedings. That said, both sets of documents were written in the style of the imperial script, such that an Aramaic writer in Egypt would have had no

29. For a list of all attested genres, see *NAP*, pp. 28–29.
30. See Manning, "Egypt: Demotic Law," 821, and references therein.

problem reading the WDSP or vice versa. From an imperial administrative perspective it can be said that on one hand writers of the two corpora were trained in an imperial curriculum with similar vocabulary and orthography, syntax, and letter formation. But on the other hand, the genre of the administrative legal documents was determined by local schooling traditions in conjunction with native or regional judicial professionals (judges, priests, witnesses, etc.).[31]

Returning to the evidence from Egypt, it is important to note that formatting, folding, signing, and sealing practices of the Elephantine contracts generally remained consistent over the course of nearly a century. Assuming the assigned dates of *TAD* B4.1 and B4.2 are correct (Dar I, 487 BCE), one can see a shift in contractual formula from the reign of Darius I to Xerxes, but the folding and sealing practices stayed the same.[32] From 483 (3 Xer) onward (*TAD* B4.3 and near parallel B4.4), all contracts from Elephantine and Syene are remarkably similar in format regardless of the ethnic origin of the writer (as assumed by the etymology of his name). The only other contract to survive in Aramaic from Persian-period Egypt comes from el-Hibeh (Middle Egypt) and dates to 515 BCE (7 Dar I).[33] It displays a number of formulaic peculiarities when compared to the Elephantine contracts,[34] particularly those during or after Xerxes, but its general formatting, folding, and sealing patterns are identical. It appears that a reform of the administrative school traditions took place during the beginning of Xerxes's reign, and it affected the whole of Egypt.[35] This corresponds with the unrest in central Egypt, as indicated in the Demotic dossier known as the Gooseherds of Hou, which demonstrates the rise of Psammetichus IV at the end of Darius's reign until the succession of Xerxes.[36] These Egyptian revolts in central Egypt, the Babylonian revolts in that province, and the administrative reforms imposed there—as well as the lack of Demotic administrative evidence

31. Famously, the Demotic Chronicle admits to this process (Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 1:125). See discussion in Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt*, 115–17.

32. It is heuristically valuable to compare the uniqueness of the folding practices both between Aramaic letters and contracts and between other papyri from different periods. See Krutzsch in Dreyer et al., "28./29./30. Grabungsbericht," 218–22; more broadly Krutzsch, "Falttechniken an altägyptischen Handschriften"; and Krutzsch, "Blattklebungen erkennen und dokumentieren."

33. The editio princeps based the manuscript's date (Dar I) on the spelling of Darius's name (DRWŠ), but this is dubious. Since then, Szubin and Porten ("Aramaic Joint Venture Agreement," 71) have argued convincingly on material grounds that Dar I, is in fact intended here.

34. Szubin and Porten, "Aramaic Joint Venture Agreement."

35. It is worth noting that two judicial records from Saqqara *TAD* B4.7 (= *ATNS* no. 35) and B5.6 (=*ATNS* no. 8) preserve nearly verbatim contractual records that are structured like *TAD* B4.1 and B4.2. The Saqqara documents may come from a later period, though there is neither material nor internal evidence for this. If they do date to the mid- to late fifth century, they may preserve the record of a contract made much earlier than the record itself.

36. Vleeming, *Gooseherds of Hou*; Pestman, "Diospolis Parva Documents." As noted by these scholars, Herodotus mentions an Egyptian revolt during the ascension of Xerxes, but proof now comes from the Demotic evidence.

in the Nile region from the reign of Xerxes onward (see excursus 2 in the introduction)—combined with the apparent standardization of contractual formulae using regional templates, all provide compelling evidence of an administrative scribal reform.

My proposal of an administrative scribal reform explains a number of frustrating features in the Aramaic legal corpus from Egypt. Long ago Yohanan Muffs recognized that idioms and legal diction in the Elephantine documents resemble those known from Neo-Assyrian cuneiform legal traditions.[37] His study showed that Aramaic administrative language in the legal sphere has a precedent in the bilingual administration of Neo-Assyrian/Aramaic schooling traditions. Others have sought to find Egyptian cultural and legal influences on the Elephantine material, and to be sure, some are there, but overestimating the Egyptian influence on the material does not explain the unique features in the Aramaic legal corpus from Egypt.[38] Rather, it seems that local Egyptians working in conjunction with those trained in the imperial administrative curriculum were employed to compile, distribute, and teach legal administrative practices unique to the province of Egypt, at least from the time of Xerxes to the end of the fifth century. This practice, which appears to have also been in place in Samaria (in the WDSP) and Babylonia (see below), allowed for provinces to maintain their own common law, but it also permitted those trained in the imperial curriculum to monitor legal proceedings. In a province such as Egypt, which was rife with political rebellion, such administrative oversight still encouraged locals to become involved in the imperial administration. As a result, the contracts were a conduit for the Persians' cultural indoctrination while allowing locals a sense of autonomy.

A judicial document that is contractual in nature but differs from the formatting and compositional stages of contracts was the (judicial) oath document (Aram. SPR MWMʾ). *TAD* has edited four documents as oaths, though only two may rightly be called such.[39] The other two are judicial records, see below. The oath document was demanded of a legal party by either a plaintiff, defendant, or the court, in lieu of documentary evidence to prove an argument. Since the only documentary evidence valid in trial that an individual would hold would have been a contract, the oath statement stands in place of a contract in a dispute. In this way, it is a type of ancient deposition in which the oath-taker visits a temple and swears before a god. The act of swearing is recorded by an administrative priest in the temple,[40] sealed, then handed over to the court. For

37. Muffs, *Studies in the Aramaic Legal Papyri*.

38. Schütze, "Local Administration"; Schütze, "Schreibämter"; Botta, *Aramaic and Egyptian Legal Traditions*.

39. *TAD* B7.1–2 are judicial records, while B7.3–4 are oath documents.

40. Moore, "Administering Cult," 314–16.

this reason it is formatted differently and may have been written in the language of the temple in which the oath was taken.

## Administrative Record Rolls and Various Documentation

Administrative Aramaic texts have received little attention from scholars. I use the term *administrative* broadly to refer to those texts that focus on recordkeeping practices. The most useful format for recordkeeping was the list. I divide the administrative documentation into miscellany lists and tabular lists. Miscellanies collect miscellaneous information in a list, formatted into separate units of textual blocks using *vacats* and/or marginal horizontal lines.[41] Miscellanies may be mixed with tabular lists, as in the case of the Syene Ration List (see chapter 5), or exist independently, as in the case of the first scroll of the so-called Memphis Shipyard Journal (= *TAD* C3.8). In some cases miscellaneous information for loosely similar contexts was collected together, such as reports, memoranda, or judicial proceedings and copies of legal documents.

The reality is that texts that I classify as administrative overlap significantly with both epistolary and legal sources, but they differ in format and function. While an individual or institution may have an interest in saving correspondences and legal documents, there are scribal practices that separate correspondences and legally binding contracts from reports and judicial/legal records. As noted above, papyrus correspondences are formatted in a unique way, but among the "letters" published in *TAD* volume A are documents that deviate from the norm. The papyrus *TAD* A3.1 is unique in that it is written on a small scrap of papyrus, begins with a reference to only the sender in the form "Servant of PN," and continues with content that is much more akin to ostraca missives in that it provides instructions, in this case concerning ten donkeys. It is written with large right and left margins and parallel to the recto's fibers. It looks as though it were a report that should have been added to a miscellany. But instead, a response to the report's content begins on the verso parallel to the fibers (and 90 degrees to the recto's content) and continues like a papyrus letter, flipped bottom-to-top, with writing around the original report. The document was folded more like a letter than a report, but the small size of the document did not allow for normal letter folding. And it is hard to imagine from the wear patterns and fold creases how the document would have been addressed, if it was addressed. Similarly, *TAD* A3.2 is a small fragmentary correspondence written parallel to the recto's fibers. It resembles an ostracon missive rather than a

41. In literary lists, such as proverbs, an archaic, linear, or Phoenician-style *alef* is used (𐤀), sometimes in combination with marginal horizontal scribal lines.

papyrus business letter. It appears to have been a missive sent on papyrus rather than ostraca and included in a packaged delivery (see chapter 7 for the features of the delivery system). Although formatting deviations appear for some papyrus correspondences, their formatting is explainable when contextualized within the larger sociological and administrative scribal context and when the pragmatic needs of recordkeeping and communication are considered. Generally, however, administrative recordkeeping demonstrates fairly consistent scribal conventions, some of which must have been taught in the imperial curriculum.

### *Miscellanies, Reports*

The way in which records were preserved depends on the type of content they contained. Apart from accounting lists, most records were compiled in various types of miscellanies, which may include reports, memoranda, and/or disparate information either verbatim from another document or in paraphrastic language. Papyrus miscellanies were formatted on the recto of the document parallel to the fibers but could continue onto the verso. They were either compiled from separate sheets of papyrus, each of which independently written, then glued together, or written in the empty space of a long roll, such as a book roll.

In addition to the aberrantly formatted text mentioned above, two, perhaps three, examples of reports survive, *TAD* A4.5, *NAP* no. 2.1.1 (lower and upper), and *TAD* A4.10. *NAP* no. 2.1.1 may be two fragments from separate reports, though they have been published together. As with other reports, the beginning of *NAP* no. 2.1.1 (upper) starts without reference to the addressee and states only the sender in the form "Your servant(s) PN(s)." This—combined with the facts that (1) it is written parallel to the recto's fibers, (2) was not folded like the typical letter but rather like a record roll, and (3) contains a title on the back of the document—suggests that it is instead an archival record of a collection of correspondences to a single addressee.[42] Its content concerns Egyptian and Babylonian interactions at Elephantine/Syene. *TAD* A4.10 is similar in that it begins with a reference to the senders "Your servants" without reference to an addressee, was written parallel to the fibers, and was not folded like a letter. It has no title, to my knowledge,[43] but it contains wide margins and well-trimmed edges, including a trim along a sheet-join; it looks as though it was intended to be compiled as a record roll. These documents are better interpreted as archival records of correspondences that were sent to a single institution

42. The fragmentary and effaced title on the back of the roll identifies the document as belonging to someone named Buṭeta'. This person is otherwise unknown, and the name does not appear to be Semitic.

43. The manuscript is inaccessible to me, and I know of no photographs of the verso.

or institutional official.[44] The content of the multicolumn report *TAD* A4.5 is politically partial toward the Yahô temple—it reports on its reconstruction—and so too is A4.10, though these texts lack the emotive language found in the copies of the official petition sent to the governor of Yehud to muster political favor for the Yahô temple (*TAD* A4.7 ‖ A4.8). For this reason, and until more evidence surfaces, I interpret these documents as abbreviated archival records of letters that were sent from those among the Judean troop at Elephantine in support of the Yahô temple. It is possible that the memorandum *TAD* A4.9 was also meant to be included with *TAD* A4.5 and A4.10 in a compiled miscellany concerning the Yahô temple.

### *Miscellanies, Memoranda*

The other type of document that has been edited as a letter but is, in fact, an administrative text is *TAD* A4.9, which is an example of a memorandum entry (Z/DKRN). I have argued elsewhere that this particular memorandum was perhaps intended to be compiled in a miscellany.[45] Memorandum entries, such as this, are the only ancient subgenre of administrative texts recognized by Aramaic administrators, and the evidence for such entries spans the duration of both the fifth and fourth centuries BCE and the geographical breadth of the Persian Empire. The act of properly noting memorandum entries must have been taught in an imperial curriculum. In a recent survey of Aramaic memorandum entries from the Persian period,[46] I have argued that a source document lies behind the content of each entry but that the entry itself was a paraphrase of the source document. This paraphrase includes only the material necessary for the writer's interest in the source document. The very existence of the memorandum entry indicates that the writer did not have ongoing access to the source and perhaps even that the source was not allowed to be copied verbatim due to

44. By comparison, consider the "Your servant" (Akk. *ardūka*, though always spelled $IR_3$-*ka*) letter-type from the Eanna and Ebarbar archives. The title of the addressee is mentioned and always designates a representative (high) official. See Levavi, *Administrative Epistolography*, 39–40, particularly the first eight examples therein, which differ from the last three.

45. Moore, "Legality of Persian Period Memoranda," 155.

46. The original draft of that article was submitted as *TAOI* 4 was released, which includes a memorandum entry, no. C2.1. I was unaware that that source was previously published (Yardeni and Porten, "Two Become One"). The ostracon may be from the Persian period, according to the paleographic dating in *TAOI* 4 (p. 91). Its content appears to be a collection of data from promissory notes owed to the taxable private firm of one Wahabî. The original promissory note would have been the legally binding document; in this case twelve original documents serve as the source texts. That the ostracon includes erasures and interlinear insertions is a sign that the writer was copying and paraphrasing another document. Additionally, *TAOI* 5 no. H3.9 is a fragmentary memorandum entry, and at least one new study considers the possibility of two more (Shahryari, "Recherche," 176; appendix nos. 3275 and 3362).

security concerns. In all but one example (*TAD* A4.9) the evidence indicates a clear connection "to items that appear in treasuries or storehouses," and once this is realized, it becomes clear that even *TAD* A4.9 fits within this administrative interest, which leads to an extremely different historical interpretation of that document (see Introduction).[47]

### *Miscellanies, Judicial Records*

Among the so-called legal texts edited in *TAD* volume B are legal/judicial records (B4.7, B5.6, B8). All come from Saqqara, with the exception of *TAD* B7.1 and B7.2, which *TAD* classifies as "judicial oaths."[48] Judicial records differ from contracts in that they record, sometimes even verbatim, the details of contract negotiations or trials but are formatted as a record roll. The text is written parallel to the recto's fibers, contains no witnesses, appears to have been rolled rather than folded, and shows no signs of having been sealed. The information on these documents was not privacy-protected as were contracts and, therefore, lack material evidence of legal validation. They were likely held, however, in a secure facility and represent legal records from which the court could draw or based on which it could make judgments. It seems the information was written on the roll so that it could be easily accessed. It also seems that administrators working in the legal sphere were trained with the same general archival conventions for judicial or contractual texts.

Reports, memoranda, and judicial records all constitute a type of record-keeping process used by trained administrators. They were either compiled into or written on long record rolls, and those that were written on single sheets of papyrus were formatted so that they could be glued to record rolls.[49] The documents were written in the so-called chancellery script so that they could be easily read by those across the empire. The documents themselves were not secure, though they may have been stored in secure buildings. They are for reference in governmental administration but are not necessarily valid

47. Moore, "Legality of Persian Period Memoranda," 155–57, 174–76. The basic conclusion that memorandum entries were made for a specific office or official responsible is consistent with the previous view that they were collected into journals. This panimperial practice appears to have also been used in other scribal cultures. For example, the Elamite "journal" published with updates and commentary by Henkelman, "Humban and Auramazdā," fits my framework in that it too is a record of a collection of barley that concerns a single official/office.

48. Fragments of what could be oaths or court records—or even may join to the two Elephantine documents—are found in *NAP* nos. 2.4. An early acquisition by Lepsius (*Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien*, 394, Abth. VI B1. 124.) was according to Cowley (*Aramaic Papyri*, no. 69) probably from Elephantine. *TAD*, however, suggests Saqqara (vol. B p. 149), and I favor *TAD*'s conclusion because the document relates to a genre only otherwise attested at Saqqara.

49. *NAP*, Introduction.

documentary evidence of that activity. It is possible that in trials they could have served as strong demonstrative evidence in lieu of primary documentary evidence.[50] In short, these document types were a part of an administrative compendium and served as important evidence of the legacy of imperial administrative scribal traditions.

### *Accounts 1: Tabular Lists on Papyri*

Administrative documentation was foremost preserved in list format. The most frequently occurring lists were accounts, which were formatted in columns and rows, constituting a tabular list.[51] Aramaic tabular lists are found on papyri, leather, and ostraca throughout the Persian period. Any list formatted vertically in rows and horizontally in columns constitutes a tabular list, even when there is only one column, such as a simple list of names. In this way, I include both "lists" and accounts in the same administrative format.[52] This column-and-row format indicates (possible) ongoing activity between the list writer(s) and content of the list. The known tabular lists have a central column, usually of names, which was expandable into further columns, to the left or the right, that include marginalia, abbreviations, or paratextual marks per row.

The most elaborate surviving example of a tabular list is the Syene Ration List from Elephantine (*TAD* C3.14 [+] *NAP* no. 2.2.3). The main column of the list includes names of those who received rations, and these names were written first and justified on the right side. Following each name is a short value code that represents three separate data: the abbreviation B(arley) (Aram. Š), the abbreviation A(rdab) (Aram. ʾ), and a numerical quantity. Although the formatting of the value does not align nicely into columns due to the varied length of the names, each of the three data can be thought of as separate columns: Commodity "B(arley)," Measurement ʾ "A(rdab)," and Quantity. It is unclear whether each value code was written at the time each name was written or in a separate compositional act. Some individuals were identified with an extra notation (Aram. HW) that was written before or after the abbreviations. The HW notation, which is traditionally thought to be the independent nominative third-person pronoun "he," is probably related to the rank of the person, the interval of the distribution, or the type of distribution (for example, issued to the person "he [himself]" rather than through an intermediary). The names of the main columns were written with large intercolumnar spacing in order to accommodate expansion, and to the right of each name an administrator used

50. Moore, "'Who Gave You a Decree.'"

51. Earlier scholars compared the Aramaic data to Greek administrative practices, e.g., de Vogüé, *Syrie centrale*, 125–28.

52. *TAD* volume C nos. C3–C4 divides between accounts and lists.

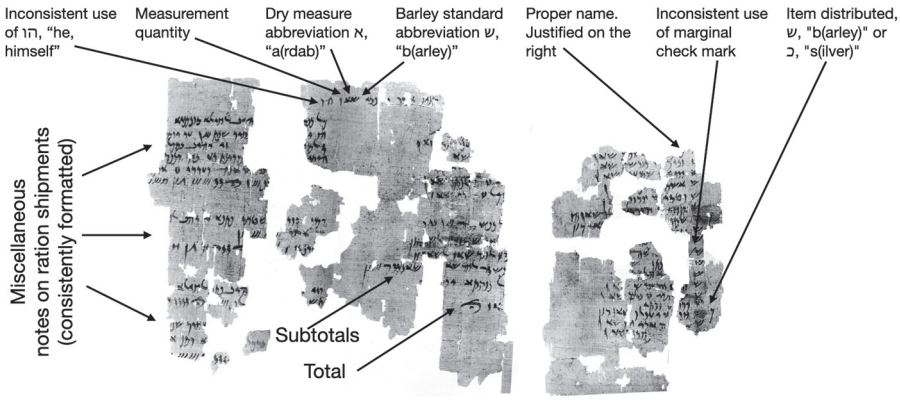



FIGURE 3. Columns of the Syene Ration List. Photograph digitally compiled from *APO*, pls. 21–22 and *NAP* no. 2.2.3 (CC-BY-NC-ND).

the intercolumnar space to create two columns of data. The column nearest the name was used to insert a slash next to the name. This is like a checkmark and indicates that some task regarding the individual has been completed; perhaps it means the ration was distributed. On other lists, an elaborate slash-code was used, and its meaning remains undeciphered.[53] To the right of the slash-column is another column of abbreviations, either Aramaic Š or K.[54] I suspect this abbreviation refers to the currency in which the ration was paid. The rations were calculated on a grain standard, and most individuals were issued grain, as indicated by the abbreviation Š. The abbreviation K, however, may have stood for silver (Aram. KSP), indicating those individuals' payments were converted to silver. Figure 3 illustrates the features of the Syene Ration List.

Subtotals and totals of the amount of barley distributed follow the list of names, and after the totals is a separate column of text formatted in paragraphs, like a miscellany, that records the total remaining barley, the amount distributed, and the party responsible for the barley's transport. Abbreviations vary across the Aramaic corpus from Egypt, so these should not be considered standardized by the imperial curriculum; they are contextually defined. That said, the use of columnar formatting appears to have been consistently taught and so too the encouragement to use abbreviations and checkmarks, even though they are not consistently employed. Therefore, it may be said that theories of administrative list making were taught imperially, but each administrator was able to employ

53. This was true for a list from Elephantine (*TAD* C3.3) and one from Saqqara (*TAD* C4.2). The various slash notations may refer to fractional distributions of the rations.

54. At least one correction to the abbreviations column was made in the right intercolumnar space.

the practices as he saw fit. Presumably, any trained administrator working with a document written by another would have been able to interpret the marks and abbreviations.

Tabular lists were ideal for keeping accounts, and something should be said here about how Aramaic administrators were taught numerals. Imperial Aramaic numbers are remarkably consistent and use a base-10 tally and adjectival system. Numerals 1–9 are marked by tallies (𐡘), which are grouped in threes, separated by word breaks (e.g., "6" = 𐡘𐡘 𐡘𐡘). The numeral 10 is a horizontally oriented crescent-shaped stroke (𐡙), and the numeral 20 is composed of two 10s, one on top of the other (𐡚). Tens and 20s were combined to form the 10-units for numbers between 10–99 (e.g., "54" = 𐡘 𐡘𐡘 𐡙𐡚𐡚). The units for 100s (𐡛), 1,000s (𐡜), and 10,000s (𐡝) are adjectival marks that follow the tallies that they modify (e.g., "34,425" = 𐡘 𐡘𐡘 𐡚 𐡛 𐡘 𐡘𐡘 𐡜 𐡘 𐡘𐡘 𐡝 𐡘𐡘). Furthermore, long lists from both Saqqara and Elephantine exhibit a marginal numerical notation that counts rows at intervals of 10 throughout a tabular list. The consistency of this system throughout the Persian period and across the empire suggests that it was part of an imperial curriculum.[55]

Before moving on, it is worth noting that the tabular lists on papyrus are formatted as record rolls and, therefore, were generally turned side-to-side when the writing on them continued onto the verso. But aberrant examples are found. One is clearly later than the Persian period and can be dated to Ptolemaic Egypt based on its names and diction (*TAD* C3.28). The other examples come from late Persian-period Bactria and are composed on leather ADAB nos. C3, C4, and C7. ADAB no. C4 is of particular interest because it, like the Ptolemaic-period papyrus, is a multicolumn tax account that continues onto the verso but was turned bottom-to-top. This type of document is not found among the Aramaic administrative papyri from Saqqara or Elephantine but is known from the administrative Phoenician papyri from the Nile Delta dating to ca. 400 BCE (see chapter 2).

### *Accounts 2: Tabular Lists on Ostraca*

In addition to lists on papyri, lists also appear on many ostraca. Approximately twenty-seven ostraca from Elephantine preserve partial or complete lists. Like the short lists made on papyrus scraps, but surviving more abundantly, these ostraca lists suggest a short-term managerial social setting. One ostracon is of paramount importance because it provides a heading that describes the administrative purpose of the list. it reads:

55. For rare examples of variation in the system as it comes into contact with Phoenician schooling traditions, see chapter 2.

CG no. XII[56]
These are the Judeans who
took salaries:
Makî son of Gemaryah
Yedanyah son of Makyah
⌜ʿA⌝nanyah son of Hôšaʿyah
◦[◦◦◦]◦ son of Šalômam
[. . .]◦⌜M⌝

The writer began by writing "Makî son of" immediately after "salaries," but in order to adhere to an administrative scribal convention of a well-ordered list, he erased the name and listed the individuals in tabular-format.

Another important example from Elephantine is currently unpublished, but it includes a list of names followed by the code "Š.S. 4," which translates to "B(arley): 4 S(eah)."[57] The list ends with a total of the complete amount of grain accounted for. It is quite clear that this is a distribution list. It is unique among the lists in that all surviving names are women.[58]

CG no. XII, the unpublished ration list, and similar texts bring up the question: Are other ostraca also lists of ration or salary distributions, or are these exceptional documents? Only two other ostraca lists provide descriptions of their purpose. CG no. 178 uses the abbreviation "Š.Ṭ." I propose that it means "B(arley): a Ṭ-measurement," in which case it too would be a ration distribution list. Finally, CG no. 266 is an account with a description at the beginning of the list referring to the dry measure 6 Ḥallurs, and presumably this is also a ration distribution list. So while the evidence leans heavily toward the ostraca lists being distribution lists, this is only clearly attested for about 15 percent of the known ostraca lists. Therefore, ostraca lists were used for a number of short-term managerial purposes, one of which was ration or salary distribution.

This evidence leads to the conclusion that ostraca lists were used by administrators who were working actively with the individuals on the lists rather than in an archival setting. This may be why ostraca were the preferred medium for short lists; they could be written without a proper writing-backing-board or a flat surface; the writer could even compose the list easily while standing. The list could have then been used in the administrator's workshop to compile the longer archival lists on papyrus. Once archived, the ostracon list could be erased and reused. In at least three cases, name lists appear on the erased text of an

56. Regrettably the document is unprovenanced.

57. Moore, *MDAIK*, unpublished DAIK/SI Elephantine O 5130(bis) / = O 5139. Compare CG no. 134.

58. For an account with mixed gendered names, see CG no. X4.

ostracon: CG no. 113 (overwritten = name list); CG no. 224 + 242 (= HL no. J10) (overwritten = missive); CG no. X2 (overwritten = name list).[59]

In addition to the ostraca, name lists are found on vessel labels. These are lists composed on only the outside (convex side) of the vessel. This small compositional detail is the only clear indication that a fragmentary sherd is a label list rather than an ostracon list. Label lists differ from ostraca lists and from simple labels in that they seem to indicate the names of individuals who took from or contributed to the vessel, though it is difficult to determine which function the list serves (so too Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, p. 195). In this way the administrator functions more as an accountant than an overseer. At least six examples of label lists have survived in the corpus.[60]

Before concluding this study on lists, it is important to note that nearly all surviving lists were lists of persons. There are three inventories that represent notable exceptions to this rule.[61] The first is the first papyrus to have ever come from an archaeological excavation at Elephantine, *TAD* D3.26. The fragmentary list appears to be an inventory of planks with measurements. Two of the three surviving rows indicate that the items are "herein," which suggests this is a large order of a shipment of lumber (see discussion of "wood" in chapter 8). The second, *TAD* D3.16, is a difficult to understand inventory of precious items, which resemble the types of items that a wealthy woman brings into a marriage in wifehood contracts. For this reason, I suspect that it was a dowry inventory kept by the wife's father's family or the wife herself. The last inventory was certainly written in the Nile Delta and survives as a palimpsest account of imports and exports found on the Ahiqar Manuscript. Signs of scribal uniformity are evident in the lists' itemizations,[62] but it is rather curious that so little evidence for such an important part of the administrative life survives. What this means for the sociology of Elephantine will be discussed in part 2, but at this juncture it seems necessary to highlight the versatility of administrators, some of whom were in charge of commodities and others of people. The limited number of inventories might be due to the ephemeral nature of the items: commodities were consumed, and therefore there was little reason to keep long-term records of them. There is at least one piece of evidence that suggests that many commodities were reported on as a single item in the lot. This comes from an Elephantine sherd that reports on the outside of a vessel an inventory of many vessels deposited in the Khnum Temple by someone with the Phoenico-Egyptian name ʿAbd-ʾaḥmosey.

59. *TAD* D9.2 may also contain a name list on the overwritten and erased texts.

60. CG nos. 177, 192, 220; Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, nos. 32, 35, 38. CG no. 208 breaks the norm of clearly identified rows.

61. Due to the overlap in content between memorandum entries and inventories it is difficult to determine the genre of some small fragments, e.g., *TAD* D3.22; *NAP* nos. 2.5.4; 2.5.16.

62. Yardeni, "Maritime Trade."

*TAD* D7.38[63]
[. . .]Khnum and *sir*-vessels 30
[. . .]of Khnum (in) possession of
[. . .] the ritual-item(?) and gave/(is) give(n)
[. . .]◦Z? *mr*-vessels 32
[. . .]◦ 1 from Tybi
[. . .]of ʿAbd-ʾaḥmosey[64]

Although the meaning of some of the vessels' names is unclear, it seems that an administrator had noted the deposit, both the number of items and the person who deposited them, on one vessel that represented the lot. The content calls to mind the tax items deposited into the Yahô temple and recorded in the form of memorandum entries (*TAD* C3.13). A label inventory such as this may have been the source document from which the Yahô temple memorandum entries were made.[65] Assuming the vessels were sealed,[66] the inventory label and the product itself serve as legal and administrative evidence of the payment to temple and state institutions.

### *Administrative Labels*

Inventories and the inventory labels demonstrate that administrators compiled records but also organized goods and commodities. In fact, nearly fifty Aramaic vessel labels survive from Elephantine and Syene, and a few more are known from Saqqara. Some labels employ the typical scribal convention of list making (e.g., Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 35), but labels are typically unformatted names on vessels, abbreviations, or the government mark (Phoe. LMLK, Aram. LMLK?). Outside of Egypt, some vessel labels were incised into the plastic clay of the vessel before it dried or was fired. Only two incised labels survive from Elephantine/Syene. One is an unpublished Syene find written in a linear Phoenician script; the vessel was likely made elsewhere. The other is Louvre AF 10238,[67] which is an Egyptian-made vessel and bears the name HQR, an Egyptian name previously attested on *ATNS* no. 47. It is clear that most vessels at Elephantine were marked by administrators in ink rather than by incision. Since the vast

63. *sir*-vessels (Aram. SRN): following Grelot, *Documents araméens*, 158 n. e. "Ritual item" (Aram. ʾWʾ) is a best guess and based on Egyptian ỉ.w, "to praise," here read as a noun. *mr*-vessels: following *ATNS*, p. 74n16, for the phrase MR ḤLB, "(Egy.) mar-vessels of milk."

64. The name ʿAbd-ʾaḥmosey is now the confirmed reading based on the Phoenician account Moore and Gorea, *CRAIBL 2021*, no. 3 ll. i′ 4′, 6′, republished in Gorea and Moore, SoE 2 no. 1.

65. For another possible example, see CG no. 194. Dated labels may also serve a similar function.

66. Evidence of references to jar sealing practices have been collected by Lozachmeur, "La vie quotidienne."

67. Lozachmeur, "Deux inscriptions araméennes," 399–400.

majority of vessels from the ancient world are unmarked, one might safely assume that marking vessels implies a bureaucratic and/or trading system that has handled the marked vessel.

The great diversity of commodities referred to at Elephantine and Syene in the Aramaic sources will be discussed in part 3, but from the point of view of the scribal administrative practices, it must be said that the Aramaic system was predictable because it was imperially taught, but it was also adaptable. The evidence from Egypt demonstrates that Aramaic administrators were very well aware of the well-established Phoenician scribal practices used throughout the Mediterranean and incorporated those practices into their recordkeeping (see chapter 2).

### *Product Tags*

Previously thought to be mummy labels,[68] Elephantine has yielded five wooden tags, although many more are known to have come from the site.[69] Their interpretation as mummy labels is owed in part to the fact that many similar tags were found in burial contexts.[70] Like ostraca, these were erased and reused. The evidence is now fairly clear that they were attached by cord to vessels or packages that were shipped across the river to Elephantine.[71] Three pieces of evidence demonstrate that these wooden tags were not mummy labels but were used for commodities. First, CG nos. E1 and E2 bear the same name along with the preposition indicating delivery or ownership, "Belonging to Yedanyah son of Yešaʿyah." Second, the tags show signs of having been erased and reused. Finally, CG no. E3 provides clear evidence that this particular wooden tag was used in the shipment of commodities. It is the only small, inscribed object that contains both Aramaic and Demotic writing. It reads:

CG no. E3
Side 1 Aramaic
⌜Belonging to⌝ Hôšeʿa son of Qôn
Side 2 Demotic[72]
The wine of the 30th regnal year: 1 qus-measure(?)

68. *TAD* D19; Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 185.

69. Surviving and accessible tags include: CG nos. E1–E4 and *TAD* D19.7. Documentation for CG no. E5 exists, but the object is missing from the collection (Lozachmeur, *La collection*, 455). A piece of wood that may be a splinter from a wooden tag is known from the photographic negative AIBL-CIS Cl.-G. 52 no. 200. Wooden tags with Aramaic on them were once on display in the Elephantine Museum (DAIK, *Elephantine*, 67.); the whereabouts of these objects are now unknown.

70. *TAD* D, p. 238.

71. For discussion of many lost wooden labels from excavations at Memphis, see Petrie, Wainwright, and Mackay, *Meydum and Memphis (III)*, xxxiv, 40–41; Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, 50–52.

72. Working translation provided Jan Moje, ERC, ID 313213.

In addition to wooden tags, the site has yielded ostraca tags, and in fact, one of them (CG no. X2) bears the same name as that found on the wooden tags CG nos. E1 and E2, Yedanyah son of Yeša'yah. Here the prepositional *lamed* is lacking, which is strong evidence that administrators used it haphazardly when labeling commodities with tags. Another ostracon tag has been misclassified as a list in *TAD* D9.6, and others may also appear in the corpus.[73] While wooden tags were affixed to packages or vessels with string, the ostraca tags were likely put inside the packages or vessels. In either case they illustrate the need for administrators to meticulously tag and label the commodities as they moved through the transportation system (see chapter 8). With the exception of the bilingual Demotic/Aramaic wooden tag CG no. E3, labeling with external tags happened in Aramaic using a local Egyptian style of practice.[74] The bilingual tag is an excellent indication that the imperial administration came into contact with local Egyptian administration, but there is no reason to assume a sharp divide between imperial and local administrators. It seems more probable that a large amount of the population had begun to adopt the Aramaic language for everyday use, according to the bulk of evidence that seems to come from after Xerxes's reform.

### *Wooden Writing Boards, Scribal Palettes, and Note Sherds*

In addition to wooden tags, there is evidence that administrators were trained to use wooden writing boards, ostraca, or their scribal palettes to take notes. An unprovenanced palette from somewhere in Egypt has an account written on it,[75] and a palette diptych from Egypt demonstrates their widespread use.[76] From Elephantine is known (1) a wooden diptych leaf that contains a short administrative note,[77] (2) a lost diptych used for note taking,[78] (3) a writing-board that has a tabular list of names on it,[79] and (4) a scribal palette with scribbles and a name.[80] The diptychs and the unique styles of the palettes are Syrian in origin—not Egyptian. The diptychs are of a hinged construction that is known

73. Specifically, two more that may have been misclassified as lists are *TAD* nos. D9.7, D9.8.

74. The exception here refers to Elephantine, but many (now lost) wooden tags from Saqqara are also bilingual. See Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, 50–52.

75. Originally published in Lemaire, "Notes d'épigraphie sémitique," 48–52.

76. Louvre no. 11.745 published in Aimé-Giron, "Un diptyque-écritoire."

77. *TAD* D13.4. Aimé-Giron, "Un diptyque-écritoire," 87, had already correctly identified the Berlin piece as a leaf of a diptych.

78. Neg. AIBL-CIS Cl.-G. 52 no. 201; Note Book. AIBL-CIS Cl.-G. 03, pp. 330–32.

79. *TAD* D13.3. *TAD* does not identify it as a writing board, but its physical characteristics define it as such.

80. Brooklyn 16.99a–d. It was first published in Aimé-Giron, "Adversaria semitica (III)," no. 119, and can be found in *TAD* D13.1.

from the iconography of eighth-century BCE Aramaic scribal culture.[81] The diptychs' style was shared by contemporary cuneiform scribes who wrote on wax-covered boards rather than directly on wood (e.g., MET 54.117.12a, b).[82] While Egyptian scribal culture had likely influenced Aramaic scribal culture—perhaps via Phoenician—in the early first millennium BCE because both were ink-based writing systems, Aramaic scribal culture developed its own idiosyncrasies. These uniquely Aramaic palettes, diptychs, and practices were then brought to Egypt by the Persian administration.

Evidence from Syene now indicates that some ostraca were used as notepads. Some of the ostraca lists appear to have been used this way, judging from the legible erased texts. Sometimes note sherds are described as "drafts," such as lists or accounts. In one unique instance a true calculation ostracon may be interpreted as a type of note sherd.[83] Others may be labeled scribal exercises, such as Moore, *Semitica* 64, no. 17. But occasionally evidence of what appears to be an ostracon used for jotting notes, testing or blotting a pen, or doodling is found. For example, CG no. 274 was used, erased, and reused many times as a note sherd.

There is a long history of scholarship about the tools and materials used by scribes, and I will not reiterate that here.[84] That said, only recently has a small window into the social realities of scribal products been opened to us. CG no. X6, which although unprovenanced must belong to the French Excavations at Elephantine, reads:

CG no. X6
cc 1. Greetings, Yedanyah. N[ow . . .]
cc 2. Waḥpreʿ brought to me[. . .]
cc 3. and ink and a pen. Do not[. . .]
cc 4. Send / they sent me a r[oll . . .]
cv 1. [. . .]ʾW (belonging) to Peṭeḥnum
cv 2. [. . .] the garment before hi\m/
cv 3. {[. . .]Ṣ| [. . .]ʾN} to you (m.p.) which shall remain.
cv 4. [. . .]◦◦◦[. . .

81. Donner and Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, no. 218.

82. For the history and use of wax boards in cuneiform scribal culture, with the test case of evidence from Sippar, see MacGinnis, "Use of Writing Boards."

83. Moore, *Semitica* 64, no. 6; see chapter 2.

84. Although focused on biblical Hebrew, Zhakevich, *Scribal Tools*, contains many relevant studies on Aramaic terms and an extensive bibliography on the matter. The famous studies by Černý, *Paper and Books*, and Turner, "Terms Recto and Verso," still have value but are supplanted in many ways by Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes*.

Here we read how a writer tells Yadanyah, a common recipient of ostraca who is associated with accounting (see chapter 7), that one with an Egyptian name, Waḥpreʿ, had brought a pen and ink. The writer then requests what may be a roll of papyrus, though this reading is highly conjectural. Regardless, we see here evidence that pens and ink were acquired, rather than made, and therefore the scribal craft was part of a larger industry of specialized products. As with most of the ostraca, there is no mention of purchasing a pen and ink; rather, those were brought/delivered and therefore likely part of the state rations allotted to the Judean administrators on Elephantine.

## Shifting the Paradigm of Scholarly Assumptions

Many previous scholars working on Elephantine have operated under two incongruous assumptions. Scholarship recognizes that Elephantine/Syene was a site of great importance to the Persian Empire because it was the most southern and relatively stable site in Persian territory. The internationalism of the people found in the documents cannot be ignored. At the same time, scholars have studied the economic and administrative aspects alluded to in the documents with the assumption that the Judean community consisted of a few small private or family enterprises.

In recent decades the scholarship on Late Babylonian economic documents has radically changed how scholars think about documentation, economy, and sociology in an imperial province. Research has shown that the Neo-Babylonians developed a new imperial program that imposed direct imperial oversight on the large temple economies of Mesopotamia by placing a *qīpu*-official directly in the temples, which in previous imperial models had been relatively autonomously structured. The Persians adopted this strategy and nuanced it by ballooning the bureaucracy and advancing "administrative creep" that served imperial rather than local interests.[85] The temples continued to lead the regions' cultures, but the empire controlled their resources. While large business families existed alongside the temple economies, such as the Iggibi or Murašu firms, it is well recognized that these firms rose and maintained prominence by fully integrating their firms into the imperial program. No matter where one looks, the hand of the empire, or at least its shadow, can be found in the surviving documentary sources from Mesopotamia.

85. Consider YOS 7, 128, and YOS 3, 106, with discussion in Jursa, "Taxation and Service Obligations," 433–35, and Stolper, "'No-One Has Exact Information.'" I am indebted to Peter Zilberg for suggesting these whimsical yet appropriate examples.

As the Elamite documentary evidence from Persepolis has become more accessible to a wider scholarly community in recent years, a startling picture of that bureaucratic machine has emerged. In a seminal study, Wouter Henkelman proposed that an "imperial signature" can be found throughout the Elamite documentation from Persepolis.[86] The entire landscape of the region was interregionally controlled—not only connected!—by a complex structure of administrative and political power. The picture deduced from the Elamite evidence is just as impressive as it is terrifying—awesome in every sense. There too society was transformed into a network of state dependents.

The fine line between security and enslavement that the Neo-Assyrians walked with their strategy of state-to-state treaty obligations had, by the Persian period, evolved into an imposition on every individual, through state-designated and -recognized communities. Taxation and cycles of debt lie at the foundation of the imperial model. The provinces could keep a facade of their own culture so long as their economies were run by the state. Recent research on the study of imperial taxation and administration has begun to show that what only a few years ago was thought to be an imperceptible administrative continuity between the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Empires in Mesopotamia, was marked by significant social and administrative changes. Persian concepts were introduced into the Babylonian system, and both Persian and Babylonian concepts of taxation appear in the Aramaic evidence.

When one considers the Judean evidence from Elephantine within this larger context, one sees not "family" matters but a dataset of a state-recognized community that maintains its economic viability by remaining a loyal and recognized entity in the imperial program. Naturally, a social hierarchy develops within the community, and a few individuals or families engage in the political art of negotiating conduits of power. These are the administrators of the temple of Yahô and the possession-status holders of the Judean community. Their community documents address each other as though the community were a family, no doubt as a measure of solidarity in their Egyptian and international contexts. Keeping the social and economic context in mind while reading the documents is key to unlocking their meaning. As in Babylonia, the Persian imperial system was a shadow that loomed over the population of Egypt. A real but ephemeral bureaucratic presence, it often appears as a historical ghost, which the populations hardly saw and hardly made reference to in their daily communication, though it was the Aramaic administrative scribal culture that kept the spirit of the empire alive.

86. Henkelman, "Imperial Signature."

## Aramaic Administrative Schooling: A Two-Tiered System

This short survey illustrates the complexity of the schooling of Aramaic administrators working in Egypt. From this, one may deduce two basic levels of education. The highest level of administrative training prepared writers to work on papyrus or parchment. These writers would have learned all administrative formats and methods. It would have been essential, for instance, for a writer to understand how decrees and letters were written in order to compose memoranda from them and to monitor the peoples or inventories that were affected by such documents. This extended to the ability to distinguish between lists or accounts, ostraca or labels, and to make notes on writing boards or diptychs. The skilled administrators needed to transfer the information on ostraca and notes to long papyrus or leather accounts for longer-term recordkeeping. These men and women were functionally accountants. Additional training in notary services for select men was available, which gave them the ability to understand legal discourse.

A lower level of administrative education existed in which managers in a particular professional domain learned how to read or compose ostraca or labels that described or organized their trade. This gave them the ability to interact with the accountants. The primary format for such lower-level administrative training, at least at Elephantine/Syene, seems to have been the ostracon missive format. As will be discussed in part 3, the ostraca missives refer to a variety of commodities as well as to diverse subject matters. Most of the men and women writing these, however, appear to have been taught only how to format their work as a missive and how to use a rather limited vocabulary to convey a message to the accountants. It is not yet clear whether this is a unique scribal development at Elephantine, which was facilitated by the fact that products and communication needed to travel across the river on a daily basis, or whether Elephantine simply preserves the best example of this practice. I am inclined to think it was mostly unique to Syene/Elephantine because no ostraca missives are so far known from Saqqara, where a large number of Aramaic documents has been found. Administrative education will be further discussed in the next two chapters, but suffice it to say, the administrative Aramaic scribal training was, at least, a two-tiered educational system, which included, at the advanced level, training in formula and vocabulary that was imperially mandated but also included provincial training in the language and procedures of local industry.

## Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the Aramaic administrative documents known from the Egyptian province, with particular focus on the Elephantine materials. The

only textual objects not covered here are tomb inscriptions, graffiti, and seal impressions. While tomb inscriptions represent a way of organizing and identifying people, they fall within the domain of private religion.[87] No "royal" inscriptions survive from Persian-period Elephantine, and the sole example of an Aramaic monumental and dedicatory inscription (*TAD* D17.1) is a state sponsored project, which was likely composed, though not carved, by Aramaic administrators. It is of sociological importance but hardly a common feature of the administrative scribal experience. Graffiti (e.g., *TAD* D22), like tomb inscriptions, speak to individualized acts of writing. While many of these epigraphs are formulaic, and undoubtedly those written in temple complexes can be associated with administrative life, they fall outside the standard uses of Aramaic writing in the Egyptian province. Lastly, seal impressions are certainly important aspects of the administrative scribal experience. Recent scientific work on Aramaic seal impressions is yielding invaluable social and historical information,[88] but seals speak to the use of a scribal object rather than to how ancient administrators affected and ordered society.

The surviving Aramaic correspondences were part of a highly systematized scribal culture that was maintained and propagated by an elaborate network of royal roads on which worked the Achaemenid postal system. This allowed for consistency in document structure, including folding, addressing, and sealing techniques that facilitated the empire's sophisticated approach to governance and recordkeeping. Similarly, the Aramaic contracts exhibit local legal traditions expressed through imperial language and administrative mindsets, as exemplified in their eventual standardized formatting and diction, especially after the ascension of Xerxes. Implementing a structured legal system with local input provided a forum through which the administration could control the population by imposing a legal bureaucracy while allowing the populace a sense of autonomy.

Going beyond the well-studied correspondences and contracts, this chapter has introduced the variety of administrative Aramaic documents and the scribal conventions that the imperial curriculum taught to produce them. These records served various administrative purposes, from managing supplies and personnel to documenting judicial proceedings. The careful organization of data through columns, abbreviations, and marginalia points to a standardized approach that allowed for efficient information management locally and across the empire. These administrative practices are witnessed not only in the Aramaic documents from Egypt but also in the Phoenician administrative scribal culture

87. See examples in *TAD* D22.

88. See Garrison and Henkelman, "Seal of Prince Aršāma"; Allen, "Letter as Object."

that interacted with the imperial bureaus. While Aramaic was the imperial language, in the eastern Mediterranean it interacted with the Phoenician system of administration, which was the mainstay of the Mediterranean market economy. It is to the evidence of Phoenician administration in Persian-period Egypt and its interactions with the Aramaic system that this study now turns.

CHAPTER 2

# Phoenician Administrators in Egypt in the Achaemenid Period

THE IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATION OPERATED in Aramaic, but in the provinces a variety of local scribal traditions were allowed, and perhaps encouraged, to continue among those communities that were loyal to the imperial program. As imperial power gained a greater hold on the eastern Mediterranean, the Persian imperial administrative system came in contact with the long-standing Phoenician Mediterranean market economy. Sources from the Phoenician homeland on the eastern Mediterranean coast are scarce from this period but indicate an attempt to negotiate imperial oversight with local governance. Lemaire has surveyed the surviving epigraphic data up to the previous decade.[1] Compared to the sources from the Babylonian or Egyptian province, it is clear that something unique was occurring in the Phoenician city-states, particularly in the fourth century BCE. From a larger historical view of the Persians' eastern Mediterranean holdings this makes sense across the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. The data from the Levantine coast is scant in the fifth century BCE when the empire focused its investment in the Egyptian province. It seems that in the second half of the fifth century BCE the Persians facilitated an influx of eastern and Levantine imports into the Egyptian province. One ostracon dating to "year 30," which I believe is best ascribed to 435 BCE (Moore, *Semitica* 64, no. 25), provides a historical fulcrum around which many, if not perhaps all, Phoenician vessel labels in Upper Egypt may be dated. As for Lower Egypt, the site of Tell el-Maskhuta has yielded many inscriptions on sherds, including at least fifty Phoenician labels. At this site was also found the Hieroglyphic inscription from the reign of Darius I that provides an illustrative description of the venture to open the Suez Canal. Additionally, the Brooklyn Museum acquired astonishing Persian-style silver vessels from the same site, some bearing Aramaic

1. Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, 1–36. See also Xella, "Phoenician Inscriptions"; Briquel-Chatonnet and Hawley, "Phoenician and Punic."

votive inscriptions.[2] The site exhibits a blend of imperial, Phoenician, and local cultures.

Not far away is the site of Tell el-Herr, which likewise has yielded a number of Phoenician vessel labels. While the dating of the Phoenician sources in the Nile Delta, including Saqqara, is not specific, it is possible that they come from an earlier period than those in Upper Egypt but still likely within the period of Persian rule.[3] After the successful Egyptian revolts of the end of the fifth century BCE, the empire invested heavily in the Levantine sites in the fourth century BCE, particularly Idumea.

This investment is economically and strategically important as the Mediterranean market economy continued to operate in the Phoenician language; the Persian imperial administration's power to suppress other administrative scribal cultures was limited by the sea. Perhaps due to the century-long troubled, and eventually failed, Egyptian venture or due to the economic power of Phoenician sites as the central node in the network of the Mediterranean market economy, the Persians allowed the region to retain a quasi-independent system of "kings" with an imperial "lord"[4] over them. This system worked alongside the royal estate network. In Phoenician city-states the Persians did not impose a "governorship." In this way, Levantine Phoenician ports remained noticeably Phoenician but served as the vehicle for the Persian presence in the Mediterranean economy. This evidence points to a Persian-sponsored increase in maritime imports into Egypt in the middle of the fifth century BCE and to a continued investment in the Phoenician Mediterranean after the fall of the Egyptian province in the fourth century BCE. The ultimate result was that the Phoenician administration coexisted with Imperial Aramaic for the duration of the empire.

2. See Brooklyn nos. 54.50.32; 54.50.33; 54.50.34; 54.50.35; 54.50.36; 54.50.37; 54.50.38; 54.50.39; 54.50.40; 54.50.43a–c; 54.50.44a–b; 55.183; 57.121; 54.50.41 (handle); 54.50.42 (handle). See Moore, "Legality of Persian Period Memoranda," 167n68, in which I mistakenly ascribed the acquisition to Charles Wilbour, but in fact, it was the Wilbour Fund that purchased them. The silver objects were part of a hoard that "reportedly contained gold-mounted agate jewelry and between six to ten thousand Attic tetradrachms (and Egyptian imitations thereof)," according to Henry Colburn, who is engaged in research on the hoard (personal communication).

3. Lutz, "Phoenician Inscriptions," 196–97 discusses the possible range of dates for Tell el-Maskhuta from the sixth to the second century. His chart on pp. 200–208 does not explain why his specific dates are ascribed per object. The objects from Tel el-Herr appear to date from the fifth to the fourth century BCE. I think Robert Hawley and Mitchka Shahryari for sharing their unpublished research with me. For Elephantine and Syene, see Lidzbarski, *Phönizische und aramäische Krugaufschriften*; Moore, *Semitica* 64; and Röllig, *SDAIK* 36. From the Nile Delta, see *ATNS* (Saqqara); Lutz, "Phoenician Inscriptions"; Schmitz, *Phoenician Diaspora*, chapter 4; Defernez et al., "Tell el-Herr (2022)."

4. See the inscription of Eshmunʿazor (Donner and Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, no. 14).

It is clear from the surviving documents that merchants from the Aegean traded with Egypt, and the Persian administration oversaw the taxation of the imports and exports of this trade in the fifth century BCE. The palimpsest of the Ahiqar Manuscript, which was found at Elephantine but composed in the Nile Delta, contains a number of compositional acts,[5] but the largest of them is an import-and-export account on Mediterranean ships. The account is written in Aramaic and includes many standardized entries. The scribal function of this document is relatively clear: it is an Aramaic ledger of taxation on groups entering and exiting Egypt over the course of approximately one year. There is no reason to assume that the people in the records were Aramaic speakers. This then begs the question in what language they operated, and the most reasonable answer is Phoenician.

The recent publication of two Phoenician accounts from the Nile Delta dating to ca. 400 BCE demonstrates that during the Persian period a Phoenician administrative scribal culture existed and interacted with a higher-level Aramaic administrative scribal culture.[6] These two accounts come from Saqqara and are written in the cursive Phoenician script. One account, Gorea and Moore, SoE 2 no. 1, is a long list of individuals, written on the recto and verso.

The recto contains two columns. All but the far right edge of the first column survives. It is a list of names followed by the numeral 4. The document calls to mind the many Aramaic accounts of either ration distribution or tax collection.[7] Only the far right edge of the recto's second column survives, and it demonstrates the use of scribal marginalia. These marginalia differ slightly from the ones in the Aramaic administrative record rolls discussed in chapter 1. The Phoenician account uses dots, rather than slashes, to indicate a "check mark," and on at least one row the Phoenician letter Y is used in the margin. This has no parallel in the Aramaic sources but calls to mind the Š and K in the margin of the Aramaic Syene Ration List. The Phoenician *yod* may represent the Phoenician term YN "wine." That it appears only once would mean that only one individual on the list took a ration or paid a tax in wine rather than the commodity or currency assessed for the other individuals.[8]

The verso is the continuation of the list in a single column of which only the left side survives. Presumably, the account would have included a summary or

5. Moore, "'Ahikariana.'"

6. The editio princeps of an earlier known Phoenician account from Saqqara, Aimé-Giron, "Adversaria semitica," no. 1, left most of the manuscript undeciphered. The published photographs are too poor to read, and the manuscript is inaccessible.

7. *NAP* no. 2.5.4 verso contains such a list. The numeral 4 also appears in a few labels and ostraca missives regarding the request or distribution of commodities, for example, Moore, *MDAIK*, DAIK/SI Elephantine (O) 5130(bis) = (O) 5319; and CG no. 212.

8. We cannot yet rule out other possible abbreviations that the letter might stand for, such as YWR "taxable male," or some coded marginalia of an undeciphered administrative meaning.

total at the end. In fact, the second Phoenician account, Gorea and Moore, SoE 2 no. 2, is a fragmentary section of one column of names in the cursive Phoenician script. It too is carbon-dated to ca. 400 BCE. The right edge of the column survives but shows no use of "check marks." The left of the column is broken, but one expects numerals to follow each name. The verso, which like the other account was continued by turning the document from bottom-to-top, includes two fragmentary lines and large quantities. These numerals are presumably the totals of (at least sections of) the account.

The Phoenician administrative practice of writing larger numbers on Gorea and Moore, SoE 2 no. 2, is curious from the point of view of scribal training. Here the writer uses groups of 10 (𐤊) stacked on top of each other to form 30.[9] This cannot be said to be *the* Phoenician numbering practice, as other Phoenician administrators throughout the Mediterranean had adopted the Persian imperial grouping of only 10s and 20s (𐤙). For example, the writer of label Moore, *Semitica* 64, no. 25, writes the year 30 as 𐤊𐤙, so too the Persian-period Phoenician account from the Levant uses 20s.[10] Thus, the use of 30s is a rather unique administrative scribal phenomenon that reflects a rare schooling tradition, but it is not limited to this Phoenician account. In fact, two Aramaic ostraca from Elephantine, CG nos. 63 and 168, also use 30s rather than 20s. This correlation between Phoenician and Aramaic administrative scribal cultures at both the northern and southern ends of the Egyptian province demonstrates the great diversity of the administrative schooling traditions that can be deduced from the documentary sources.

The relationship between the Phoenician and Aramaic administrative schooling traditions has recently become more complicated as demonstrated by the new finds from the Swiss Institute's excavations at Syene.[11] Very few direct correlations exist between recently discovered Syene labels and ostraca and the larger corpus known from Elephantine. But the Syene objects exhibit a more diverse interaction of the schooling traditions per capita and may actually provide evidence of a schooling tradition practiced at Syene. The Persian-period labels and ostraca from Syene come mostly from Area 2, the southeastern corner of the old city wall. The area comprises a small compound of buildings and building extensions that have more to do with cooking than dwelling. It may be seen as an industrial kitchen complex. The inscriptions provide evidence of Carians or other Aegeans using the Phoenician script and language (Moore, *Semitica* 64, no. 15). This data can be added to at least four examples of Carian vessel labels from Elephantine that mimic the Phoenician labeling practice.

9. While both Egyptian and Akkadian numerals are built by repetitions of the numeral 10 (Egy. 𓎆, Akk. 𒌋), their orientation differs from that found here.

10. Dothan, "Phoenician Inscription from 'Akko."

11. Porten and Lemaire, "Personal Names"; Moore, *Semitica* 64.

The evidence is clear that these Carian marked vessels are related to Phoenician traders and the Aramaic administration. The label *TAD* D11.17 is of particular importance because it includes the Carian label abbreviation, P, along with a Phoenician name label and an Aramaic governmental label (LMLK[?], "Belonging to the king"). Of the twenty-four governmental labels from Elephantine only two are written in Aramaic, while the remaining twenty-two are Phoenician labels. Various other governmental references on labels are also written in Phoenician script on vessels or vessel sherds from Elephantine and Syene rather than in the Aramaic script. The point to be made here is that although not ethnically "Phoenician," peoples outside of Egypt and native to the Mediterranean, such as Carians, were likely first trained in Phoenician schooling and admisitrative practices. Only a few appear to have advanced their education and learned the Aramaic script and labeling practices.

Also, Syene Area 2 has yielded three texts that may be considered exercises. One is unique and appears to be simply a calculation (Moore, *Semitica* 64, no. 6). It is unclear if it was an exercise or a mathematical calculation on a label. Another one appears to be an exercise in which someone attempted to compose Phoenician, but the text shows signs of the Carian script (Moore, *Semitica* 64, no. 17). The last is most interesting because it is an Aramaic abecedary that exhibits a skilled and an unskilled hand. The skilled hand writes the first four letters of the Aramaic alphabet, producing good examples of the so-called chancellery script. Written perpendicularly to this exemplar is an attempt at the first six letters of the Aramaic alphabet in an unskilled hand. This unskilled hand exhibits Phoenician rather than Aramaic forms of the letters, though it is clear that an attempt to compose Aramaic forms of the letters has been made. One conclusion about these data seems obvious: at Syene Area 2, a variety of administratively trained Aramaic and Phoenician individuals coexisted or at least interacted in the Persian period. The abecedary provides evidence that an individual previously trained in a Phoenician administrative tradition was attempting to learn the standard Aramaic chancellery hand. This was likely an adult with a limited administrative Phoenician education trying to learn Aramaic.

A conclusion can be drawn from the survey of these objects: higher-level administration was conducted in Aramaic, but for this to occur, intermediaries who could operate in administrative Phoenician were needed to connect local economic groups. These administrators monitored the economic actions of their own groups for the imperial administration. In this way, the Phoenician evidence is perhaps the best example of a lower- and middle-tiered administrative hierarchy that operated below the Aramaic accountants in Persian-period Egypt. These administrators worked within the transport system rather than within the five institutional levels of landholdings, but evidence demonstrates how interwoven those institutional systems were.

Observations made here about Syene Area 2, in particular, serve as a template that explains the evidence from Elephantine and Saqqara.[12] At Elephantine was found a fragmentary practice-abecedary with two surviving lines that show a development in the writer's script, especially in the letter B (Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 19).[13] Likewise, at Saqqara survives a collection of Aramaic and Phoenician labels. Only one sherd that can be identified as an ostracon was discovered there, and it was an Aramaic abecedary (*TAD* D10.2). All but the first letter of the alphabet is preserved, and it exhibits both good Aramaic forms and some Phoenician forms (particularly H, Y, Ṣ). The mixed corpora of Aramaic and Phoenician labels at Syene, Elephantine, and Saqqara that show evidence of training in the Aramaic alphabet indicate that some who operated in the greater Mediterranean market language of Phoenician were being trained in administrative Aramaic throughout the Egyptian province. The languages are very similar, and one can see that this evidence points to some administrators converting names from Phoenician to Aramaic, writing abbreviations, using numerals, using words for items, or writing dates. This then developed into a skill for a few who composed tabular accounts in Phoenician, but these Phoenician accounts were most likely later collected in Aramaic record rolls.

Ernst Axel Knauf was the first to propose that Elephantine had a scribal school,[14] and Lemaire elaborated on this theory by finding examples of exercises in the Elephantine material.[15] Specifically, Lemaire homed in on CG no. 277, which is written in a surprisingly linear Aramaic script and contains only the opening lines of a formal correspondence's introduction. Furthermore, the unusual ostracon is written on a fully preserved handle piece, which will stand on its own displaying the formula to be copied. The blessing in the introduction mentions Bel, Nabû, Šamaš, and Nergal. Lemaire's explanation of this as an exercise dispels the notion that it is the sole example of an elaborate religious syncretization among the Judeans at Elephantine; it is more simply a scribal model for copying. Besides, the formula used in this ostracon is missing

12. An additional unprovenanced but complete abecedary is held in the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Jerusalem (*TAD* 10.1). It is written in a competent hand that resembles the Aramaic chancellery script and comes from Elephantine (Lemaire and Lozachmeur, "Deux inscriptions araméennes," 99–103; Lemaire, "Aramaic Literacy," 300). Like the exemplar script on the Syene abecedary (Moore, *Semitica* 64, no. 7), this one may in fact be an exemplar for students to copy.

13. Lemaire ("Aramaic Literacy," 300) observes that Röllig mistakenly identified this as a Phoenician abecedary when it is in fact Aramaic. Lemaire struggles to explain it, however, stating, "Thus this ostracon is either really earlier (level 5?) or archaizing, copying the shapes of the letters of the monumental script" (300). In light of the mixed Aramaic Phoenician scripts at Syene, it seems best to simply identify this abecedary as a practice exercise by a Phoenician writer learning the Aramaic script, particularly since we lack a way to reliably date Aramaic hands from the fifth century (*NAP*, pp. 219–27).

14. Knauf, "Elephantine," 236.

15. Lemaire, *Leventine Epigraphy*, 60–61; Lemaire, "Aramaic Literacy," esp. 299–301.

a message and resembles the introductory formula more closely akin to those found in the Hermopolis letters. Given the Babylonian origins of the Persian-period Aramaic scribal tradition, these gods may simply be part of a training manual for composing correspondences. But if we look more closely at CG no. 277, we find that it too may have been written by one who knew Phoenician and was learning the chancellery script. The first words ʾLʾḤY, "To my brother," are written without a word break, but in a hand that differs from that of the rest of the document. The *alef*s are nicely formed with steady strokes, but the *alef*s in the word ʾḤWK, "your brother," and ʾḤY, "my brother," in line 2 are poorly written. In fact, they look strange in part because their initial vertical stroke was written, then deemed too short by the writer, and lengthened to a strangely long stroke. But this was probably done because the *alef*s' horns were written too low compared to the length of the first vertical. Similarly, the Ḥ in the first word exhibits the expected cursive ductus and steady-handed strokes of a well-written letter form, but those elsewhere are written with unconnected strokes. Furthermore, while the Š on line 2 looks fairly regular apart from its vertical ductus, those on line 3 indicate that the writer had the small Phoenician forms of Š in mind. In Phoenician, the letter sits high on the line and with a wide unconnected v-shape that was vertically met with a center stroke. The ostracon is a palimpsest with indications of long similarly attempted strokes on the erased text, and the writer's name Yarḥû (i.e., Jericho) looks more Phoenician than Aramaic.[16] It seems to me that the ostracon was begun by one trained in Aramaic and completed by someone who was learning the script and correspondence format. This nicely aligns with the larger administrative milieu at Elephantine for which ostraca missives became the genre of choice for orders, receipts, and promissory notes.

## Cursive Administrative Phoenician and the Aramaic Chancellery Script

As noted in the previous chapter, there is good evidence that the Persians mandated some types of documents to be taught across the empire. This applied to some administrative genres, such as memoranda, but certainly to decrees and therefore also letter formats. While a teacher may have preferred a particular letter format, the formats were similar enough that any trained administrator in the empire could understand a letter written by any other trained individual. This was especially true of the provincial decrees (ṬʿM-documents), which had standardized features. The above discussion of Phoenician administrative

16. Kornfeld, *Onomastica Aramaica*, 54; Benz, *Personal Names*, 27, 129, 326.

scribal traditions shows that throughout Lower and Upper Egypt some working in the Mediterranean's economic language of Phoenician attempted to learn the Aramaic script. The evidence suggests that, in addition to formatting types of documents, the imperial administrative system propagated a single script type. Abecedaries illustrate those attempting to learn the preferred handwriting features of this script. The conclusion is that a single and legible Aramaic script that could be read by all administrators across the empire was also a central feature of the imperial administrative curriculum. This conclusion is not new, but the evidence marshaled above provides, for the first time, the way and reasons why the script was employed in the Egyptian province. Scholarship has mostly concerned itself with the graphic study of this script, but consideration of its sociohistorical importance leads to a number of conclusions.[17] The foremost of these is that, in Egypt, knowing the chancellery script likely came with some advantage, either financial or social. The script was necessary to transfer economic data from those working in the Mediterranean market economy into administrative Aramaic where the highly trained accountants for the Persian administration could preserve the content on record rolls. Training lower- and middle-tiered administrators in the chancellery script connected the transportation industry to the landholdings system.

Those learning the script, particularly those previously trained in Phoenician, may have been ethnically far removed from a so-called Semitic culture. As noted above, there is good evidence that those using Phoenician in the Mediterranean market economy were not "Phoenicians"—that is, people ethnically derived or native to the eastern Mediterranean regions of mostly Sidon or Tyre—but were instead one of the non-Semitic speaking peoples engaged in the market economy. Evidence is clear from Syene that vessels from the eastern Aegean were labeled with Phoenician, and it seems best to posit that Carians were the merchants in charge of those vessels (Moore, *Semitica* 64, p. 103). As argued above, such individuals learned and used the Phoenician language for the most basic level of administrative documentation, labeling vessels with names, abbreviations, dates, or as items. In most cases, these Phoenician words could be transposed into the Aramaic chancellery script letter-by-letter and became comprehensible to the Aramaic administrator. For example, Bezalel Porten and André Lemaire observed that no. 10 in their collection of Syene labels, which reads "Sidonian," was written in the Aramaic script but used Phoenician orthography.[18] It is important to note that this particular amphora

17. Cross, "Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran," 149 (as a presumption); Naveh, *Development of the Aramaic Script*; Gzella, *Cultural History of Aramaic*, chapter 4. See also Rosenthal, *Die aramaistische Forschung*, 58–60.

18. Porten and Lemaire, "Personal Names," 165.

was made from Nile silt;[19] the vessel appears to never have left Egypt.[20] Therefore, whether the administrator who marked the vessel with Aramaic was a Sidonian himself cannot be known, and it is also unclear whether the Sidonian refers to the contents of the jar or the person to whom it belongs.[21] Nonetheless, it appears to simply be a transcription of the Phoenician administrative script into the chancellery script.

Learning the unique features of Aramaic orthography doubtlessly would have been a useful skill for those attempting to rise from the lower administrative levels to invaluable ranks of personnel mediating between the transportation industry and the provincial administration. I have argued that the evidence shows that Phoenician writers had a vested interested in learning and using the Aramaic chancellery script. But could the opposite have been true? Lemaire in his rebuttal of Röllig's identification of Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 19, as a Phoenician abecedary posited that "a person who could read Aramaic could also probably read names written in Phoenician."[22] This conjecture is certainly intriguing but so far not supported by the evidence. Certainly, a bright accountant trained in the most advanced levels of administrative Aramaic may have endeavored to try to learn the varieties of the Phoenician script that circulated the Mediterranean, especially the cursive administrative Phoenician script of the fifth century BCE. But Phoenician—particularly its common cursive forms—is significantly different from contemporary Aramaic. It should be remembered that the cursive script of the Phoenician papyrus account Moore and Gorea, *CRAIBL 2021*, no. 3, was too difficult to read, even for scholars who published the many thousands of Phoenician texts in the CIS. It was not until 1912 when Mark Lidzbarski reedited the Elephantine Phoenician labels from the German excavations of 1906–8 that administrative Phoenician was fully deciphered.[23] Even then, some of Lidzbarski's readings of clearly written labels are contestable.[24] Unlike the Aramaic chancellery script, cursive Phoenician letter forms are difficult to read without knowing the Phoenician language with some familiarity or fluency. Thus, as the evidence now stands, it seems more likely that learning the Aramaic chancellery script was the goal of an aspiring Phoenician, particularly in Egypt. The market forces of the greater Mediterranean, which was only partially under Persian rule, did not destroy or supplant the Phoenician script with

19. Porten and Lemaire, "Personal Names," 164.

20. This calls to mind the DAIK/SI archaeological reports about finds on Elephantine; the 1990 report discusses an example of Levantine-style pottery made of Egyptian material (Kaiser et al., "17./18. Grabungsbericht," pls. 37–53, p. 240).

21. Compare the reference to "Sidonian wine" in the tax ledger of the Ahiqar Palimpsest (pl. G r ii 8).

22. Lemaire, "Aramaic Literacy," 300.

23. Lidzbarski, *Phönizische und aramäische Krugaufschriften*.

24. See, for example, the discussion of Moore, *Semitica* 64, no. 5.

Aramaic. But in Egypt, the influence was unidirectional. It was desirable to learn Aramaic but less desirable to learn Phoenician.

## Conclusions

The observations made in the last two chapters can be placed into a historical context. The chancellery script is a key feature in the propagation of an imperial administrative curriculum. Instruction for the standardization of this script, along with letter formatting, appears to have been sent through the Persian postal system, and this system would have been an ideal vehicle for the efficient diffusion of Achaemenid propaganda; the Ahiqar Manuscript and the Darius Inscription, both found at Elephantine, are examples of such diffused propaganda used for educational purposes. Lemaire, in particular, has marshaled a convincing argument that from the era of Darius I onward schooling was a priority of the Persian authorities.[25] Given the Aramaic evidence in Egypt, it seems that from Xerxes onward a more rigid administrative training existed in Egypt, which ultimately excluded the Egyptian language from the higher-level administration in the Nile Valley and Delta. After the suppression of the Inaros revolts of the mid-fifth century, it seems Aršama introduced a pro-Mediterranean and pro-Phoenician economic plan that included Elephantine and Syene. As the Phoenician and Aramaic administrative scribal cultures began to interact, efforts were made to train adult Phoenician administrators in the Aramaic script in order to monitor the influx of Mediterranean trade throughout the landholdings of the Egyptian province.

25. Lemaire, "Remarques sur l'emploi," esp. 241–42.

CHAPTER 3

# Aramaic Administrative Practices in the al-Yahudu Documents

IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT THE PERSIANS took over and fine-tuned the Aramaic administration that had already existed in Syria and Mesopotamian in the Neo-Babylonian period.[1] In the Judean settlement of al-Yahudu, as in much of Babylonia and the environs of Nippur, local administrations continued using the cuneiform administrative scribal tradition. Scholars of Late Babylonian sources have discussed this continuation as the "long sixth century," but new research is revealing that while the cuneiform training with regard to tablet formatting mostly continued, nuance in terminology or procedure alludes to administrative reforms initiated by the Persians.[2] Some administrative idioms were introduced after the Persian conquest, specifically the notion of "going to Elam" (B4), which is a circumlocution for the *ilku*-labor tax. One also finds Iranian loanwords, such as *pardēsu*, which is used to identify a larger regional unit in which a field of dates is distinguished (C53).[3] Similarly, Francis Joannès and André Lemaire have observed major geopolitical shifts after the Persian conquest.[4] The dossiers of larger entrepreneurial businesses of the period, such as the Egibi family, Belšunu the governor, or the Murašû firm, attest to shifting politics, but so too do the many records of rural settlements in the environs of Nippur, where al-Yahudu (lit. Judahtown) was situated. The Persians took over this region where the Neo-Babylonians had settled many communities on state land. The collections of cuneiform sources that come from the region of Nippur, such as the Šaṭir settlement or al-Yahudu, are relatively few compared to the large urban temple archives but provide a view into the rural administrative

1. Neo-Babylonian (period) refers to the politically defined period between the Neo-Assyrian and Persian periods. Late Babylonian refers to the dialect of Babylonian-Akkadian that was in use from the Neo-Babylonian through Hellenistic periods.

2. For nuance of the land's taxation system, see Kleber, *Taxation in the Achaemenid Empire*. For potential Aramaic scribal reform, see Moore, "Traces of Administrative Reform."

3. Also notable, but outside the Judean corpus, is the use of *baga* in the Akkadian sources (e.g., CT 22, 422). I thank Peter Zilberg for this reference.

4. Joannès and Lemaire, "Trois tablettes cunéiform."

landscape that is otherwise mostly unknown in surviving Persian-period documentation (see DUBSAR 31, p. 1).

The al-Yahudu and the larger Nippurian rural landscape provide an obvious node of comparison for the Elephantine Aramaic material because both concern Judeans in the Persian period; however, the differences between the context of the Egyptian province and the Mesopotamian province must always be borne in mind. Firstly, al-Yahudu was a Neo-Babylonian settlement of presumably a deportee population from the former kingdom of Judah. This is different in political scope from the colonial venture of the Yahô temple at Elephantine. The Persians inherited al-Yahudu, which already had an administrative protocol that governed the population. By making Aramaic the imperial administrative language, the Persians adopted and adapted throughout the empire sociological and political notions from Syria-Mesopotamia, but they evolved these structures toward an imperial agenda while also allowing for local nuance. They systematized the political structures of the provinces not with rigid terminology but rather with generally analogous bureaucratic systems. As a result, the sociology of al-Yahudu differed from that found at Elephantine. Al-Yahudu's system of *šušānū*, bowfields, and storehouse management as well as the *ḫatru* system known from the later Murašû dossier preexisted the DGL-units, century units, and temple-management system of the Egyptian province and therefore differ from it. So while correspondences can be drawn between the communities, they can at most be considered heuristically valuable analogies. Furthermore, while Judeans in one part of the empire may have had a vague conception that Judeans existed in other parts of the empire, it is safe to assume the two communities did not know each other. Generally speaking, state dependents existed within their provincial level and only crossed the provincial boundaries as royal imperial personnel or specialized traders/merchants with state approval, which is something a Judean farmer was unlikely to do.

The imperial administration, regardless of province, included rural farmlands that were monitored by urban administrations. In this way, the al-Yahudu and larger evidence from Nippur is valuable for the study of Elephantine. The Mesopotamian sources provide evidence of Aramaic administration in the rural lands, mostly in the form of Aramaic epigraphs written on cuneiform texts. At the same time, the temple administration of Elephantine provides a perspective on the responsibilities of an urban Judean center that was supported by a rural administration.

Hebrew and Aramaic epigraphs survive on about 10 percent of the tablets collected in two editions of the al-Yahudu and related sources, CUSAS 28 and BaAr 6. Although the data is scant, currently it indicates a shift in the administration at the onset of Persian rule. Only three epigraphs survive on tablets dated to the Neo-Babylonian period and all three are Hebrew. Sixteen tablets have legible

Aramaic epigraphs.[5] The earliest dates to the first year of Cyrus and the latest to the ninth year of Xerxes. The current evidence then shows that at the dawn of Persian rule in Mesopotamia, the Judean community in al-Yahudu switched its local administration from a Hebrew to an Aramaic scribal culture. The evidence does not indicate whether this Hebrew administration was supplanted by different Aramaic administrators writing the epigraphs or whether the Hebrew administrators adopted Aramaic. Regardless, it seems that Cyrus brought, either by mandate or through incentives, a reform that affected the rural administration of Nippur.[6]

Another administrative shift is noticeable in the Aramaic epigraphic record of the surviving cuneiform tablets after the accession of Xerxes. The cuneiform record from al-Yahudu goes silent after the ninth year of Xerxes (477 BCE; C53). At the start of Xerxes's reign, a Babylonian uprising against the Persians formed (484 BCE). According to the editors of CUSAS 28, "Xerxes's revenge against the supporters of the competing contenders for the political power in Babylonia did not directly affect the rural deportee populations and the administrators of royal domains in charge of the land-for-service holdings. This is portrayed in our corpus in a manner consistent with contemporary archives of similar settings that extend further than 484 BCE" (CUSAS 28, p. 4). The ascension of Xerxes came with a growing administrative change in Mesopotamia, but unlike the abrupt administrative shift witnessed at the ascension of Cyrus, the change brought by Xerxes was gradual in the rural region of Nippur. Neighboring communities, such as the town of Šaṭir, indicate that cuneiform continued in small quantities until nearly the end of the fifth century BCE. The gradual death of the cuneiform textual record in al-Yahudu does not necessarily signal the death of the Judean community in the region. Judean names continue to appear in the cuneiform textual record, particularly in the Murašû dossier, well into the fifth century BCE.[7] The observation to be made seems rather simple, Northwest Semitic communities, like the Judeans of al-Yahudu and neighboring rural areas, probably resorted to using only Aramaic documentation for their business dealings in the reign of Xerxes.

In support of the imperial imposition on the administrative activity of al-Yahudu in the reign of Xerxes is the type of Aramaic information that is found on the three latest surviving tablets with epigraphs, C52, C53, and J7, all of which date to the reign of Xerxes. As indicated by other studies on collections of epigraphs in the Neo-Assyrian through the Persian periods,[8] no discernible

5. MS 4506 is excluded from this calculation; it is simply an additional Late Babylonian tablet in the Schøyen collection. See discussion in Moore, "Aramaic and Hebrew Epigraphs."

6. Further discussion in Moore, "Traces of Administrative Reform."

7. Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia*, 3.

8. In particular, see Fales, *Aramaic Epigraphs on Clay Tablets*; Cussini, "Re-examination"; and Clay, "Aramaic Indorsements." Recently, see also DUBSAR 31, pp. 78–98.

system was used by Aramaic administrators who wrote the epigraphs, but patterns can be seen in the data. In the collection of tablets from CUSAS 28 and BaAr 6—with only one exception (B30) dated to the first year of Cyrus—the Aramaic epigraphs from Cambyses and Darius I contain only a single individual's name. This is mostly the contracting party who stands as the debtor, but in two (C42 and J10), perhaps three (C37), cases the lender is named. Tablet J7 (4 Xer) is the first to include the item of the transaction in addition to a note regarding a transacting party. The tablet is damaged and not much more can be said. C52 (7 Xer) is also damaged, but appears to not include the name of a transacting party. Lastly, C53 clearly refers to the debtor as well as the item of the transaction. It seems that the Aramaic administrators began to (once again) include more specific information on the tablets in the reign of Xerxes, while in the reigns of Cambyses and Darius I only a transacting individual was indicated, mostly the debtor. Much like the variously attested cuneiform scribes who wrote the tablets, it is safe to assume that various Aramaic administrators wrote the epigraphs. Therefore, the pattern witnessed during the reigns of Cambyses and Darius must not be considered the product of a single Aramaic administrative family; rather, it was part of a larger administrative schooling tradition of the Aramaic personnel at al-Yahudu.[9] This change at the ascension of Xerxes perhaps indicates a change in the system, such as a possible restructuring of the storehouse organization or management.

The degree to which the Aramaic administrator, who wrote a given epigraph, understood the cuneiform remains unclear. Only in the case of the epigraph on

9. The recently published Šaṭir legal texts also exhibit dossier-specific epigraphic practices. The small corpus of thirty-eight tablets comes from the rural region of Nippur and dates from 444 to 403 BCE. The tablets are contemporary with the vast majority of Elephantine material but postdate the al-Yahudu texts by a few decades. Eighteen of the thirty-eight tablets include incised epigraphs, a relatively high percentage and an indication that the administration preferred, if not normally demanded, transactions to occur in Aramaic. The very survival of this dossier is, like the al-Yahudu dossier (see below), likely owed to an attempt to gain an unfair advantage by creditors over their debtors, who could not read cuneiform and were unlikely to afford hiring their own cuneiform scribe to confirm the terms of their agreements. Seventeen of the eighteen epigraphs focus on the debtor (DUBSAR 31 nos. 2–7; 9–12; 15–16; 18; 20–21; 28–29; 32). Evidence of the Aramaic administration is found throughout. For instance, one Aramaic epigraph identifies the contract's barley (general term in the cuneiform) with barley flour in the Aramaic (no. 15). This is likely due to the different packaging and perhaps location in which flour is stored as opposed to barley kernels and the administrators who managed the different stores. This epigraph may even indicate with an abbreviation the type of vessel the barley flour was stored in, b(at-vessels). Unique to the dossier is a collection of untypical "exchange" (Akk. *šupêltu*) documents that commuted a previous obligation into another payable at an exchange rate (DUBSAR 31, pp. 17–21). In some cases this standard of conversion was governed by the municipality of Šatir, in others by the creditor's own standard. With these documents the creditors maintained a debt cycle, which was predatory and intentionally preserved in cuneiform to make recourse for the debtor even more expensive and complicated. Two of these exchange documents bear epigraphs stating the new debt (nos. 6 and 29), and one typical promissory note also states the debt owed (no. 9).

B59 is there a possible allusion to cuneiform scribal practice, namely, the use of A represented as ʾ to indicate the lineage of the debtor's master. But this possibility is highly speculative, as I indicated in the editio princeps.[10] All elements of the Aramaic epigraphs could have been orally communicated by the cuneiform scribe to the Aramaic administrator as indicated by the use of hypercoristic (e.g., J1 or J5) or phonetic (e.g., B59) spellings. The relationship between the Aramaic administrator and the cuneiform scribe remains an intriguing problem in other corpora, and there need not be only one social situation that explains their relationship. Each community with cuneiform scribes and Aramaic administrators may have shared different relationships.[11]

It should be emphasized that the community's adoption of cuneiform in the first place seems rather odd. There is little evidence that administrative documentation ever went from Aramaic into Babylonian in the Persian period (or the Neo-Babylonian period); the direction of translation would have been cuneiform to Aramaic for most administrative activity in Babylonia. This seems particularly true from Xerxes's reign onward. Only a few exceptional cases of paraphrastic translations of high-level administrative Aramaic decisions into Babylonian are known. These come from the large Mesopotamian temple economy of Sippar, which was a traditional center and a last bastion of cuneiform scribal culture (BM 79541 [7 Dar I = 515 BCE] and BM 75849 [17 Dar I = 505 BCE]).[12] As John MacGinnis notes, the Persians extended their reach and administrative oversight in the reign of Darius I into temple administrations across the empire as evidenced by a similar phenomenon at Elephantine regarding the appointment of a *lesonis*-priest in the Egyptian temple of Khnum.[13] Again, it must be reiterated that these examples are dated prior to the ascension of Xerxes.

The desire of the community to operate in Aramaic in al-Yahudu is already evident in the corpus prior to 484 BCE, and this is consistent with evidence from other sites.[14] In fact, the overall size of the cuneiform corpus from al-Yahudu remains relatively small and concentrated around two businessmen, Ahiqam and Ahiqar, and the scribes who worked with them. It has long been known by Assyriologists—but they are only now beginning to take stock in the fact—that the surviving data "is just a very minor part of the written output of this

10. Moore, "Aramaic and Hebrew Epigraphs," 376–77.

11. After dealing with the Aramaic epigraphs on Elamite evidence from Persepolis, Stolper and Tavernier ("From the Persepolis Fortification Archive Project," 19–20) have concluded that "even if writing cuneiform and writing alphabetic texts were different specialties, nevertheless many of the people who read and wrote Elamite cuneiform texts, and most of those who filed them, were comfortable with Aramaic, and the converse was probably also true."

12. MacGinnis, "Judgment of Darius the King," 93.

13. MacGinnis, "Judgment of Darius the King," 94n21, 96.

14. As argued by Sandowicz, "Before Xerxes," 36.

period."[15] The Aramaic epigraphs are the best surviving window into the robust Aramaic administrative activity in the region. But few have considered seriously the details of the epigraphs that do survive and what they tell us about the sociohistorical and administrative realities of a community's written record. This is surprising given that the epigraphs indicate the last administrative life of the tablets. Therefore, they are significant for solving major historical questions of the archives. In the following, I will argue that the al-Yahudu tablets point to having been stored at a community *kalakku* "storehouse/granary." This storehouse served as the locus of the Aramaic administration. My proposal provides an explanation for why the cuneiform documents survive.

## Aramaic and Hebrew Epigraphs

A number of Aramaic epigraphs survive on al-Yahudu texts.[16] It is quite possible that many more, particularly those written in ink, have been lost or effaced. Epigraphs in the collection appear on an unused edge of the tablet. An epigraph on the edge allows the tablet to be easily referenced, should it have been stored in a tablet box or a similar apparatus in which tablets may stand in rows. It is well known from literary sources that tablets were stored in "(wooden) tablet boxes" ($^{giš}$*ṭupšinnu*), but the word for a tablet box is so far not attested in Late Babylonian sources (*CAD* T 479–80). It nonetheless stands to reason that this or a similar filing system may also have been in place for Late Babylonian documentary archives.[17] Documents are associated with boxes (Aram. TBH [sing.]) in the ostraca from Elephantine (see CG no. 265), but it is

15. Clancier, "Cuneiform Culture's Last Guardians," 755–56, speaking of Hellenistic Mesopotamia, but the statement is relevant to the Persian period.

16. In addition, a forthcoming tablet BaAr 8, no. 28 (IM 141920, 25 Dar I = 497 BCE), contains a long Aramaic docket that describes the genre of the text, ⌜ʔ⌝WLT (= Akk. *uʾiltu*), "Promissory note," and the debtor, then two lines of Aramaic data follow. The first states: "concerning the house of . . ." and may be a reference to the family business of the lender. The second describes the debt owed: "Concerning barley, 12 kor [3] ⌜s(eah)⌝." It was incised after the cuneiform but while the clay was still plastic. For this tablet, the cuneiform is merely an emblem of the validity of the document and serves no practical administrative purpose, unless in the rare case a lawsuit was brought. I thank Cornelia Wunsch for asking me to interpret the epigraph and providing her transcription and translation.

Additionally, C47 contains two strange marks, one star-like and another arrow-like. These were scratched into the dried tablet. Their meaning is unknown. Other unknown but likely administrative marks are found on Murašu and Šaṭir documents (according to Peter Zilberg, personal communication).

17. Documentary sources do not describe the details of administrative activity. Only literary narratives or, more rarely, passing remarks in letters allude to them. Since so few Late Babylonian literary sources have been published, the lack of the term "tablet box" is not evidence that such apparatuses were no longer used in the period.

unclear if the papyri, and perhaps ostraca, stored in these boxes were related to the cuneiform- and leather-document traditions of Babylonian scribal culture.

### *Hebrew Epigraphs and the Aramaic Administrative Reform of the Persian Period*

A remarkable feature of three of the al-Yahudu texts is that epigraphs on them are written in Hebrew rather than Aramaic. Table 1 summarizes their data.

Lemaire has rightly argued that the Hebrew on two of these tablets is evidence of the continued use of Hebrew alongside Aramaic and Late Babylonian in the Judean community in Babylonia, at least in its earliest period.[18] But what does the presence of Hebrew tell us about the administrative activity in the community?

The two best preserved epigraphs, C10 and B1, are written eighteen years apart in the same location, though the name of the town had evolved over this time (CUSAS 28, p. 6). Furthermore, (1) they are both promissory notes for barley, and (2) each has a party member with the name Šalam-Yāma. The younger of the two tablets, C10, explicitly identifies Šalam-Yāma as the debtor, and his first name is clearly written in Hebrew on the edge of the tablet. In the earlier tablet the lender's, Nubâ's, patronymic is Šalam-Yāma. Unfortunately, this is a relatively common name in the corpus (CUSAS 28, p. 292), and therefore it cannot be said that this Nubâ, the name of at least seven distinct figures in the corpus, is the son of Šalam-Yāma (son of Nadab-Yāma) in C10. In fact, given the chronology, it is more likely that Šalam-Yāma in C10 should be Nubâ's son, which is clearly not the case. Thus, the only thing connecting these two epigraphs other than the Hebrew is the fact that they are written as debt notes for large quantities of barley.

When we look at the tablets and the scribal circumstances in a bit more detail, it can be observed that the Hebrew on both tablets was inscribed while the clay was still plastic. Furthermore, the forms of the letter H in the two documents are written based on different typological letter structures. The Hebrew writer of B1 wrote the rightward diagonal stroke (↘) of H first and later crossed it with the upper leftward diagonal stroke (↙); he built the letter from right-to-left. The opposite is true of C10, and it seems highly unlikely that the same writer would vary the archetypal structure of a letter's stroke pattern to this degree. Thus, the Hebrew reveals that at least two different administrators between 572 and 567 BCE were active in the community.

Both documents are promissory notes for barley, and fairly large amounts of barley at that. The Hebrew was inscribed while the clay was still plastic, that

18. Lemaire, *Levantine Epigraphy*, 43–44.

TABLE 1. Hebrew epigraphs on the al-Yahudu and related tablets (BaAr 6, pp. 380–81)

| Text | Writing | Line | Transliteration | Translation | Subject | Eponym | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | Incised | le. e. | ŠMD⌜N⌝ | Šummiddi⌜n⌝ | Debtor | 20.i.33 Neb | 572 BCE |
| C10 | Incised | le. e. | ŠLMYH | Šalamyah | Debtor | 23.x.6 Nab | 550 BCE |
| B1 | Incised | le. e. | LṢDQY | To/for Ṣidqî | Adminis-trator(?) | 7.ix.38 Neb | 567 BCE |
| | | lo. e. | ●HW● BN HS | He is a son of the s(cribal office) | | | |

is, shortly after the cuneiform had been written. These circumstances agree in general terms with the observations made about the Aramaic epigraphs (below), and it stands to reason that the tablets with Hebrew epigraphs were probably stored not with a particular businessman or scribe but in a communal archive. The Hebrew administrator was probably responsible for filing and maintaining the debt records of the members of the community, who still natively spoke Hebrew. Whether this is due to a legacy of Hebrew speakers within some al-Yahudu families or whether this represents new influxes of deportees to the community is unknown. What can be said is that at least two local Hebrew administrators mediated Late Babylonian legal texts between the community members and the government. While there is no evidence that this continued into the Persian period, it calls to mind the Phoenician administrators of the fifth century BCE in Egypt who also mediated between Phoenician users and the imperial administration as discussed in chapter 2.

### *Aramaic Epigraphs and Their Administrative Context*

Sixteen identifiable, and mostly legible, Aramaic epigraphs and one Aramaic seal impression survive on the al-Yahudu tablets. As noted, they span the duration of the community's known documents. Table 2 summarizes the data of these sources.

Two of the epigraphs are written with ink, so there is no way of knowing when they were added to the tablets, but they must have been written after the tablet had dried, that is, at least a few hours after the cuneiform had been written. Likewise, B30 was inscribed on the semidried tablet leaving some strokes as incisions and others as scratches. The remaining tablets were incised into the clay while it was still plastic and thus were written very shortly after the

TABLE 2. Aramaic epigraphs on the al-Yahudu and related tablets (BaAr 6, pp. 372–73)

| Text | Writing | Line | Transliteration | Translation | Subject | Eponym | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C37 | Incised | le. e. | [ŠṬR] ZY Šˤ[R]N | [Document] of bar[l]ey (of) | Item and lender(?) / | 22.xi.10 Dar | 512 BCE |
| | | r. e. | ˤB⌜D⌝ . . . | ˤAb⌜d⌝(yahû) | Lender's father (?) | | |
| C40 | Ink | le. e. | ŠṬR LY⌜ŠW⌝[ˤ] | Document (written) for Ye⌜šû⌝[ˤa] | Codebtor/partner | 10.ix.5 Dar | 517 BCE |
| C41 | Incised | le. e. | ˤBDY⌜H⌝W | ˤAbdya⌜h⌝û | Debtor | 6.ii.5 Dar | 517 BCE |
| C42 | Incised | le. e. | ⌜ʾW⌝LT NN⌜ʾ⌝L⌜TR⌝Ḫ | ⌜Prom⌝issory note of Nana⌜ʾu⌝l⌜tara⌝ḫ | Lender's | ⌜7⌝.[?].13 [Dar] | 509(?) BCE |
| C52 | Incised | le. e. | ⌜Š⌝ṬR Z[◦(◦)] | ⌜Do⌝cument of Z[◦(◦)] | Transaction type | 20.i.7 Xer | 479 BCE |
| C53 | Incised | le. e. | BYTʾL ḪSN⌜Y⌝ | Bêtʾelḫisn⌜î⌝ | Codebtor and | 25.v.9 Xer | 477 BCE |
| | | lo. e. | TMRN KRN III III | Dates, 6 kor | Item of sale | | |
| C71B | Ink | le. e. | ŠṬR \| . . . | Document \| . . . | — | 15.ix.1 Cam | 529 BCE |
| C102 | Incised | le. e. | . . . | . . . | Debtor's father | 5.i.1 Cyr | 538 BCE |
| | | lo. e. | ([. . .])⌜B⌝LʾDN | ([. . .])⌜Be⌝lʾiddin | | | |
| B30 | Incised | le. e. | ⌜K⌝SP ʾḤQR | ⌜Si⌝lver, ʾAḫiqar | Item. Debtor | 11.v.8 Cyr | 531 BCE |
| B59 | Incised | lo. e. | ⌜B⌝ZR BˤLH | ⌜Ba⌝zzer(i), his master is | Debtor. Debtor's master | 18.xi.3. Dar | 519 BCE |
| | | le. e. | ʾ ZYR⌜BN⌝ | ʾA Zêri⌜bni⌝ | | | |
| B89 | Incised | le. e. | [. . .]◦(◦) ◦Š◦ | [. . .]◦(◦) ◦Š◦ | — | ? . ? . 20 Dar | 501 BCE |
| B92 | Incised | le. e. | ⌜N⌝DT ◦[. . .] | ⌜Ni⌝dittu ◦[. . .] | Debtor | 17.? . ? [Dar] | ??? |
| J1 | Incised | le. e. | ʾWT ʾYK | Matter of ʾAyakku | Debtor | 28.ix.6 Dar | 516 BCE |
| | | | BR ZˤRʾ | son of Zeˤeraʾ/Zuˤruʾ | | | |
| J5 | Incised | u. e. | LBRKʾL | To/for Barikʾel | Debtor | 5.ix.22 Dar | 500 BCE |
| | | le. e. | BR ṬBʾ | son of Ṭabaʾ | | | |
| J7 | Incised | rev. | BˤL [◦◦◦]ḪNṬYʾ ZY | Baˤal- . . . The wheat of | Item (rest unclear) | 10.xi.4 Xer | 482 BCE |
| | | | ZBBŠRʾṢR BˤL P I | Zababašarʾuṣur owner of 1 P. (=36 liter) | | | |
| J10 | Incised | u. e. | ʾDNY | ʾIddinaya | Creditor | 10.[?].1 Cam | 530 BCE |
| | | le. e. | BR NBWQM | son of Nabûqam | | | 529 BCE |

cuneiform text. This is true of most surviving incised Aramaic epigraphs, such as those from the neighboring, but later, Šatir dossier.

No immediate pattern emerges that explains all the epigraphs. All except C42 and J9 refer to one of the debtors mentioned as parties in the contracts. This is fairly consistent with the findings of Eleonora Cussini in her survey of the Aramaic epigraphs from the Persian-period archive at Karš. In apparently all cases in Cussini's texts, the debtor or lessor is mentioned in the Aramaic. Seventeen of the eighteen Šatir epigraphs also mention the debtor. The frequent formula ŠṬR (debtor) "Document of (debtor)," or minor variations thereof, is found in our texts two, perhaps three, times: C40, C71B (see "Copying Tablets" below). In two instances, C53 and B30, the currency, which is the subject of the contractual exchange, is mentioned followed by the debtor's name. In one, C41, only the name of the debtor is found.[19] This leaves C42, which is exceptional in a number of ways. First, rather than the term ŠṬR, "Document of," the Aramaic reads ʾWLT, "*Uʾiltu* of." The technical Akkadian term *uʾiltu* begins the contract in the cuneiform text as well. This Akkadian loanword into Aramaic is known from a few other epigraphs on Late Babylonian texts, but unique here is the reference to the lender. This is no ordinary lender either; Nanâ-ultaraḫ is a female servant, who is only identified by the broken first name of her owner or the institution to which she belongs. She lent 3 kor of dates (ca. 540 liters) to three men. According to the document, the debt was paid on behalf of the three men by the businessman Ahiqam, who presumably then became the de facto lender and would have had a contract written to that effect. Furthermore, unique to this tablet is the scribe, who instead of a patronymic bears the family name "The Carpenter." This particular text must be seen as an outlier, and its full administrative meaning is not yet realized.

It seems clear, then, that most of the Aramaic epigraphs were written by an administrator at, or very shortly after, the same time the cuneiform was impressed. The purpose of the epigraph was to identify easily the debtor and perhaps the type of currency in which the debt was made. This reasonably excludes the notion that the tablets were held by the debtors. The data lead to two possible reconstructions of the administrative social context. First, the tablet was a copy held by the businessman serving as creditor or his scribe, and the Aramaic allowed him or his administrator(s) to easily find the tablet in his bureau. I do not think this is the case. There is a debate in the literature about the texts published in CUSAS 28 as to whether the tablets are best arranged as dossiers of the businessmen, as the editors of the volume had argued, or whether

19. The Aramaic of the seal impression on J9 is inconsequential for the administrative meaning of the tablet.

they should be seen as dossiers of the scribes who wrote the contracts.[20] Neither view completely explains the corpus. Furthermore, there seems to be a close relationship between at least one scribe, Arad-Gula, and the businessman Ahiqar. In their case, no clear argument can be made either way. It is quite likely that Arad-Gula helped manage Ahiqar's business. In such a situation there would be no distinction between the creditor or scribe holding the tablets.

Second, and I believe more likely, the Aramaic epigraphs indicate the copy of the tablet that was stored in a community office. I suspect this office was located at a community storage facility in which the currency could be deposited, and at the same time the debt note could be found and "crushed" and a receipt issued, probably in Aramaic. The corpus refers to the deposit of currency into a storehouse. The *bāb kalakki*, "the gate of the storehouse," is mentioned frequently in the texts,[21] and the phrase "gate of [institution]" is a well-known expression for a scribal administrative center from the Neo-Assyrian period onward. In fact, the documents from the slightly later but neighboring Šaṭir dossier now directly spell out this process in three tablets (DUBSAR 31 nos. 1, 3, 11). For example, no. 3 reads: "In the month of Ayyāru, he (debtor) shall deliver those 6 kor of barley according to the tariff of the land, using the 1-*pānu* measure of Šamaš-zēri-ibni (creditor), in Šāṭir, at the entrance to the granary" (DUBSAR 31 no. 3 lines 4–8).[22] Of the three tablets with this instruction, only here is the land's tariff mentioned. Michael Jursa has concluded that this statement found elsewhere refers to a standard interest rate prescribed by the municipality;[23] though if correct, it is unclear why this would be an optional statement for a scribe to add. Nonetheless reflecting on the land's tariff, Kathleen Abraham and Peter Zilberg astutely observe, "The *nisḫu* promissory notes from Šāṭir were probably registered with the local representatives of the Crown" (DUBSAR 31, p. 16). They do not suggest that the present tablets were held by the crown, but this is, I believe, closest to the solution. The whole surviving corpus was likely held in the "gate of the *kalakku*," which in turn was a rural municipal branch of the state administration.

Not all of the al-Yahudu documents refer to this storehouse/granary/*kalakku*, but reason dictates that if a legally binding promissory note had been written to ensure a debt would be paid, it would have been in the best interest of the debtor to have an official receipt for the payment. These receipts were probably written mostly in Aramaic,[24] but a few receipts also survive in the cuneiform

20. Waerzeggers, Review, 184–89.

21. B14, B32, B35, B37, B59, B68, C3–C5, C7, C36–C37, C65, C68, C87, C89, C90, C94.

22. Translation from DUBSAR 31.

23. Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History*, 492–95.

24. Note that a similar phenomenon occurred in the region of Maqqedah and Maresha in the southern Levant at the end of the Persian period and into the Hellenistic period (see Lemaire,

corpus (e.g., C6, B6, B18, B28, B41). Furthermore a catalog, of likely memorandum entries, was kept by the storehouse administrator as evidenced by such documents in the surviving records in Egypt and Bactria.[25] Perhaps most important—and to my knowledge not articulated in the Assyriological studies on the matter—is the practical factor: it seems unreasonable that a debtor would be required to collect an official cuneiform scribe or Aramaic accountant along with witnesses, then bring them to the creditor along with a large amount of currency in order to clear a debt. It should be remembered that while silver could stand as fungible currency for dates or barley, often the demand is for the debt to be paid in kind.[26] The sums of the debt are frequently over 1,000 liters of product. It seems impractical that these types of transactions occurred without an official intermediary, such as an institutional storage facility, near the community from which witnesses, scribes, and accountants can be readily found. The fact that debt documents were recorded at all implies that the state had mechanisms to ensure the legality of those documents, both storage facilities functioning as banks for the transactions and a judiciary for recourse should a debtor default.

## Poorly Trained Cuneiform Scribes or Big Fish in a Small Pond?

In his study on the linguistic analysis of the Judean corpus from Babylonia, Johannes Hackl argues that the scribes writing the cuneiform texts were poorly trained in the cuneiform scribal tradition. He makes two significant points that are worth discussing with regard to administrative practices. First, he argues that the legal documents use many expressions similar to those found in the vernacular of Late Babylonian correspondences. He holds that the scribes of the Judean legal sources were native Babylonians who used informal language in formal contractual documents. This means, for him, that neither Aramaic nor Hebrew (he prefers the term "non-native [Babylonian] speakers") influenced the Babylon scribes, and he cites a limited number of loanwords in the contracts as evidence of this. His second point is found in his conclusion; he writes that "*because* [the scribes] completed their scribal education at a relatively low level," they were sent to work in the countryside and villages.[27]

"Achaemenid Taxation," 336–43). For further comparison, consider the context, when available, of the Idumea ostraca, some of which appear to have been found in a cave used as a field house at el-Qôm in a dedicated room (see Shahryari, "Recherche," 57–60). Other find-spots, according to Shahryari, include storage facilities and granaries (71).

25. Moore, "Legality of Persian Period Memoranda," esp. 168–69.

26. See Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History*, 645–80.

27. Hackl, "Babylonian Scribal Practices," 138. Emphasis original.

To his first point, I have argued elsewhere that we may deem the scribes of the Judean corpus used Late Babylonian vernacular so long as we understand this vernacular as having been strongly influenced by Aramaic.[28] I follow the seminal work of Paul-Alain Beaulieu on this matter, who has shown convincingly in a number of studies that the vernacular of Late Babylonian was a menagerie of Babylonian, which had been for centuries in contact with Aramaic.[29] The different imperial pushes by the Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Persian rulers to use Aramaic at an administrative level continued to influence the vernacular. Hackl is correct that the spoken language in the heart of Mesopotamia throughout the reign of Darius I is not technically Aramaic—though I wonder whether those using the language would have seen it this way. Nonetheless, from an Aramaic perspective, many of Hackl's examples of vernacular usage in the contracts are reminiscent of standard Aramaic idioms, and as was shown above in the case of the loanword *uʾiltu*, many Babylonianisms made their way into the dialects of Aramaic spoken in the region. The administrative scribal relationship was reciprocal, and in the fifth century the statistical data shows that cuneiform was more heavily influenced by Aramaic than the other way around.[30]

As for Hackl's conclusion that poorly trained cuneiform scribes worked in rural communities *because of* their poor training, I find this idea contestable. The editor of the collection, Cornelia Wunsch, shares a similar sentiment to mine when she writes, "The tablets available to us show that even these second- or third-rank scribes were generally competent and flexible when needed. They clearly knew enough to deal even with cases or requirements that were not covered by the school instruction book. Their ability to improvise and apply parts of known staple clauses with specific twists shows their imaginative approach and reflects the high standard of education in general."[31] From my point of view, it is hard to imagine any academic setting that prizes merit and ability as an organizational principle, and this is certainly true of cuneiform scribal culture in the mid-first millennium BCE. To be sure, there are moments when institutional needs coincide with individual opportunity and ability, but these are exceptional circumstances and hardly the rule. One need only reflect on the modern and historical state of the academy to find incompetence at the highest

28. Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," 45.

29. Beaulieu, "Yahwistic Names"; Beaulieu, "Official and Vernacular Languages"; Beaulieu, "Arameans, Chaldeans, and Arabs"; Beaulieu, "Aspects."

30. Many studies demonstrate a growing number of Aramaisms or Aramaic scribal influence on the texts. See Zadok, "On Aramaic Loanwords"; Zadok, "Arameo-Akkadica"; Zadok, "Arameo-Akkadica II"; Zadok, "Arameo-Akkadica III"; Zadok, "Yamu-Iziri the Summoner"; and Abraham and Sokoloff, "Aramaic Loanwords in Akkadian."

31. BaAr 6, pp. 9–10.

levels and talent at the lowest. Cuneiform scribal culture normally operated within a status quo that favored pedigree, family, and civil loyalty over ability. The Aramaic Story of Ahiqar exhibits these principles well and became an Aramaic critique of the cuneiform scribe.[32] It is a profound historical coincidence that the predatory business man exploiting cuneiform scribal culture for his gain in the al-Yahudu documents is also named Ahiqar, an otherwise uncommon name in ancient sources.[33]

Literature, such as Ahiqar, was a coping mechanism that played on the reality that talent and opportunity do not coincide in the scribal world. The operating principles of the narrative are based in the fact that cuneiform scribes maintained status and power according to a status quo that subjugated Aramaic scribal culture. The catalyst for the plot's development is when the wise scribe and councilor—a role which implies an Assyrian *ummânu*, the most elite scribal position—Ahiqar resorted to nepotism to train and instate his inept successor in his position. From Ahiqar's perspective his successor Nadin betrays him. By means of manipulation, murder, and cronyism, Ahiqar saved face. Part of the success of this fictional story is that it holds a truth about the sociology of educated institutional structures: a baseline ability that establishes a status quo is all that is needed in a system that operates on privilege of lineage or pedigree.

On this point, I wish to highlight one of Hackl's acute observations, namely, that some scribes sign their tablets with their pedigree. The most active cuneiform scribe in the al-Yahudu corpus was Arad-Gula, who wrote some contracts for the businessman Ahiqam (B5), but many for the businessman Ahiqar. Arad-Gula was one of the most careless scribes of the corpus. He made a number of errors, inconsistently spelled words and names, and used a high frequency of Aramaisms or vernacular terms. It is difficult to determine if the unpolished language of his contracts is owed to incompetence or carelessness. The distinction has lasting sociohistorical effects on our understanding of the community. I see him as careless, Hackl sees him as incompetent. Arad-Gula always signed his contracts with his family pedigree, "The scribe: Arad-Gula son of Nabû-šum-ukīn of the lineage of Amēl-Ea." My impression of this scribe is that he believed his pedigree compensated for any carelessness or inadequacies found in his contracts. But the reality was that very few cuneiform scribes would have checked his work in these rural settings, and he knew it. He was a big fish in a small pond. His contracts mostly served as visual representations of formal and legal documents, which were not read by either the parties or the Aramaic administrators serving as the bankers and clearing the debts. Presumably, most of the tablets had Aramaic epigraphs on them written in ink, which are now

32. Moore, *Literary Depictions*.
33. For the discussion of the name, see Moore, "Ahikariana," 253–56.

effaced, or each tablet was immediately committed to the banker's memorandum roll. Either way, the Aramaic, not the cuneiform, would have served as the functional administrative information necessary for the completion of the promissory note. The cuneiform was solely for legal recourse had a dispute arisen.

It is important to emphasize again that the community for which these cuneiform scribes wrote was not Babylonian; the community spoke, read, and wrote Aramaic or Hebrew and conducted the vast majority of their business in these languages. The only genres of sources to survive are a relatively few cuneiform legal documents written by a relatively low number of cuneiform scribes over a long period of time. This evidence leads one toward the conclusion that cuneiform may have been used in legal transactions by a few businessmen in order to maintain power over the parties with whom they did business. Although the terms for a transaction were negotiated in Aramaic or Hebrew, writing the legally binding conditions in Akkadian allowed only those who had access to a cuneiform scribe the ability to check the contractual stipulations. As I have noted elsewhere, in some cases Arad-Gula and Ahiqar, in particular, appear to have formed an alliance and occasionally Arad-Gula added addendums to Ahiqar's legal contracts *after* the witnesses agreed to be listed on the contract![34] Manipulation of legal transactions—that is, fraud—was a serious and punishable offense as shown in a court case from the Egibi archive (Nbn 720).[35] This court case in the Egibi archive, in particular, shows that fraud occurred among scribes aligned with entrepreneurial business families in the period. In the Judean corpus one may look at B21, which records the clearing of a debt note and includes a warranty that claims any other type of document thereafter is invalid. Such warranties are meant to curb fraud or at least to secure the specific transaction in favor of the creditor. In other cuneiform documents, only if the opposing Judean legal party had access to a cuneiform scribe could the terms of the contract be checked for fraud when the documents were drafted. Had the document been written in Aramaic or Hebrew, however, the opposing party would quite possibly have been able to check the terms themselves—if only by listening to the document read aloud. The very use of Late Babylonian in these communities in the Persian period was an administrative tool of social advantage and ultimately a predatory business practice.

34. Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," 45. In addition to what I argued in that study, it should be noted that the addendum to C69 provides a tax incentive for Ahiqar when the state authorities audit the records. By having the insolvent debtors in that contract "crush" (i.e., relinquish tax responsibility) for half of the field, the community takes on that debt, and not Ahiqar. In this case, it is a tax loophole.

35. Further discussion in BaAr 6, p. 16.

## Copying Tablets

Unlike the extant Aramaic documents, for which no exact duplicates of legal transactions survive,[36] the cuneiform corpus of Judean documents from Babylonia contains duplicates and in some cases references to duplicates. Table 3 lists the surviving duplicates in the corpus.[37] The duplicates C16A and 16B and C45 and HBM 8 refer to legal action that occurred outside of the normal locations where the tablets were written.[38] C45 and HBM 8 are the only tablets in the corpus written in Babylon. They refer to the division of the businessman Ahiqam's moveable property, and it seems his five sons wanted the property division legally arbitrated by a higher court and a neutral scribe. It is likely that at least three more official copies of the tablet once survived, one for each son. Unlike C71A and C71B, no significant variants appear between the two copies C45 and HBM 8.

I argue above that the surviving tablets were kept in the community archive for the purpose of finalizing the documentation when the debt was paid. If this is correct, how are the copies of C71A and C71B, loan documents involving Ahiqar, to be interpreted given their variants? These tablets are an example of the predatory cronyism inherent in the use of cuneiform in this period and among this community. Arad-Gula changes this business agreement in Ahiqar's favor. C71B adds line 8, which clarifies the boundaries of the property of Kīnâ that is given in pledge for the loan to Ahiqar. Furthermore, C71B adds a very important statement that is beneficial to Ahiqar. It reads that the yield of the field belongs to Ahiqar "until his barley and the silver from the yield of his field are received" (lines 10–11). This differs from C71A, which states that the yield from the field is Ahiqar's until "his account is paid" (*rašūssu išallim*). Ahiqar will not lose income due to changing exchange rates or exchange fees should the deal not go exactly as he wants. C71B allows no wiggle room for Kīnâ to settle the account in any other fashion than to repay the debt with the same currency in which it was loaned. This is implicitly rejecting something like an exchange document, examples of which are known from the neighboring Šaṭir dossier. This is only one example of the debt Kīnâ continues to owe to Ahiqar.

36. The only Aramaic duplicates are of the Petition of Yedanyah and his colleagues the priests to the governors of Samaria and Jerusalem (*TAD* A4.7‖A4.8). Although it was an "official" petition, it was not a "legal" document. The closest example of copies of legal documents are *TAD* B4.3 and B4.4, but their variances raise some doubt as to whether they were copies or corrections. A false start by a notary who erased nine(?) lines of text and corrected himself on the same manuscript can be found on *TAD* B3.12.

37. C67 and B24 appear at first glance to be near duplicates, but the parties differ, and therefore the documents were likely just similar transactions by two different brothers on the same day.

38. C16 may have been related to C20 and C91, but this is unclear.

TABLE 3. Duplicates of Judean tablets from Babylonia

| Texts | Date | Content | Scribe | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| C16A and 16B | 26. xii 9 Dar I = 512 BCE | Litigation over dates as rental income | Erība-Enlil / Širiktu | Amurru-šar-uṣur |
| C71A and 71B | 15.ix 1 Cam = 529 BCE | Promissory note for barley and silver | Arad-Gula / Nabû-šum-ukīn // Amēl-Ea | Našar |
| C17 and B6 | 8.xii 9 Dar I = 512 BCE | Receipt for silver | Šamaš-ēreš / Marduk-mukīn-apli | Bīt-Naʾinnašu |
| C45 and HBM 8 | 7.vii 16 Dar I = 504 BCE | Division of inherited shares of immovable property (slaves and items) | Ša-Marduk-ul-inni / Nabû-īpuš | Babylon |
| C98 near dup. C99 | 8.v 5 Cam = 525 BCE | Receipt for house rental | C98 = Arad-Gula / Nabû-šum-ukīn // Amēl-Ea C99 = Niqūdu / Ṣillâ | Našar |

In fact, four years later, Ahiqar pays Kīnâ's rent according to the duplicates C98 and C99. That particular transaction appears to have been so suspicious that a second cuneiform scribe was used, likely financed by Kīnâ, to write the copy. While the scribe Niqūdu son of Ṣillâ (C99) wrote some contracts for Ahiqar and knew him, Arad-Gula was used to copy the duplicate, likely on Ahiqar's behalf (C98). It seems probable that Ahiqar asked Arad-Gula to check that Niqūdu son of Ṣillâ and the owners of Kīnâ's house were not swindling him. Here too, Arad-Gula adds an addendum, an exception clause, stating that this transaction is not to be confused with others (lines 20–21). Waerzeggers holds the improbable position that Ahiqar paid the same price for the same fee twice on the same day in these two contracts, which is why two scribes wrote the documents and why there is an exception clause.[39] But as C17 and B6 show, two payments on the same day for the same transaction (one being an advance payment), may be written by the same scribe. For Waerzeggers's idea to be correct, one would expect a variation in the document's stipulations in some way, like that seen on C17 and B6 (see below). It could be that Ahiqar paid two years' rent on the same day and the dates should be restored in C99 as years 6–7 Cambyses. This seems unlikely though, since the scribe could have

39. Waerzeggers, Review, 191.

easily written the contract for a two-year lease payment at four shekels rather than the one-year lease at two shekels. Waerzeggers is correct, however, that the exception clause *makes it appear* as though other transactions occurred. Given that the payment is for a whole year in advance, Arad-Gula's addendum allows for other transactions to occur throughout the year while still protecting the initial payment of Ahiqar.[40] In addition, and perhaps more in line with the subtle nefariousness of Arad-Gula and Ahiqar, the exception clause may not only protect potential future transactions with Ahiqar but serves to obscure the fact that a duplicate of the transaction survives at all (see below).

Advance payment seems to also be the subject of the "duplicates" found in C17 and B6. These receipts record the payment of Ḫiqammu on the land for which Mudammiq-Nabû is responsible in terms of the tax payment to Iddinâ, the vice marshal of the region.[41] To confuse matters more, it seems the payment was originally transferred to someone named Nargia in a document that is now missing. Nargia became responsible for Mudammiq-Nabû's tax-debt to Iddinâ, but Ḫiqammu is paying Iddinâ directly. In so doing, Ḫiqammu clears the payment of all three men, Mudammiq-Nabû, Nargia, and himself. The duplicate appears to be an advance payment for the same tax debt owed in the coming year. Both documents were written on the same day 8.xii 9 Dar I, but C17 is explicitly for the year 9 payment and B6 for year 10. The cuneiform "9" and "10" are clearly written on the respective tablets, and there is no orthographic ambiguity between the two numerals. These are not duplicates in the practical sense of the word. They, furthermore, illustrate an administrative function of copying tablets to account for advance payments. It is therefore imperative that the record of such advance payments be kept secure.[42]

It is worth noting that only one of the pairs of duplicates makes an internal reference to the duplicate's existence (C45 and HBM 8). This is the high-level transaction that occurred in Babylon. In many other texts (C26, C27, C29, C30, and C46), however, the tablet explicitly refers to a duplicate that has not survived. These all pertain to Ahiqam's business and serve as good evidence that duplicates were kept in a business archive and a community archive associated with Ahiqam. None of the texts that claim to have duplicates were written by

40. Waerzegger's may be correct that Ahiqar made other transactions that day with one or more of the men found as a party in this document. Those transactions may have been recorded in Aramaic. Note that only here in the corpus is *giṭṭu* used, and unlike other terms, which are specific to Akkadian documentary genre forms, *giṭṭu* can refer to a parchment legal document (*CAD* G, 113). Note that Arad-Gula does not use a determinative identifying the writing medium of the *giṭṭū* as is customary ($^{ku}$š*giṭṭu* "parchment" vs. $^{im}$*giṭṭu* "oblong-tablet"). See similarly DUBSAR 31 no. 28 and discussion on pp. 192–93.

41. His title was *šanû ša rab-urâti*, literally, "the second of the chief of the mares"; see BaAr 6, p. 43.

42. I thank Cornelia Wunsch for helping me work out this matter.

Arad-Gula, the most prolific scribe in the corpus, yet, at least two of his transactions were duplicated: C71A and C71B and C98 and C99. In line with his character, it serves him and Ahiqar best to not make others aware of documentation that could challenge their business claims, particularly since it is clear that he makes changes to duplicates. This may say more about Arad-Gula's carelessness than it does about the other administrators; Arad-Gula did not note when duplicates were made. That said, the fact that the corpus accounts for duplicates is a good indication that businessmen kept their own archives beyond that held in the *kalakku*. What we have, then, is a corpus of legal documents for Judean transactions, written by a few cuneiform administrators, which were kept in some cases in a community facility that served as the arbitrator of community transactions, as well as some duplicates, which were once held by individual businessmen but likely turned into the community facility to receive the debt owed them. That the duplicates were not canceled—that is, destroyed—when they were turned in could be owed to a number of complex administrative reasons regarding filing, procedures of cancellation, open legal investigations, or the complexity of the business relationship which may bear ongoing debts.[43]

## Conclusions and Approaching the Elephantine Data

The last three chapters have sought to describe the sociohistorical circumstances of the administrative activities that took place in and around the Judean settlements at Elephantine and in Babylonia. The Aramaic evidence from Egypt, in particular, was used to discuss an imperial curriculum that united the Persian administrators across the empire. Traces of this "imperial signature"[44] are found in the epigraphs of the cuneiform documents from Babylonia, but of that collection it must be concluded that the cuneiform tablets recording Judean business interactions are not directly comparable to the Aramaic evidence from Egypt. As was discussed in chapter 1, even among the Aramaic evidence, administrative differences are found in the surviving documents from various locations and time periods. While training in the composition of Aramaic correspondences and in the use of the chancellery script was standardized across the empire, the legal traditions were localized. In both Egypt and Mesopotamia, imperial Aramaic administrators forced some level of standardization on the provinces. In the case of Egypt, this is seen in the evolution of the formal structure of the contracts. In Babylonia, this can only be inferred, since the cuneiform record

43. One should not rule out the possibility that the duplicates C71A and C71B and C98 and C99 survive from the *kalakku* because Arad-Gula was under investigation for fraud.

44. À la Henkelman, "Imperial Signature."

grows silent in the first nine years of Xerxes's reign. The inference is that the Aramaic speaking community in Babylonia accepted wholesale the imperial preference to compose documentation in Aramaic. This pushed out the few cuneiform scribes who worked among the community. Even before Xerxes, the cuneiform record is relatively slim compared to what one would expect. The inference is that Aramaic had been used in conjunction with Late Babylonian just like Egyptian was accepted in conjunction with Aramaic in Egypt prior to Xerxes. But as Egyptian was ousted as an imperially acceptable language of legal documentation, so too was cuneiform in Babylonia among the Judeans from Xerxes onward.

The result then is that data from each corpus, the Aramaic documentation pertaining to Judeans in Egypt and the Late Babylonian documentation pertaining to Judeans in Mesopotamia, must be considered in light of each community's specific scribal administrative traditions and one should be reluctant to find direct correspondences between the corpora. Now having glimpsed the historical circumstances of Aramaic administrative scribal culture in the provinces where known sources of Judean communities survive, the next part of this book will turn to the ways the administrators at Elephantine organized the people with documentation.

PART 2

# Identifying and Organizing the People

CHAPTER 4

# Contracts and Administrators Whom We Know

EMBEDDED IN THE CONTRACTS, administrative sources, and correspondences are the administrators' perspectives on the social structure of Elephantine. While the documents at times were written by insiders within the Judean community, these writers still followed their imperial administrative training. This chapter aims to describe how the Aramaic notaries writing the surviving contracts functioned in the social order and in turn how they described the social standing of parties. By illustration I will address the long-standing scholarly problem: Why do the contracts refer to some individuals as Arameans, while others refer to the same individuals as Judeans? I will show that the answer lies in understanding the notary's perspective, particularly his self-understanding relative to the contractual parties and to the state, as well as his perception of the parties' standings relative to the state.

## Notaries and Their Perspectives: Place of Composition

Apart from provincial decrees, of which few examples are attested from Elephantine, the contracts provide the only other clear examples of state-authored sources written by known Aramaic administrators. Those who wrote the legal contracts took information from civil exchanges, translated it into legal diction, and drafted the information into a contract that included all the structural techniques and formatting discussed in chapter 1. As noted there, the contracts are highly formulaic, and part of the formulaic structure includes the identification of the writer. It is important to emphasize that the writer is not called a "scribe" (Aram. SPR) nor given a title in the Aramaic contracts from Egypt. In this sense the contracts differ from the Mesopotamian contracts, which do identify the writer as a "scribe" ($^{lu2}$UMBISAG). In the Egyptian milieu it was preferred to use a circumlocution to identify contract writers, whom I call notaries. The Aramaic statement was likely drawn

from the Egyptian phrase šḫ PN, "PN wrote," which is written in Aramaic as "PN wrote this document."[1]

The full names of thirteen notaries survive in addition to the patronymics of two or three other notaries. Lastly, one document, which must have been written by an unknown administrative priest in the Yahô temple, also survives, and while we do not know his name, it is significant that we at least know his role (*TAD* B7.3).[2] These notaries wrote, in total, thirty separate documents at Syene/Elephantine between 487 BCE and 402 BCE. Of these, five notaries wrote more than one of the surviving documents (table 4).[3]

Unlike Babylonian scribes, Aramaic notaries in Egypt were not obliged to indicate the place of composition. If they chose to, they would indicate the place of composition by mentioning it either at the beginning of the text between the date and the initial proclamation by the first party or at the end of the document after the notary's name, as is done in Babylonian contracts.[4] This laxity in the variable formatting of the place of composition—if at all mentioned—indicates the notary's prerogative. It is therefore important to note that while some contracts claim to have been written at Elephantine, others claim to have been written at Syene. In reality all were likely written at Syene, and the difference between identifying the fort as Elephantine or Syene depends on the notary's perspective. The notaries Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah (active 437–402 BCE) and Maʿûzyah son of Natan (active 434–416 BCE) appear to be the first to compose legal documents "at Fort Elephantine," but their oldest documents written in the years 437 and 434 BCE, respectively, do not indicate a place of composition. References to composition "at Fort Elephantine" appear only between 427 and 400 BCE; the final date is attested on *TAD* B5.5, for which the notary's name is lost and which is therefore not included in table 4. The earliest dated document

1. Compare the WDSP in which the scribe is not explicitly mentioned; a curious feature of an ancient Semitic contract but not studied in detail by the edition of Gropp, *Wadi Daliyeh II*, 32. See, though, Dušek, *Les manuscrits araméens*, 438, which discusses the possibility of identifying the same scribe by paleography. See also Gross, *Continuity and Innovation*, 26.

2. See discussion in Moore, "Administering Cult," 314–16.

3. Parentheses indicate that the information is implied rather than stated. The date of *TAD* B4.2 is not certain. When Cowley published the manuscript in 1903 ("Some Egyptian Aramaic Documents"), it was poorly conserved. A jumbling of a number of fragments was placed on line 1—one fragment is even upside down. The document contains an internal date with a break. The space between "year" and the surviving numeral 6 on line 7 is a lacuna. No date formula appears on the first line, and this formatting feature may be an indication of the age of the document. The papyrus has never been conserved, and the reconstruction made in Yardeni's hand copy was never tested. The internal date, "year 36," is owed to the graphic placement of the jumbled fragments in Yardeni's hand copy. Prior to her reconstruction in *TAD*, Cowley had originally assigned the document to the mid-fifth century and Porten had previously accepted that date (*Archives from Elephantine*, 27). For photographs of the jumbled line from which Yardeni reconstructs the date, see https://elephantine.smb.museum/pictures/bildinfo.php?p=1952.

4. The deictic adverbial particle "here" (Aram. TNH) is not found in the contracts.

TABLE 4. Attested Aramaic notaries

| Notary | Origin of name | Text | Location | Date (ancient) | Year (BCE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Priest of Ḥerem and Anat-Yaho ?) | ? | B7.3 | (Elephantine) | – | – |
| [Hôšeʿa ] son of Hôdawyah | Heb. | B4.3 | [. . .] | 28 [Phaophi, Xer 3] | 483 |
| [Hôšeʿa ] son of Hôdawyah | Heb. | B4.4 | [. . .] | 28 Phaophi, Xer 3 | 483 |
| [PN son of] ʿAnanî | WS | D2.22 | [. . .] | [. . .] | [. . .] |
| [PN son of] ʿAnanî | WS | B7.1 | Syene | ø [Pay]ni, 11 Darius | 413 |
| [PN] son of Taḥnûm | Egy. | D2.25 | [. . .] | [. . .] | [. . .] |
| ʿAttaršûrî son of Nabûzerʾibni | WS/Akk. | B2.3 | Syene | 21 Kislev = [21] Mesore, Arta 6 | 460/459 |
| ʿAttaršûrî son of Nabûzerʾibni | WS/Akk. | B2.4 | Syene | [21 Kislev] = [21 Mesore], Arta 6 | 460/459 |
| Bûnnî son of Mannukî | Akk. | B3.2 | ??? | 25 Phamenoth = 20 Sivan, Arta 14 | 451 |
| Šaweram son of ʾEšemram son of ʾEšemšezib | WS/WS/Aram. | B3.13 | Syene | ø Thoth, Arta 4 | 402 |
| Gemaryah son of ʾAḥyô | Heb. | B4.2 | [. . .] | [. . .] | 487 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | Sem./Heb. | B3.4 | ??? | 7 Elul = 9 Payni, Arta 28 | 437 |
| Ḥaggay (son of Šemaʿyah ?) | Sem./Heb. | B3.6 | Elephantine | 20 Sivan = 7 Phamenoth, Arta 38 | 427 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | Sem./Heb. | B3.10 | Elephantine | 24 Marcheshvan = 29 Mesore, Arta 1 | 404 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | Sem./Heb. | B3.11 | Elephantine | 20 Adar = 8 Choiak, Arta 3 | 402 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | Sem./Heb. | B3.12 | Elephantine | 12 Thoth, Arta 4 | 402 |
| ʾÎtû son of ʾAbah | WS | B2.2 | Syene | 18 Kislev = [17] Thoth, 21 (Xer) = 0 Arta | 464 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | Heb./WS | B3.5 | ??? | 25 Tishri = 25 Epiph, Arta 31 | 434 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | Heb./WS | B2.9 | Elephantine | ø Elul = ø Payni, Dar 4 | 420 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | Heb./WS | B3.8 | Elephantine | ø Tishri = ø Epiph, Dar [4] | 420 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | Heb./WS | B2.10 | Elephantine | 3 Kislev yr. 8 = 12 Thoth yr. 9, Dar | 416 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan son of ʿAnanyah | Heb./WS/Heb. | B6.4 | [. . .] | [. . .] | [. . .] |
| Nabûtukultî son of Nabûzerʾibni | Akk. | B2.11 | Elephantine | 24 Šebaṭ yr. 13 = 9 Athyr yr. 14, Dar | 410 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | WS/Heb. | B2.6 | ??? | [26] Tishri = [_6] Epiph, [. . .] | 458/445 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | WS/Heb. | B3.1 | ??? | 7 Kislev = 4 Thoth, Arta 9 | 456 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | WS/Heb. | B3.3 | ??? | 8 [Av] = [30] Pharmuthi, Arta 16 | 449 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | WS/Heb. | B2.7 | ??? | 2 Kislev = 10 Mesore, Arta 19 | 446 |
| Pelatyah son of ʾAḥyô | Heb. | B2.1 | ??? | 18 Elul = 28 Pahon, Xer 15 | 471 |
| Peṭeʾisî son of Nabûnatan | Egy./WS | B2.8 | Syene | 14 Av = 19 Pahnos, Arta 25 | 440 |
| Rawḫšana son of Nergalšezib | Iran./Akk. | B3.9 | Syene | 6 Tishri = 22 Payni, Dar 8 | 416 |

to indicate a place of composition is *TAD* B2.2, written by ʾÎtû son of ʾAbah "at Fort Syene" in 464 BCE. One could take the variance between Fort Elephantine and Fort Syene as a recognition of two separate locations of composition. This, I believe, would be misleading, and instead, we should see statements of the place of composition as a perspective of the notary. There were not two seats of judicial power, one a few minutes' boat ride from the other. Legal documents in the cuneiform tradition include their location of composition, and the Judean notaries in Egypt, such as Ḥaggay and Maʿûzyah, were probably influenced by the more prestigious administrators whom they encountered over the course of their careers. They then began to include the place of composition to elevate their sense of prestige. Other Babylonian practices transmitted through Aramaic notaries influenced the Judean notaries at Elephantine. For instance, in one contract (*TAD* B6.4) Maʿûzyah includes his second patronymic (i.e., his grandfather's name), which is reminiscent of the prestigious Babylonian scribal practice of writing the scribe's name as PN son of PN family of PN (BaAr 6, p. 13). As noted in chapter 2, there may be an example of this in the Aramaic epigraphs from al-Yahudu.[5]

While the place names "Elephantine" and "Syene" were functionally interchangeable,[6] the Judean notaries likely preferred Elephantine due to their administrative self-interest in the location of their own temple and offices. In actuality, the judicial proceedings and contract writing likely occurred on the mainland. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Fort Elephantine as a location of composition does not appear in the contracts until 437 BCE, and only one non-Judean refers to Fort Elephantine as a location of composition, the Babylonian-named Nabûtukultî son of Nabûzerʾibni (B2.11). It should further be noted that this occurs relatively late into the Persian occupation, 410 BCE, during a spike in ethnic tensions between the Judeans and the Egyptian temple administrators. It is entirely possible that the use of Fort Elephantine as a reference to the location of composition is an ethnically defined category, whereby Judeans and pro-Judean Persian officials refer to the region as Fort Elephantine, particularly after the rise of ethnic tensions, while the non-Judeans refer to the region as Fort Syene.

## Notaries and Variable Identities: The Contractual Parties

Innovations in the Judean tradition of educating administrative scribes developed slowly because the education occurred in a relatively closed community.

5. Only one notary with an Akkadian name, Bûnnî son of Mannukî, did not include a location of composition on the contract he wrote.

6. See Vittmann, "Arameans in Egypt," 230; Kratz, "Judean Ambassadors," 422.

Those accountants who served time as official notaries are relatively few and may have controlled a nepotistic system.[7] Families appear to have cornered the market on specific types of legal writing for the community. As Porten observed, the father Natan son of ʿAnanyah and his son Maʿûzyah composed all the marriage contracts so far discovered with a surviving notary's name, though these men did not limit their work to this type of legal genre.[8] Furthermore, their colleague Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah appears as a witness on a document that Maʿûzyah son of Natan wrote in 420 BCE (*TAD* B3.8). It is clear from this evidence that the Judean notaries worked together, and it is possible that Natan son of ʿAnanyah trained both his son Maʿûzyah and Ḥaggay, who was not directly related to him.

The vast majority of notaries bear names of Semitic origin, with roughly an equal distribution of Hebrew, West Semitic, and Akkadian names. One bears an Iranian / West Semitic name, Rawḥšana son of Nergalšezib. Generally, however, the parties in the contracts bear ethnic names of the same origins as that of the notary. What is surprising is that one, maybe two, notaries bear names of Egyptian and Semitic origins, Peṭeʾisî son of Nabûnatan and PN son of Taḥnûm.[9] The document written at Syene by Peṭeʾisî son of Nabûnatan is a withdrawal from a legal proceeding that an Egyptian by the name of Pîaʾ son of Paḥî, who holds a Persian appointment as architect (ʾRDYKL), brought against Mibtaḥyah daughter of Maḥseyah, a Judean by name. No witness in the contract bears a name of either Egyptian or Hebrew origins. Here we see a notary of Egyptian and Semitic origins and a body of witnesses standing as impartial players in a legal affair and its outcome. Such impartiality has been recently noted by Shalom Holtz as a feature of the Persian administration.[10] The document written by PN son of Taḥnûm contains a mixed group of witnesses,[11] but it may also attest to the phenomenon of ensuring that those involved in legal matters feel that the process is fair. Here too, one may anticipate that an Egyptian was a party in the document due to the Egyptian notary and to the fact that at least one witness signed his Egyptian name in Demotic.

Holtz is correct that the legal system in the culturally diverse setting of the island and mainland promoted a sense of fairness for the diverse parties taking

7. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 192–93.

8. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 257. The identification of Maʿûzyah son of Natan son of ʿAnanyah in *TAD* B6.4 is seen as evidence that Natan son of ʿAnanyah was Maʿûzyah's father.

9. The broken first name ends [. . .]◦ʾL. Currently, no name of Egyptian origin found in Aramaic (or Phoenician) ends with -ʾL. This looks like the divine element ʾEl, which would suggest a name of West Semitic origin.

10. Holtz, "Foreign but Fair." The judiciary in Persian-period Babylonia appears to have also favored Northwest Semitic interests in a Babylonian context. See also Sandowicz, "West Semites."

11. *TAD* inexplicably ascribes D2.25 to Maʿûzyah son of Natan and places this information as a restoration at the end of the document, after the witnesses, where formulaically it is not expected.

part in the justice system. This diversity highlights the sensitivity that the Persian administration had for social groupings. Within the rigid contractual structure, notaries were free to include miscellaneous material after an individual's name, be it individuals who were a contractual party or a third party referenced in the contract. Like the variable use of place names, *these variable identifiers help classify the diversity of the parties and identify their place with respect to the notary*. These variable identifiers may include ethnonyms or titular attributes like positions, state-dependent unit allocations, state dependency status, or taxation status. Further variable identifiers include administrative numerals to indicate the number of parties involved, particularly in a contract referring to multiple individuals in a party. It appears that these variable identifiers were optional and, therefore, indicate to the historian the relationship of parties vis-à-vis the notaries.

## Notaries' Use of Ethnonyms

Ethnonyms generally appear after a party's name in a legal document, and if included, they are the first identifier. Sometimes a person's ethnonym is also found after the name of a coparty. Given that ethnonyms appear on legally binding administrative documents, it seems best to see them as state-recognized terms for communities. There are two types of ethnonyms found in the surviving contracts: self-ascribed and notary-ascribed ethnonyms.

Surprisingly, two of our notaries, [Hôšeʿa ] son of Hôdawyah and Gemaryah son of ʾAḥyô, appear to have written their own documents.[12] These are the earliest dated Aramaic documents to survive from Elephantine and suggest that the access to the well-structured judiciary, witnessed in later documents, was not yet in place. Neither of these notaries include ethnonyms, titles, or dependency units for themselves or the other parties. In fact, no notary identifies their own ethnonym, but there are eight instances of what can be called self-ascribed ethnonyms in the legal corpus.

Six individuals, who sign in their own hand, self-identify with an ethnonym in the witness lists of four contracts. None of the self-ascribed ethnonyms among the contract witnesses are "Judean" or "Aramean," the two variable ethnonyms ascribed to Judeans by the notaries. The self-ascribed ethnonyms are Magian, Medean, Babylonian, and Caspian, all of which may be interpreted

12. The name Gemaryah son of ʾAḥyô is the restored contractual party in *TAD* B4.2, but it seems to also be the notary's name. Presumably it is not a papponymic or a coincidence that the party and notary bear the same name. For B4.2 and B4.3, Hôšeʿa son of Hôdawyah claims to have written the text in his own hand.

TABLE 5. Self-ascribed ethnonyms of witnesses in the contractual documents

| **Name** | **Patronymic** | **Ethnonym** | *TAD* |
|---|---|---|---|
| ʾAtrafarna | Nîsaya | Mede | B3.6 |
| Barbarî | Dargi(ya) | Caspian | B2.7 |
| Bayt(a) | Vyzbl | Caspian | B3.4 |
| Hadadnûrî | – | Babylonian | B2.2 |
| Ḥyrw | ʾtrly | Caspian | B3.4 |
| Mitrasarah | – | Magian | B3.5 |
| Tataʾ | – | Magian | B3.5 |
| V⌜y⌝⌜z⌝b[lw] | ʾtrly | Caspian | B2.7 |

as markers of "elite" social distinction in the Aramaic administration of Egypt. That these self-ascribed ethnonyms indicate high status is furthered by the actions of the Babylonian and two Magians in table 5 who use their ethnonym in place of their patronymic. High ranking employees or royalty used their titles in place of their patronymics throughout the Imperial Aramaic corpus.

In contrast to the self-ascribed ethnonyms, one finds notary-ascribed ethnonyms in a number of contracts. The notaries have ascribed ethnonyms as variable identifiers forty-four times in the surviving contracts.[13] Ethnonyms appear in the contracts as early as 471 BCE and continue until the latest dated contract in the year 400 BCE. Most of the legal parties with ethnonyms are identified as "Aramean," but unlike other ethnonyms this identifier is always accompanied with a further modifier identifying the place with which each Aramean is associated, either an Aramean of Fort Elephantine or an Aramean of Fort Syene. Both women and men are identified as Arameans of a place, and persons with Hebrew, West Semitic, Iranian, and Egyptian names are identified as Aramean. It is clear that the ethnonym "Aramean" cannot be associated with the etymological origin of an individual's name.

The first remark to make when reviewing the data in table 6 is that nearly half of the attestations include both ethnonyms and their DGL-unit leader. While it seems that the DGL-unit leader may have been an optional identifier that a writer could ascribe to a person, it was only optional so long as the individual was ascribed an ethnonym. Ethnicity and state assigned rank were connected. In fact, in only one instance is an individual identified with a DGL-unit leader but lacking an ethnonym. In that source, the two parties are introduced by the notary ʿAttaršûrî son of Nabûzerʾibni in the following way:

13. Forty-eight attestations survive; Bagazušta son of Friyana/Palliya is twice identified as a Caspian by Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah in *TAD* B3.12.

TABLE 6. Attestations of notary-ascribed ethnonyms

| Notary | Text | Individual | Ethnonym | DGL-unit | Location | Year only (BCE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ʿAttaršûrî son of Nabûzerʾibni | B2.3 | Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah | Judean | X | Syene | 460/459 |
| ʿAttaršûrî son of Nabûzerʾibni | B2.3 | Mibṭaḥyah (daughter of Maḥseyah) | – | | Syene | 460/459 |
| ʿAttaršûrî son of Nabûzerʾibni | B2.4 | Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah | Judean | X | Syene | 460/459 |
| ʿAttaršûrî son of Nabûzerʾibni | B2.4 | Yezanyah son of ʾÛryah | – | X | Syene | 460/459 |
| [Hôšeʿa ] son of Hôdawyah | B4.3 | [Hôšeʿa ] son of [Hô]dawyah and ʾAḥ[îʾab son of Gemaryah] | – | | [. . .] | 483 |
| [Hôšeʿa ] son of Hôdawyah | B4.4 | [Hôšeʿa ] son of Hôdawyah | – | | [. . .] | 483 |
| [Hôšeʿa ] son of Hôdawyah | B4.4 | ʾAḥîʾab son of Gemaryah | – | | [. . .] | 483 |
| [Hôšeʿa ] son of Hôdawyah | B4.4 | ʾEspemet [. . .] | – | | [. . .] | 483 |
| [PN son of] ʿAnanî | B7.1 | Maḥseyah son of Šîbah | Aramean of Syene | ? | Syene | 413 |
| [PN son of] ʿAnanî | B7.1 | [PN son of PN] | [. . .] | X | Syene | 413 |
| [PN son of] ʿAnanî | D2.22 | [. . .] | – | | [. . .] | [. . .] |
| Bûnnî son of Mannukî | B3.2 | ʿAnanî son of ʿAzaryah | – | | Elephantine | 451 |
| Bûnnî son of Mannukî | B3.2 | Míkaʾ son of ʾAḥyô | – | | Elephantine | 451 |
| Gemaryah son of ʾAḥyô | B4.2 | [. . .] | (–) | | (Syene ?) | 487 |
| Ḥaggay (son of Šemaʿyah ?) | B3.6 | Mešullam son of Zakkûr | Judean of Elephantine | X | Elephantine | 427 |
| Ḥaggay (son of Šemaʿyah ?) | B3.6 | Tapemet by name | – | | Elephantine | 427 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | B3.10 | Yahûyišmaʿ daughter of ʿAnanî | – | | Elephantine | 404 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | B3.10 | ʿAnanî son of ʿAzaryah | – | | Elephantine | 404 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | B3.11 | Yahûyišmaʿ daughter of ʿAnanî | – | | Elephantine | 402 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | B3.11 | ʿAnanî son of ʿAzaryah | – | | Elephantine | 402 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | B3.12 | ʿAnanî son of Ḥaggay son of Mešullam son of Busasa | Aramean of Elephantine | X | Elephantine | 402 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | B3.12 | Tapemet wife of ʿAnanî / daughter of Patû | – | | Elephantine | 402 |

TABLE 6. Attestations of notary-ascribed ethnonyms (*continued*)

| Notary | Text | Individual | Ethnonym | DGL-unit | Location | Year only (BCE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | B3.12 | ʿAnanî son of ʿAzaryah | – | | Elephantine | 402 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | B3.4 | Wb(y)l daughter of Šatibara | Caspian of Syene | X | Elephantine | 437 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | B3.4 | Bagazušta son of Bazu | Caspian | X | Elephantine | 437 |
| Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah | B3.4 | ʿAnanî son of ʿAzaryah | – | | Elephantine | 437 |
| ʾÎtû son of ʾAbah | B2.2 | Dargamana son of Khvarshaina | Khwarezmian | X | Syene | 464 |
| ʾÎtû son of ʾAbah | B2.2 | Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah | Judean | X | Syene | 464 |
| ʾÎtû son of ʾAbah | B2.2 | Qônyah son of Zadak | Judean | X | Syene | 464 |
| ʾÎtû son of ʾAbah | B2.2 | [Yeza]nyah son of ʾÛryah | Judean | X | Syene | 464 |
| Makkibanit son of Nargî | B1.1 (el-Hibeh) | Padî son of Daganmalk | – | | Korobis | 515 |
| Makkibanit son of Nargî | B1.1 (el-Hibeh) | ʾAḥaʾ son of Ḥapyô | – | | Korobis | 515 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | B2.10 | Yedanyah son of Hôšeʿyah son of ʾÛryah | Aramean of Elephantine | | Elephantine | 416 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | B2.10 | Yedanyah son of Natan / son of Mibṭaḥyah and Maḥseyah son of Natan / son of Mibṭaḥyah daughter of Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah | – | | Elephantine | 416 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | B2.9 | Menaḥem son of Mešullam son of Šalûmam and ʿAnanyah son of Mešullam son of Šalûmam | Judeans of Elephantine | X | Elephantine | 420 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | B2.9 | Yedanyah son of ʾEsḥôr son of Ṣeḥaʾ / son of Mibṭaḥyah daughter of Maḥseyah and Maḥseyah son of ʾEsḥôr son of Ṣeḥaʾ / son | Judeans | X | Elephantine | 420 |

TABLE 6. Attestations of notary-ascribed ethnonyms (*continued*)

| Notary | Text | Individual | Ethnonym | DGL-unit | Location | Year only (BCE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | of Mibṭaḥyah daughter of Maḥseyah | | | | |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | B3.5 | Tamet wife of ʿAzaryah | – | | Elephantine | 434 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | B3.5 | ʿAnanî son of ʿAzaryah | – | | Elephantine | 434 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | B3.8 | Zakkûr son of Mešullam | Aramean of Syene | X | Elephantine | 420 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan | B3.8 | ʿAnanî son of Ḥaggay | Aramean of Elephantine | X | Elephantine | 420 |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan son of ʿAnanyah | B6.4 | Hôšeʿa [son of . . .] | [. . .] | | [. . .] | [. . .] |
| Maʿuzyah son of Natan son of ʿAnanyah | B6.4 | Yehôḥen [daughter of . . .] | [. . .] | | [. . .] | [. . .] |
| Nabûtukultî son of Nabûzerʾibni | B2.11 | Maḥseyah son of Natan / son of Mibṭaḥyah | Aramean of Syene | X | Elephantine | 410 |
| Nabûtukultî son of Nabûzerʾibni | B2.11 | Yedanyah son of Natan / son of Mibṭaḥyah | Aramean of Syene | X | Elephantine | 410 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | B2.6 | Maḥseyah (son of Yedanyah) | Aramean of Syene | X | (Syene) | 458/445 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | B2.6 | ʾEsḥûr son of Ṣeḥaʾ | – | | (Syene) | 458/445 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | B2.7 | Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah | Aramean of Syene | X | (Syene) | 446 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | B2.7 | Mibṭaḥyah (daughter of Maḥseyah) | – | | (Syene) | 446 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | B3.1 | Mešullam son of Zakkûr | Judean of Elephantine | | (Elephantine) | 456 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | B3.1 | Yahôḥen daughter of Mešullak | – | | (Elephantine) | 456 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | B3.3 | Mešullam son of Zakkûr | Aramean of Syene | X | (Elephantine) | 449 |
| Natan son of ʿAnanyah | B3.3 | ʿAnanî son of ʿAzaryah | – | | (Elephantine) | 449 |
| Pelatyah son of ʾAḥyô | B2.1 | Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah | Aramean of Syene | X | (Syene) | 471 |
| Pelatyah son of ʾAḥyô | B2.1 | Qonayah son of Zadak | Aramean of Syene | X | (Syene) | 471 |

TABLE 6. Attestations of notary-ascribed ethnonyms (*continued*)

| Notary | Text | Individual | Ethnonym | DGL-unit | Location | Year only (BCE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Peṭeʾisî son of Nabûnatan | B2.8 | Mibṭaḥyah daughter of Maḥseyah | Aramean of Syene | X | Syene | 440 |
| Peṭeʾisî son of Nabûnatan | B2.8 | Piyaʾ son of Paḥî | – | | Syene | 440 |
| Rawḥšana son of Nergalšezib | B3.9 | Zakkûr son of Mešullam | Aramean of Syene | | Syene | 416 |
| Rawḥšana son of Nergalšezib | B3.9 | ʾÛryah son of Maḥseyah | Aramean of Syene | | Syene | 416 |
| Šaweram son of ʾEšemram son of ʾEšemšezib | B3.13 | ʿAnanî son of Ḥaggay son of Mešullam | Judean | X | Syene | 402 |
| Šaweram son of ʾEšemram son of ʾEšemšezib | B3.13 | Paḥnûm son of Besaʾ | Aramean of Syene | X | Syene | 402 |
| . . . ʾl son of Taḥnûm | D2.25 | [. . .] | – | | [. . .] | [. . .] |
| (priest of Ḥerem and Anat-Yaho ?) | B7.3 | Menaḥem son of Mešullam | – | | (Elephantine) | [. . .] |
| [. . .] | B4.5 | Yislaḥ son Gaddûl | Aramean of Syene | X | Elephantine | 407 |
| [. . .] | B4.5 | [Natan] son of Hôseʿa | Aramean of Syene | X | Elephantine | 407 |
| [. . .] | B4.6 | Menaḥem son of Šallûm | Aramean of Elephantine | X | [. . .] | 400 |
| [. . .] | B5.2 | Matan son of Yašobyah | Aramean (and) Syenean | X | – | [. . .] |
| [. . .] | B5.2 | [PN son of PN] | ? | X | – | [. . .] |
| [. . .] | B5.5 | Mipṭaḥyah daughter of Gemaryah | [Aramean(?)] of Elephantine | X | Elephantine | 400 |
| [. . .] | B6.1 | [. . .] | Aramean of Syene | X | [. . .] | 446 |
| [. . .] | B7.2 | Malkyah son of Yašobyah | Aramean (of Elephantine) | | Elephantine | 401 |
| [. . .] | D2.10 | [PN daughter of PN] | Aramean of Syene | | [. . .] | [. . .] |
| [. . .] | D2.12 | Yedanyah son of Natan | Judean | | [. . .] | 403 |
| [. . .] | D2.12 | Barznarava son of Atrabarzana, who is Patoû | Bactrian | | [. . .] | 403 |
| [. . .] | D2.3 | [PN son of] Qôn | Aramean of [. . .] | | [. . .] | [. . .] |
| [. . .] | D2.4 | [PN] daughter of ʾAšyan | Aramean [of . . .] | | [. . .] | [. . .] |
| [. . .] | D2.5 | [PN-]h daughter of ⌜Gemarya⌝h | Judean ([. . .]) | | [. . .] | [. . .] |

> Pap. Cairo EM JdE 37106 = *TAD* B2.4:1–3
> Said Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah, a Ju[dean o]f Elephantine of the DGL-unit of Hawmadata, to Yezanyah son of ʾÛryah in the same DGL-unit, saying.

Here, Yezanyah son of ʾÛryah lacks an ethnonym. ʿAttaršûrî had written earlier that day *TAD* B2.3, in which Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah gave a house to his daughter Mibṭaḥyah. In *TAD* B2.4 he now writes for Maḥseyah a usufruct contract that allows Mibṭaḥyah's husband Yezanyah son of ʾÛryah to use the house but not acquire its possession status (Aram. MHḤSN). It is clear from *TAD* B2.4 that the contract was written last because it references *TAD* B2.3. Furthermore, the document is a rare example of an opisthographic contract. It seems that after a long day of service as a notary ʿAttaršûrî was likely tired and running out of papyrus. He either mistakenly left out Yezanyah's ethnonym or intentionally omitted it due to an attempt to save space. Alternatively, he may assume that the statement "in the same DGL-unit" implies, by ellipsis, that the same ethnonym of Maḥseyah applies to Yezanyah, particularly since the other data demonstrate a connection between state-assigned rank and ethnic identity. In either case, this should be seen as an aberrant example in the data rather than a rule. Therefore, excluding this rather explainable datum, the evidence points to the fact that notaries always include ethnonyms when citing DGL-unit leaders, though ethnonyms could stand alone. Their pairing of a DGL-unit identifier with an ethnonym indicates that ethnonyms are to be associated with recognized state-dependency status. This is due to the organization of the DGL-units, for which state dependents serving their tax obligations were organized by their recognized state communities; this also occurs of century units as discussed in the next chapter.

Table 6 shows the lack of titles ascribed to the individuals in the contracts who are assigned ethnonyms. Apart from the title "witness," which is found often though not always before the names of witnesses on the contracts, and excluding biological relational terms such as "son" or status of servitude within a family unit, only twelve titles are ascribed to individuals in the contracts.[14] Of them, four are titles for high-ranking officials in the fort/district or royal estate institutions who serve as judges or overseers of the legal proceedings: judge, frataraka, "Guardian of the Seventh," and commander. The remaining eight are titles ascribed to individuals to identify their professional or administrative status (see below). In only six instances are individuals with ethnonyms ascribed an additional title. In all but one undetermined fragmentary case (*TAD*

14. I have excluded here PRYPT in *TAD* B3.12:11, because its meaning remains obscure, and ʿBD YWR. The latter is a taxation term which would bring this total to thirteen. See below.

D2.12), these contracts deal with the transference or claim over immovable property. In these cases the legal status of the parties is included, as either titles of possession-status holders or, in the case of *TAD* B3.4, taxable individuals, "(taxable-)man" and "(taxable-)lady." It seems that titles are not systematically associated with the variable identifier of the ethnonym as opposed to the optional DGL-unit identifier.

## Ethnic Identifiers in the Contracts

Ultimately, this brings us to the question that has plagued a century of scholarship: What is the purpose of the ethnonyms, and how do they function? It is clear that the data is complex, and therefore we should not expect the simple answer that previous studies have sought to find. One must also not abandon the problem because it seems too difficult, as the most cautious scholars have so far done.[15] The central problem with previous studies is that they assume ethnicity was known and inalienable to the person appearing in the contracts.[16] As I will show, ethnicity was an ascribed administrative label given by the notaries, who had their own agendas with regard to the contractual parties and referenced third parties.

For the sake of space I will engage the most recent study on the subject.[17] Taking his lead from Pierre Grelot, Gad Barnea writes, "These observations demonstrate that genuine ethnic identity-markers, when used in a military setting, could be assimilated by members of other ethnicities serving under the same banner to create the phenomenon of 'multiple identities.' Its bearers probably saw it as more than an administrative label. It reflected 'brother-hood' and even represented a badge of honor if they served in a storied or illustrious unit. This can conceivably explain the double-identity Yhwdy-ʾrmy—but what did an ʾrmy identity mean in the Achaemenid period? And, more importantly for the sake of this article, how should a Yhwdy identity be understood?"[18] While he is correct that ethnic identifiers fulfill a social function in the sources,

15. For example, Kratz, "Judean Ambassadors," 421–23.

16. The problem could have been solved some time ago had Wright, "Surviving an Imperial Context," studied the data he refers to systematically. He sensed the correct path forward, writing: "From this, it seems that Jews normally referred to themselves as Arameans, while others referred to them as Jews" (522). Unfortunately, the misunderstanding of "military" service, even of the Ptolemaic data to which that study alluded, produced an incongruous solution, even though the article's premise was correct: "Viewed from the perspective of Judean/Jewish communities, allegiance to the emperor was strengthened by the growing consciousness that the foreign ruler was responsible for and was indeed genuinely interested in the welfare of his conquered peoples" (515).

17. See also Grassi, "'Do We Know the Arameans?'"

18. Barnea, "Yahwistic Identity," 5.

as his "badge of honor" statement indicates, he unfortunately has fallen into the same presumptuous pitfalls as previous scholars. He continues his study focusing (1) on the term Judean rather than the interchange of Judean-Aramean and (2) on the "bearers" rather than the administrators who ascribed the ethnonyms. Furthermore, his traditional framework of "a military setting" limits the scope of analytical possibility, obscuring the social nuance that the administrators engaged with their diction.[19]

Also, noteworthy, in a passing remark Barnea writes off Reuven Yaron's view. Yaron, who had decades earlier written what stands today as the best survey of the Elephantine legal material, was sensitive to the social dynamics of the notaries, and in that respect closer to the answer.[20] Barnea is correct that Yaron's view does not completely explain the data, but Yaron was the first to consider it systematically and to critically explain the conflicting data points.[21] The ultimate fallacy of those who have previously studied the Judean-Aramean problem is that they assume all the notaries were of the same mind when ascribing titles and identities to the parties found in the contracts, including third parties. This is despite the wide difference in the ethnic origins of the notaries' names, which implies social and educational deviations that affect the way each notary sees other people and groups.

As is apparent from table 6 and the discussion of scribal practice, ethnonym and DGL-unit statuses are closely connected and appear only once in a contract, the first time a party is mentioned. This feature is found in all contracts written by the ten notaries, who wrote throughout a combined period of nearly seventy

19. This also led him to assume that Elephantine and Syene were two distinct locations. Barnea writes, citing Van der Toorn ("Ethnicity at Elephantine," 154), "The claim that at Elephantine, an Aramean is by definition 'an Aramean of Syene,' and a Jew, 'a Jew of Elephantine' seems to ignore the fact that the label *ʾrmy* is used for both the inhabitants of the island and of Eastern shore facing it" (Barnea, "Yahwistic Identity," 9). He later seems to claim that only "Yahwists"—whatever this means—bear the label Aramean (11), though he cites one example from Saqqara that cannot be a label for a "Yahwist" (n. 57). He overlooks *TAD* B8.4, a court record from Saqqara that refers to Arameans, who by neither name nor context are Judean. It is also relatively clear with new photographs that *TAD* D3.19:3 reads BʾRʿMYʾ or BʾRʿMYN, "Among (the) Arameans," and not BʾRʿ, "in the land," as Porten read. The Aramean woman with the Egyptian name TḤPY found on CG no. 258 is not discussed (see further Lemaire, "Judean Identity," 368). Furthermore, Barnea's section on the onomastic evidence could benefit from a study of the name Arāmāya (or Arammayya) attested in the Akkadian evidence from Babylon in 490 BCE (Peiser, *Keilschriftliche Acten-Stücke*, no. 12:40). Tallqvist (*Neubabylonisches Namenbuch*, 10) had connected it to the ethnonym Aramean. In addition, the Egyptian evidence, albeit slightly later (Vittmann, "Arameans in Egypt," 235–37) could be consulted.

20. In my opinion, Yaron's study *Introduction to the Law of the Aramaic Papyri*, provides a philological and social introduction to Elephantine's legal corpus, unlike later studies, which focus largely on legal theory—a growing discipline in ancient Near Eastern studies in the decades that followed Yaron. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, relies heavily on the findings of Yaron.

21. As does Barnea, Yaron assumes that Elephantine and Syene are separate locations (Yaron, "Identities," 354).

years. The placement of the variable identifiers is governed by format and may be a manifestation of the notaries' training in southern Egypt. Ethnonyms in the contracts are not cultural identifiers but foremost derive from an administrative scribal practice. The writers were taught a provincial curriculum or, more likely, used provincial templates while composing. Regardless, the result is the same, ethnic status, particularly Judean versus Aramean classification, is foremost a socioeconomic distinction that is under the control of the notary ascribing this variable identifier.

Like ethnonyms, DGL-units were socioeconomic categories that could change. A single DGL-unit was comprised of ethnically different subgroups, with each subgroup overseen by a handler from the same community (see chapter 7). In *TAD* B3.13 the notary Šaweram son of ʾEšemram identifies the two parties as part of the same DGL-unit, yet with different ethnonyms, Paḥnûm son of Besaʾ an Aramean of Syene and ʿAnanî son of Ḥaggay son of Mešullam a Judean. Furthermore, the contracts reveal that one's DGL-unit can change over time. A frequent party in the contracts is Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah, who in *TAD* B2.2 (464 BCE) appears as a member of Varyazata's DGL-unit, but in *TAD* B2.3 and B2.4 (written on the same day in ca. 460 BCE) he belongs to Hawmadata's. Two years later in *TAD* B2.6 (458 BCE) he is assigned to Varyazata's unit again. Some have struggled to explain this shift, but we should not assume that social groups are static categories in the context of the imperial administration. It seems to me the simplest reason for the change in DGL-units or the lack of a DGL-unit in the contractual record is owed to a (bi)annually assigned period of state service.[22] While it is possible that year-after-year, as corvée obligations were imposed in lieu of tax payments, one may have returned to the same DGL-unit for service, this does not need to be the case.[23] DGL-units were not made of a single ethnic group. They are state-organized labor forces made up of conscripts (tax service obligations, i.e., *ilku*-labor tax) from various recognized communities.

While the change in DGL-assignments is explainable, the change in ethnonyms is due to more complex social factors. The data is confusing at first glance, but a pattern emerges when we consider the complex social structure of the institutional levels of the Egyptian province and, therefore, the fort/district's

22. It should be noted that while the situation is different in the Babylonian evidence, heuristically the comparison holds. Although change in administrative units was rare in both Egypt and Babylonia, cases are found of a changing leader of a Babylonian ḫaṭru-unit. Concerning this, Benjamin Dromard writes, "It seems that it was more convenient for the Achaemenid administration to maintain the same people or their relatives involved in the same administrative structure when it came to fiscal matters" ("Nippur and Its Region," 219).

23. Yaron, "Identities," 354, had already concluded that "the *degel* was a military unit, and the examples adduced show that a person could be transferred from one unit to another."

relationship to the Judean community as well as the interpersonal relationships between the notaries and the contractual parties.

For instance, Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah is referred to as a Judean by the notaries who bear general West Semitic names (*TAD* B2.2–B2.4) but as an Aramean by notaries with Yahwistic names (*TAD* B2.1, B2.6, B2.7). Additionally, his daughter is identified as an Aramean by Peṭeʾisî son of Nabûnatan (B2.8). Thus, local notaries, whether Egyptian or Judean, identified Maḥseyah and Mibṭaḥyah as Aramean, while those with more "foreign" perspectives identified them as Judeans. The term Aramean appears to have had a social advantage in the eyes of Judeans (and Egyptians), while the term Judean is a recognized community.

This distance between those involved in the administration versus the Judean community vis-à-vis the notary holds true in the identification of the ambiguously Northwest Semitic–named Mešullam son of Zakkûr by the Judean-named notary Natan son of ʿAnanyah/ʿAnanî. In *TAD* B3.1 Natan identifies Mešullam as a Judean of Elephantine without a DGL-unit identifier, but roughly five years later in *TAD* B3.3 Natan identifies Mešullam as an Aramean of Syene of the DGL-unit of Varyazata. In this case, while Mešullam was engaged in state service Natan identified him as an Aramean. I suggest that the identifier Aramean was seen by this Judean notary to be more socially advantageous at the level of the fort institution.[24]

Similarly in *TAD* B2.1, Qônyah son of Ṣadaq, who bears a Yahwistic name, stood as a contractual party at Syene, and the notary with the Judean name Pelatyah son of ʾAḥyô identified him as an Aramean of Syene of the DGL-unit of Varyazata. Like Natan in the previous example, Pelatyah used the opportunity to elevate Qônyah's ethnic (i.e., administrative) status while in state service. But over six years later he was serving in the DGL-unit of Atrôfarna, and when his house on Elephantine is referenced, he is called a Judean by the notary with the West Semitic name ʾÎtû son of ʾAbah. ʾÎtû, whose name likely hails from the ancient region of Syria and Aram, sees Qônyah as a Judean no matter his state service, likely due to ʾÎtû's own sense of status relative this Judean and the state.

ʿAnanyah son of Ḥaggay is identified as an Aramean by both Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah (*TAD* B3.12) and Maʿûzyah son of Natan (*TAD* B3.8), two notaries with Judean names. In both contracts ʿAnanyah is serving in a DGL-unit, though under two different commanders. However, the West Semitic notary Šaweram son of ʾEšemram son of ʾEšemšezib refers to ʿAnanyah as a Judean. As with the previous examples, here a non-Judean identifies Judeans as such regardless of their role in state service, while the Judean notaries take liberties

24. It seems Mešullam son of Zakkûr in B3.6 was his (grand)son.

to elevate the status of the Judean parties to "Arameans" when they serve in a fort unit.

The distinction outlined works in all cases, but one more complex social/cultural example deserves attention. At one point, a dispute arose between two prominent Judean families over state-allocated property, and the notary who wrote the contract had a familial investment in the matter; he uses ethnonyms to insult the opposing family. In *TAD* B2.9, the Judean notary Maʿûzyah son of Natan son of ʿAzaryah called the two sons of Mibṭaḥyah, Maḥseyah and Yedanyah, sons of ʾEsḥôr, using their father's local Egyptian name, and refers to them as Judeans of Elephantine while they served in the DGL-unit of Iddinnabû; but the notary Nabûtukultî son of Nabûzerʾibni, who bears a good Babylonian name, refers to these two sons by their father's Semitic name "Natan" and calls them each an "Aramean of Syene" (*TAD* B2.11). This exception illustrates how the socially conditioned and variable administrative labels of ethnicity may have been used. We do not know what the relationship was between the powerful family of Maḥseyah and his daughter Mibṭaḥyah, whose descendants are the contractual parties Maḥseyah (II) and Yedanyah, and the notary Maʿûzyah, whose father knew and wrote contracts for both Mibṭaḥyah and her father decades prior (*TAD* B2.6 and B2.7). Maʿûzyah was nonetheless a man of repute in the community, if he served as a notary, and his grandfather may have been associated with the position of LḤN-oblate in the Yahô temple. The problem of Judean versus Aramean identifiers in *TAD* B2.9 certainly alludes to one of the most divisive conflicts between powerful Judean families, and the solution to this problem depends on understanding the relational dynamics between the two families, their access to resources allocated by the state, and the administrative function of different types of contracts.

It appears that the notary Maʿûzyah may have been the cousin of Menaḥem and ʿAnanyah who brought the suit against Maḥseyah and Yedanyah. In *TAD* B2.9 the dispute is over state-allotted possession status of resources that caused a rift between the two families. It makes no sense for Maʿûzyah to refer to either party as Arameans since the dispute is over state-granted possession status of goods allocated specifically to Judeans because "Judean" was their state-recognized ethnic status. But there is power in referring to Maḥseyah and Yedanyah's father with an Egyptian name and lineage in a dispute over Judean allocations. The insult is palpable, particularly when compared to *TAD* B2.11, which is simply a family agreement between Maḥseyah and Yedanyah over the appointment of their mother's slaves.[25] Here they have the power to insist the notary use their preferred Hebrew name for their father, Natan, and they can

25. Furthermore, we find the elevation of an Egyptian-named Judean in *TAD* B5.5 with the use of the ethnicon. Here Eswēre, a half-Egyptian half-Judean is specifically labeled Judean.

insist that the Babylonian notary Nabûtukultî son of Nabûzer[ʾ]ibni refer to them nobly as Arameans of Syene, which he obliges to do. Nothing is at stake in *TAD* B2.11 and the document is essentially commissioned, unlike the litigated dispute between the two Judean families in *TAD* B2.9. Therefore, the exception in *TAD* B2.9 to the pattern of Judean notaries using the ethnic distinction Aramean to greaten the status of the Judeans in the eyes of the state shows that the use of ethnicity to gain an administrative and social advantage is conditioned by a complex history of interpersonal relationships and state-recognized fiscal circumstances.

In conclusion, it seems, then, that a notary's relationship to the parties and a notary's perception of the parties' proximity to the state-dependency system was the motivation for the notary to use the variable identifier Judean or Aramean in a given context. Those closer to the fort system, relative the notary, were labeled as Arameans while those farther away from the notary were identified with the basic taxable unit Judean. The notaries were agents of the state when writing contracts but still belonged to state-recognized ethnic communities. They used a legally acceptable range of ethnic variation to elevate the status of their community members in legal processes. Unlike previous scholarly attempts to explain the interchange between Judean and Aramean, I have tried to provide a compelling reason for every relevant datapoint based on the documents. In future studies, this model can be extended to the fragmentary documents.

It is now clear that the term "Aramean" can be read as an identifier of social and economic advantage in the imperial system, and this conclusion can be extended outside of the Elephantine/Syene corpus to documents from Saqqara. These documents are unfortunately also fragmentary but attest to three examples of an "Aramean" in similar legal contexts—here likely record rolls of court records, where one does not necessarily expect the notary to have been named according to the genre's format (*TAD* B4.7, B5.6, B8.6). The Saqqara evidence demonstrates that the use of an "Aramean" was a larger phenomenon in the legal documents of the Egyptian province. This begs the ultimate question: What does the term mean in the Persian province of Egypt? The data does not supply a direct answer, and I must venture into conjecture to address the issue. In a previous study, I have argued that it is heuristically valuable to consider the Ptolemaic state's view of Judeans as an indication of their position, at least in the second Persian period but perhaps also during the fifth century BCE. That study, which relies heavily on the work of Willy Clarysse, brings the fact that Judeans were considered tax-Hellenes into the discussion of identity. Judeans in the Ptolemaic period received tax incentives on par with Greeks in Egypt, but they were not considered Greeks and presumably then did not receive other

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Unfortunately, the notary of the contract is lost and, therefore, cannot be studied in more detail here. See further, Vittmann, "Arameans in Egypt," 230.

perks that were only for Greeks. This model may be applicable to the Persian administration, in which non-Persian loyalists of high ethnic standing could be considered on par with Persians.[26] A different term, however, was used to express this: Aramean.[27] It was especially useful for Judeans to employ around the elitist non-Persians, such as those with Babylonian and Syrian-Aramaic names. One can easily see why notaries would use variable ethnic identifiers in legal proceedings when they understood that the imperial representatives viewed ethnicity as an administrative construct.

## Syenean: Mattan Son of Yašobyah

The term Syenean is found only three times in the whole Aramaic corpus from Egypt (*TAD* A4.10:6, B5.2:2, C3.14:32). It uses the Persian form of a gentilic adjective, -KN,[28] which has been grammaticalized into Aramaic, as evidenced by its correct Aramaic grammatical ending. This is the only Persian-ized gentilic adjective used in the administrative corpus from Elephantine.[29] In *TAD* B5.2 (ca. 420–400 BCE) is found a contractual party by the name of Mattan son of Yašobyah, a Syenean-Aramean (Aram. ʾRMY SWNKN). His name is Hebrew or Phoenician and his patronymic is Yahwistic. Here Syenean appears to be an additional administrative identifier for Mattan. In fact, the other two Elephantine sources that use the term Syenean indicate that others with Yahwistic names who

26. See Moore, "Supposed Diaspora Community," citing Clarysse, "Jewish Presence"; Clarysse, "Jews in Trikomia"; Clarysse and Thompson, *Counting the People*, along with additional reference to Huß, "Die Juden im ptolemäischen Ägypten."

27. Dromard has recently reignited a rather curious problem in the Babylonian evidence of the Murašu archive. There is found a ḫaṭru-group of Iranian-named state dependents, who seem to first appear in the environs of Nippur in the Persian period. They are likely not connected directly to the Achaemenid princes or highest administrators. Instead, the administrative development and activity of their ḫaṭru-unit "is quite distinct, compared to the other ḫaṭru-units" ("Nippur and Its Region," 219–21). Their ethnonym is *arūmāia*. Ran Zadok long ago connected them to the Iranian word **arva*, "quick, brave," which led to the English translation Areians ("Iranians," 113–14; compare Bloch, *Alphabet Scribes*, 305; Dandamayev, *Iranians in Achaemenid Babylonia*, 162–64). Matthew Stolper was doubtful in 1985 that our understanding of their identification is fully resolved (*Entrepeneurs and Empire*, 72n10). They appear to have tried to elevate their status by taking on Babylonian names (Dromard, "Nippur and Its Region," 221). It may be only a suspicious coincidence that *arūmāia* sounds like **ʾarāmāya* and the ethnonym could be spelled the same in Aramaic, but not in Akkadian. It should not be forgotten that in the Persian period the language Aramaic, which was previously known as *Armaya* "Aramaic" becomes *Aḫlamû*, literally "Elamite." The *social*—not linguistic—relationship between Arameans and Persians/Elamites has not yet been fully articulated in scholarship.

28. Muraoka and Porten, *Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic*, §28h n. 302.

29. Muraoka and Porten, *Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic*, §18h n. 302 also includes "Cretan" (KRTK), Saite (SYKN), and Carians (KRKYʾ), which are attested from Saqqara. See also *ATNS*, p. 20n4.

are identified by the administration as "servant" are also identified as "Syeneans (and) possession-status-holders" (*TAD* A4.10:6). The final reference is certainly administrative; it appears after a list and summary of food-ration distributions (Aram. M$^{?}$KL) in a note that refers to the food rations given to the Syenean troop (Aram. ḤYL$^{?}$ SWNKNY$^{?}$, *TAD* C3.14:32). Here, Syenean is an administrative designation that differs from a possession-status holder and from other ethnonyms. Its appearance in a fort-level ration list suggests that it refers to a troop of individuals allocated with state food rations rather than rations distributed within ethnically identified troops/communities. That the ethnonym uses a known Persian (Aram. -KN) rather than Semitic grammatical marker further supports this claim. For *TAD* B5.2, one may conclude that Mattan is working in the institution of Fort Syene directly under its commander as a (semi)permanent employee. It is worth reiterating that community troops do not have commanders, only the fort troops. In order to function, the Syenean troop of Fort Syene must have had permanent or long-term roles paid for by the state, particularly at the higher administrative levels. Certainly, the troop commander as well as the DGL-unit and century-unit commanders held long-term positions, as evidenced in the dated contracts in which they appear over a long duration. So too would other administrators in the ranks, like Mattan. This may not exclude them from participating in their recognized community as well.[30] Further possible evidence for this is found in the character of Hôše$^{ʿ}$a son of Natûn, whose name is not only listed in the short Syenean list of Judeans in *TAD* A4.10 but also found on the Yahô Temple Collection List (*TAD* C3.15:50).[31] If these are two references to the same person, then like Mattan in *TAD* B5.2, Hôše$^{ʿ}$a son of Natûn both belongs to an ethnic community, the Judean troop (*TAD* C3.15:1), and holds a position in the higher level institution of the fort troop. In such a case, referring to him also as an Aramean was a natural choice by the notary of *TAD* B5.2.

## Taxation Status and Professional Titles in the Contracts

As briefly explained above, the contracts' notaries use additional titles in two distinct ways, as a stand-in for a patronymic and as an extra identifier to a

30. It is worth noting that Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 35, suspected that priests remained outside the ethnic-troop/DGL-unit/century-unit structure, though he saw them as having "no such designation," but "[p]erhaps . . . [they are] included in the term *b$^{e}$$^{ʿ}$ēl qiryāh*, 'member of a town,' civilian, used in contrast to 'member of a *degel*,' soldier." I believe that the evidence rather points to priests serving as state representatives to the community and as community representatives to the state.

31. The name is also found in *TAD* D3.17:3 among those who performed the ḤMY, a currently unknown activity.

person's full name. Titles that take the place of patronymics are common among the higher-level administrative officials in Persian-period Aramaic sources. These titles assume that one individual or only a few distinct individuals hold such positions, and therefore, they may be identified clearly by their first name and title. We learn very little from the notaries about those who hold such titles—only that they have legal authority to adjudicate disputes that result in the withdrawal of one party from the dispute.[32] Interestingly, those with Egyptian names who bear a professional title are also ascribed patronymics, but they are not found in positions of judicial power; in the contracts only one is a legal party, Piyaʾ son of Paḥî the architect (*TAD* B2.8:2). All others are referenced as third-party property owners: Ḥôr son of Peṭeʾesê the gardener (*TAD* B3.11:6, B3.10:10), Ḥarûṣ son of Palṭô the priest of Khnum (*TAD* B2.7:15), and ʾEsḥôr son of Ṣeḥaʾ the architect of the king (*TAD* B2.6:2). The properties of three "boatmen" are also mentioned in the contracts, two of them include last names: ʾEspemet son of Pepṭuʿaûneyt (*TAD* B2.2:10, B2.3:7), his father Pepṭuʿaûneyt (*TAD* B2.1:13), and Paḥê/Paḥoî son of Tawêʾ (*TAD* B3.12:21). Of these professions, the role of the Gardener is most opaque, though one wonders whether it is a type of prebendary office associated with the Khnum temple complex.[33] We must make some assumptions about the role of the priest of Khnum here. It is unclear if this priest of Khnum was a simple *wab*-priest or the *lesonis*-priest of the temple. If the latter, then we can assume that he was a Persian loyalist who received some benefits from the administration—probably the right to live in a home in a section of the residential quarter designated to individuals who were associated with the administration. Likewise the architect and the boatman are state-approved professionals. Since the Neo-Assyrian period, architects with the title *arad ekalli* (= Aram. ʾRD[Y]KL) bore a special status,[34] and here the title explicitly states that the role serves the government.[35] As for the boatmen, it stands to reason that a number of boatmen were on the Persian administration's payroll. The ostraca frequently refer to "meeting the boat" to transport ration shipments, and one boatman mentioned by name was an Egyptian called ʾEspemet (HL no. J12), perhaps even the same ʾEspemet found in the above contracts. Furthermore, a ration-distribution list found on the south face of the Mastabat al-Fir'aun in Saqqara includes at least two Egyptian boatmen

32. These include Vidranga RBḤYL, "Commander," who is later also called HPTḤPT, "Commander of the Seventh," Ramnadayna the PRTRK, "Frataraka," and Damîdata the DYN, "Judge." In an earlier contract one finds Raûka as RBḤYL, "Commander."

33. Compare MacGinnis, *AfO* 38/39, esp. 75n7.

34. Oppenheim, "Akk. '*arad ekalli*'"; May, "Text and Architecture," 256.

35. See Moore, *Literary Depictions*, 46. The standard version of the Syriac manuscripts of the Story of Ahiqar, the core of which likely stems from the Persian period (Moore, "'Ahikariana'"), refers to this legendary figure as a wise builder (Syr. *ʾardēklāʾ ḥaḵîmāʾ*, Camb. Cod. Add. 2020 5.2).

(*TAD* C3.26). The Persians were known for using state labor to ensure the protection and stability of transit ways, and they especially had an incentive do so on Elephantine, where there was an imperial treasury. It appears then that by identifying the titles of the few native Egyptian property owners in the documents, the Yahwistic- or West Semitic–named notaries continue their practice of indicating the proximity of individuals in the documents to the administration.

In the same way, the title of the Yahô temple's servitor or oblate (Aram. LḤN) functions as both a professional distinction and a status, as can be seen with ʿAnanyah/ʿAnanî and his wife Tapemet the servitor (Aram. LḤNH).[36] In fact, the title of oblate calls to mind the analogical evidence from Mesopotamia, where contemporary temple oblates, from the lower status *širkū* to the temple administrators in major Babylonian temple economies, maintained a unique taxation status.[37] Furthermore, in the contracts, the Aramaic temple oblates hold, acquire, and transfer property in the same way as do those with possession-holder status. At this point I take the liberty to make inferences from the data about the role of these LḤN-servitors. Of particular interest is *TAD* B3.2, which is a withdrawal contract over something called "the *HYR*," which ʿAnanî, the Yahô temple's LḤN-servitor, controls. Porten following Yaron believed the term referred to immovable property, while Alejandro Botta has argued that it must refer to movable property because the document lacks a description of property boundaries.[38] The term is clearly attested only one other time in the corpus.[39] There it reads:

36. As for Porten's "Anani Archive," it is important to remember that all but one of the documents come from Charles Wilbour's collection. He acquired them in 1883 from the locals at Elephantine/Syene, who very likely found them as a collection; but whether they came from a Persian-period context or a secondary ancient context is unknown. Regardless, they should be thought of as a group, except for *TAD* B3.1, which was likely acquired in Rubensohn's second excavation between 1 and 15 January 1907. *TAD* B3.1 is a loan in which property of "a lady of Elephantine" stands as security. The rest of the documents concern Anani, a Yahô temple LḤN-servitor or his (Egyptian) wife Ta(pa)met daughter of Patow, the emancipated slave of a Judean, who after marriage also took the status of a Yahô LḤN-servitor. Their oblatory duties appear to have been lucrative enough for them to save capital for buying their own place, which was certainly a fixer-upper (B3.4 and B3.5). So, as oblates, especially one being an Egyptian, and as property owners, their lineage and former belongings would have been contestable after the Judean expulsion from Elephantine.

37. Wunsch, "Temple Economy," 985–86; Ragen, "Neo-Babylonian *širku*," 288–380.

38. Botta, *Aramaic and Egyptian Legal Traditions*, 127.

39. I note in *NAP*, p. 37, that if this foreign word can interchange with ḤR², it may be found on CG no. 60. I do not believe the broken context of [. . .]HR² on CG no. X8 refers to the same concept. Whether it refers to Aramaic Ḥ(Y)R, "magnate," is difficult to tell due to the broken context. The word is hardly attested and found as a self-identifying marker of Yedanyah the priest and his colleagues in *TAD* A4.7‖A4.8. It is used in all branches of Imperial Aramaic; in the Bishitun Inscription it is a translation of Akkadian mār banî (e.g., *TAD* C2.1:48), which in Neo-Babylonian was a recognized judicial status of a free person regardless of their social-economic standing (Kleber, "Dependent Labor and Status," 448–50). Similarly, Aramaic Ḥ(Y)R appears to be a cultural term

*NAP* no. 1.1.2
recto 1. ʾÛrî ⌜and his/its su⌝rplus[. . .]
recto 2. Hô⌜š⌝eʿa and ⌜my⌝ brother/ʾAḥ⌜y⌝[o . . .]⌜Š⌝◦ [. . .]
recto 3. the maidser⌜vant⌝ and a⌜s⌝[ked . . . PN]yah [. . . {they|you (m.p.)} shall d]o
recto 4. according to the value of the HYR [. . .] with which TN[. . .]
recto 5. from the district. [. . .]a security (payment) in possession [. . .]
verso 1. do (f.s.) for me as[. . . Ye]hôyišmaʿ son/daugh[ter] of[. . .]
verso 2. from Ḥabib. Sen[d (f.s) me . . .]⌜L⌝◦ B◦◦ son of ◦[. . .]
verso 3. to Yehôyišmaʿ ◦[. . .]◦ they sent.

In this fragmentary text we find "the value of the HYR" in the context of "surplus," an administrative term used to refer to surplus of supplies, particularly produce yields of grain. In view of this, Botta is likely correct that the HYR refers to movable property, that is, the income produced by the immovable property, which is (a percentage of) the yield of a given piece of land. One sees from this why Porten and Yaron believe it referred to immovable property; HYR could refer to an assessment of yield owed on a plot of land.[40] Since *TAD* B3.2 explicitly states that a HYR belongs to ʿAnanyah and that he pays Mîkaʾ son of ʾAḥyô five shekels "as the value of the *HYR* belonging to you (ʿAnanyah)" (line 3), I am inclined to think of the HYR as a type of prebend of the temple of Yahô that ʿAnanyah manages. The withdrawal document then refers to the settlement made after Mîkaʾ brought a claim against ʿAnanyah's prebend. ʿAnanyah settled the lawsuit with a relatively small payout to Mîkaʾ to ensure that he can no longer make claims against the prebend, which is the ultimate point of the contract and why the matter was of interest to the state.

In fact, although the type of prebend, its values, and the number of parties involved differ from a case found in surviving Babylonian sources (MacGinnis, *AfO* 38/39 nos. 7–8), the situation is remarkably analogous. The first, MacGinnis, *AfO* 38/39 no. 7, is a basic sales contract written in 496/5 BCE for a butcher's prebend. In it the owner Ana-Bēl-ereš sells it to Šellibi for three minas. We learn though that approximately two years later, in 494 BCE, the woman Kabtāya had a financial stake in the prebend that Šellibi purchased (perhaps even as his original creditor) and therefore becomes its legal co-owner. BM MacGinnis, *AfO* 38/39 no. 8 is a settlement made by Kabtāya to a claimant named Bel-Iddin

meaning simply "(nondependent) leader" and not a social category or officially recognized position, contra the definitions provided in CAL, n.m.pl. "ḫyryn, ḫyryʾ." I am reluctant to map the Greco-Roman notion of free-versus-slave onto the term. In *ATNS* no. 48 ii 5 a group of Ḥ(Y)R appear to own or be responsible for demarcated fields.

40. It is clear from the Aršama dossier that the fort or royal estates audited the potential yield of plots in order to assess taxes (*TAD* A6.11; discussion in Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," 41–43).

(who is from the same clan as the original seller Ana-Bēl-ereš). To settle the case, Kabtāya simply pays Bēl-iddin one mina of silver, and Bēl-iddin withdraws from the prebend using comparable language to that found in the Aramaic text between Mîkaʾ and ʿAnanyah.[41] While the claimants in the Babylonian example hold opposite roles from the ones in the Elephantine example, in both cases a priestly party brings suit against the current holder of a prebend. The procedures and situation are similar—a claim against a prebend was made, and the current holder agreed to a settlement to avoid further litigation. In view of the prebendary system, the HYR in *NAP* no. 1.1.2 comes into better focus as well. Prebends could require security deposits, as appears to be the subject of that letter. In short, ʿAnanyah the LḤN-servitor of the Yahô temple maintained a recognized status among the Persian authorities that never granted him possession status of state land; this status resembles that of Babylonian *širkū* and temple administrators. The state recognized that ʿAnanyah had the right to function in a temple economy, which was monitored and adjudicated by the imperial administration, in part because the administration reached into the temple economies and taxed them as centers of state-recognized communities (see chapter 9).[42]

The notaries of Aramaic contracts found in Egypt also included taxation statuses at the beginning of contracts in a number of cases, particularly when women were legal parties. In particular, as noted in chapter 1, his administrative training prompts the notary of *TAD* B3.4, Ḥaggay son of Šemaʿyah, to clerically add the number of parties with numerals. He also adds the taxation status to the duel-party Caspian couple who sells a house to ʿAnanyah. There, Ḥaggay identifies the man as GBR "man" and the woman as NŠN. Throughout the contracts, the general term for man is found as a placeholder for a hypothetical legal and taxable party.[43] Built into this general term, then, is the notation of a legally independent player.

The terms for taxation status "man" and "lady" differ from recognizable adults who do not bear this status but are rather called "underlings" (Aram. ʿLYM). The term is found in two contracts. The first is an apportion document (Aram. SPR PLGN) of the staff of Mibṭaḥyah, whom her sons Maḥseyah and Yedanyah are dividing (*TAD* B2.11). Here the notary Nabutukulti refers to Tabi who was property of Mibṭaḥyah and to Tabi's three children: Peṭôsîrî who is called a servant (ʿBD; line 7) and is apportioned to Yedanyah; Belleʾ who is apportioned to Maḥseyah; and Lîlû who is not to be acquired in the current document, perhaps because he was too young. Both Peṭôsîrî and Belleʾ are

41. See MacGinnis, *AfO* 38/39 nos. 7–8.

42. Wunsch, "Temple Economy," 990.

43. Additionally, compare the contemporary Babylonian system in which LU$_2$ (*amēlu*), "man," is a taxation class; see BaAr 6, p. 28n52 and references.

identified as Aramaic ʿBD YWR, which has long remained enigmatic.[44] The secret to its interpretation lies in the tally marks that follows the phrase. These marks are a reflex of the notary's administrative training. Years after the document's original publication, Cowley was on the right track when he wrote that the sentence would be simple if we understood the phrase as a class of slave.[45] He did not have the data to interpret it as such because it was not until the publication of the Account of Egyptian Family Units in 1988 (reedited in *NAP* no. 2.2.1) that the meaning of YWR/YWD as an administrative taxation class became known.[46] The phrase ʿBD YWR can here be translated as "1 servant of a taxable male," that is, unable to incur a tax burden himself.[47] Furthermore, at the end of the document Nabutukulti refers to Peṭosiri and Belleʾ as ʿLYMYʾ, "underlings." By doing so he shows us that he thinks the term ʿLYM is a more general term for dependents of working age, which may include slaves who are not themselves considered taxable entities.

The second occurrence of ʿLYM is found in an adoption contract written by the notary Raukhshana (*TAD* B3.9). It is clear from the contract that Zakkûr son of Mešullam transfers Yedanyah son of Taḥôî to ʾÛryah son of Maḥseyah. Yedanyah is identified as a ʿLYM (line 4). While the transfer indicates that Yedanyah was a dependent of Zakkûr, he is not identified here as a servant (Aram. ʿBD). Much has been made of the fact that the document explicitly indicates that Yedanyah must be adopted, forever treated as a son, never forced into slavery, and never marked as a slave (*ThWAT* 9:568–69). The motivations for Zakkûr's interest in Yedanyah seem rather apparent; Yedanyah is likely the son of Zakkûr by Taḥoi, who presumably was Zakkûr's female servant (Aram. ʾMH).[48] For this reason, it is in his interest to adopt Yedanyah as a son, so that he may never be forced into servitude, as the contract's guarantee goes on to articulate. This interpretation explains Yedanyah's Judean name, and Zakkûr's interest in his adoption. Emil Kraeling believes that Yedanyah was too young to have been marked,[49] but if so, why would he be identified as a ʿLYM? The ʿLYM in *TAD* B2.11 were

44. Cowley read it in the editio princeps as YWD and believed it to be a reference to the Aramaic letter (Sayce and Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, 48). He assumed it to be a reference to the tattoo mark but could not explain what *yod* would mean.

45. Cowley surveyed the research since his original publication, without making progress. His intuition, however, was leading him in the right direction as he wrote, "If by any possibility YWD could be descriptive of the kind of slave, the sentence would be simple, '1 yod slave, marked.' But I see no hope of explaining it as so" (Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, 106).

46. First edition by Porten, "Aramaic Papyrus Fragments," no. 10. One wonders whether the contemporary Phoenician administrative abbreviation Y is related. See Gorea and Moore, SoE 2 no. 2.

47. While the meaning of the term YWR/YWD is now clear, its etymology is not.

48. Kraeling, *Brooklyn Museum*, 224.

49. Kraeling, *Brooklyn Museum*, 224.

marked. The answer may lie in the fact that both these documents were written by non-Judeans and perhaps even individuals administratively trained outside of Egypt, in Syria-Mesopotamia. They appear to be using the term ʿLYM to mean "dependent," which could include the status of a servant. In neither of these cases is it clear that age plays a role in the notaries' designations. Instead, the term, which may have a secondary meaning of "boy" (or "girl" in the feminine form), was used here to represent status. After all, the servants in *TAD* B2.11 may have been the same age or older than their possession-status holders. The two foreign notaries, whose names mark them as coming from higher-status communities at Elephantine, likely use the term ʿLYM "boy" in a pejorative manner, which was for its time and place legal diction for "dependent."[50] In this regard, their eastern diction is in line with the usage found in the Aršama dossier for which ʿLYM means "dependent," regardless of age.

By comparison, women appear less often in the contracts, and are, therefore, more likely to be identified with the taxable status, NŠN. As with the other titles, this term of status only appears once in a contract, when the legal party is first introduced.

The remaining title ascribed by notaries to legal parties is that of possession status holder (Aram. MHḤSN). Much has been written about this term, but surprisingly, in only three instances are contractual parties clearly identified as holding possession status, and of those only two are complete contracts with the surviving names of the notaries. In addition, a severely broken contract refers to the act of transferring possession status (*TAD* B5.2).[51]

Scholarship held a variety of positions about the meaning of this Aramaic term until the 1982 study by H. Z. Szubin and Bezalel Porten. Prior to Szubin and Porten, studies argued that the word should be viewed within the domain of colonial land tenancy, though the nuance of that meaning differed depending on the study. Szubin and Porten, however, based their argument on Egyptian customs of hereditary property rights and later Targumic and Rabbinic sources. They argued that it refers to "heredity" property ownership. I have argued elsewhere that while landholders may have preferred to operate in a heredity fashion, state allotments are reverted to the state upon the landholder's death unless a legal contract, approved by the administration, was in place.[52]

Of particular note, the contract *TAD* B2.3 contains a clause in which Maḥseyah states that the transfer of possession status is given to Mibṭaḥyah. While the witnesses on the contract *TAD* B2.3 all bear West Semitic or Yahwistic

50. Similarly Karev, "Slavery and Servitude," 98n144.

51. The restoration on *TAD* B4.3:3 is speculative and problematized by the fact that the term does not appear in its near parallel *TAD* B4.4.

52. Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," 53.

names, which are typical of the Judean community, the notary of the contract ʿAttaršûrî son of Nabûzerʾibni bears a name of Aramaic-Akkadian origins. The relevant statement reads, "That [quitclaim] document (proving tenancy rights), I have given it to you. You possess it!" (*TAD* B2.3:25–26). With the transference of the document comes the transference of the land. So while Mibṭaḥyah is never called MHḤSNT*, "one (f.) who holds possession status," this statement effectively bestows it on her. Here then, we see the recognition that even a woman can hold possession status in Egypt within the imperial landholding scheme, so long as the proper documentation was in place.

The term for possession status was known from at least 460 BCE (*TAD* B2.3) to the end of that century (*TAD* B7.2:2), but it may have been used even earlier. The existence of term limits for the possession status of immovable property is not so clear, as indicated in a fragmentary letter *TAD* A5.2 in which a term limit of seven years is stated. But the term limit implied in an Aršama leather document suggests that the status could be held for life (*TAD* A6.11). Unfortunately, not much more can be said about how that document and writer construed the word. The Aramaic root ḤSN is used throughout the corpus in relation to property, mostly immovable, though *TAD* B2.9 demonstrates that one could also hold a claim of possession status over movable property (Aramaic NKS) and humans. It seems that the references to the root in all Aramaic documentary sources composed in Egypt point to this possession of state-granted property, movable or immovable. One letter of particular interest indicates that even a whole "troop" could be granted possession status (*TAD* A5.5:9). This fragmentary text reads:

*TAD* A5.5 (Elephantine)
recto 1. You (m.p.) [. . . Now, PN]
recto 2. administrator of Thebes says thus: [. . .] the ⌜tr⌝oop [. . .]
recto 3. to kill [. . . .] Moreover, killed [. . .] they/them [. . .]
recto 4. ⌜K⌝[. . .]
recto 5. [. . .]
recto 6. they said [◦◦ and ]they came to Pnh to B[. . .]
recto 7. their DGL-unit and the chiefs of their century-units [. . .]
recto 8. is/were destroyed/his sword. There is no troop [. . .]
recto 9. this troop had been holding-possession-status [. . .]
recto 10. even now this fortress [this] lives/is the tro[op. . . .]
verso 1. Now, thus say⌜s⌝ Mithradates: ◦[. . .]
verso 2. you judges say to P◦[. . .]
verso 3. let him give to the rebels.

This is an important statement, but unfortunately the fragmentary nature of the document does not allow us to expound much on its social significance.

Nonetheless, troops consisted of both men and women, and therefore the notion that Mibṭaḥyah could take on the title in *TAD* B2.3 is confirmed.

The notion of group possession was significant in one of my earlier studies in which I speculated that the Judean *šušānū* in Babylonia were functionally similar to those state dependents in Elephantine who bore this possession status.[53] Later that year, Zadok proposed that an infrequently used Babylonian modifier *ḫesannu* is an Aramaic loan from the root ḤSN into Neo-/Late Babylonian. He made a connection to later Aramaic usage rather than the contemporary Aramaic evidence from Egypt. He noted seventeen instances of the term as a designation for the members of the *šušānu*-class. *CAD* Ḫ (p. 201) had previously assumed that the term *ḫesannu* was from an unknown Iranian etymology meaning a type of craftsman, but Zadok argued that it derives from a C-stem Aramaic infinitive of root ḤSN and refers to the name of a *šušānu*-estate titled "inheritance, possession."

Comparatively, apart from *TAD* A6.11, which provides us one of two definitive statements regarding possession status, two more Aršama decrees (*TAD* A6.8 and A6.10) use the term ḤS(Y)N within the context of possession (Aram. ZYL) or of a legal complaint over possessions or estate property. These were written in Parsu and prefer to use eastern Aramaic terms. It seems probable that the writers of these letters were also using a variant of *ḫesannu*. The word is difficult to translate contextually, and *TAD* follows previous scholars' translations of ḤS(Y)N, which evidently stem from biblical Aramaic. Eduard Sachau (*APO*, p. 47) wondered how to interpret the term in the editio princeps of *TAD* A6.2:13 within its technical context (before the Aršama leather collection was discovered), and he considered whether it originates from Aramaic or Hebrew. But nobody, to my knowledge, has reassessed the term. While it seems clear from the literary proverbial language of the Ahiqar Manuscript that a form of the root ḤSN means something like "strong," the interpretation of *ḫesannu* in the context of landholdings in contemporary administrative Babylonian sources, and the fact that in the documentary sources from Egypt it is always found in the context of property, it seems that the Aramaic root ḤSN and the adjective/adverb ḤS(Y)N similarly refer to a class of possession-status holders who enjoy the benefits of state-granted property.

53. Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," 52. Recent research has mapped out the relationship between the community and the population, particularly the *šušānū*, who were intermediaries (Kleber, "Dependent Labor and Status," 446–48). The *šušānū* were responsible for delivering taxes directly to the royal administrators, while the community included private community creditors who served as local banks to help others pay their taxes, at a profit of course (Dromard, "Nippur and Its Region," 193, 196, 200). We then have a royal bank and intermediary community creditors. The *šušānū* were state dependents who consisted of a particular labor force, whose job was to ensure the granted lands were maintained (Dromard, "Nippur and Its Region," 200–201).

## Conclusion

In sum, this chapter has demonstrated that the use of ethnic identifiers in the Elephantine contracts—especially the alternation between "Judean" and "Aramean"—does not reflect essentialist notions of ethnicity but rather reflects the administrative perspective of notaries who operated within the imperial structure. These identifiers were tools shaped by social proximity to the fort system, by the perceived benefits of affiliation, and by the complex interpersonal relationships among parties. Far from being neutral or fixed designations, ethnonyms were dynamically deployed to negotiate status, assert affiliation, or even in cases of dispute signal exclusion or disdain. This analysis challenges prior assumptions about the static nature of ethnic identity in Persian-period Egypt and reveals instead a nuanced and highly contingent scribal practice. By attending closely to the patterns of notarial behavior, the chapter offers a model that explains the variation in ethnic labels and opens new paths for interpreting social identity in ancient administrative texts.

CHAPTER 5

# Accounting for the People According to Administrators Whom We Do Not Know

ACCOUNTS AND LISTS ARE the quintessential form of administrative documentation. A large and understudied corpus of lists and accounts survives from Elephantine and from Saqqara. In hardly any case did Aramaic lists and accounts, due to their formatting conventions and in difference to the contracts, include the names of the administrators who wrote the accounts. It will therefore be impossible to discuss the practices and perspectives of specific administrators as was done in the previous chapter. Instead, this chapter will present a survey of the different types of lists and their functions and, where possible, discuss the few individuals who appear on more than one document. Doing this, while considering the specialized meanings that an administrative perspective can reveal, will lead to a new sociohistorical interpretation of the documents.

Nearly all the lists collect the names of humans rather than commodities or tasks. Tracking persons in tax collection ledgers or ration distributions served a primary function in list-making practices. In both cases, the function was to monitor state- or community-recognized status and activity. It will be argued for the first time that three long lists, the Syene Ration List, the Account of Egyptian Family Units, and the Yahô Temple Collection List reflect a tripartite social structure at Elephantine consisting of:

- a multicultural system of active state employees at Syene, which was made up of members from various recognized communities, such as the Judeans, who received compensation from the state;
- groupings of state-recognized native Egyptians, who were monitored at the family level and from whom taxes were extracted by adapting the age-old practice of Egyptian census making into a tool of taxation oversight;
- a state-recognized community of Judean colonists, who were generally self-governing state dependents from whom taxes were extracted at the community level.

In addition to these three long lists, at least six label lists and forty-seven fragments or short lists and accounts survive. It will be shown that they complemented the efforts of administrators, helping them to monitor this tripartite society.

In this chapter, I will survey how—and when possible, why—the administrators organized individuals into particular lists. First, the chapter will interpret the label lists as well as the short lists and accounts from Elephantine. It will then turn to three surviving long tabular accounts: The Syene Ration List, the Account of Egyptian Family Units, and the Yahô Temple Collection List. Throughout, I will note the ethnonyms used in the lists and individual(s) who occur more than once. Such data are crucial for determining the functions of the lists. Lastly, while the comparative evidence was of only limited value in the study of the Elephantine contracts, it will be demonstrated how very informative the comparative evidence is for the interpretation of the Aramaic lists.

## Label Lists

There survives from Egypt a very small collection of sherds that may be identified as Aramaic vessel labels formatted as lists. They all come from Elephantine and include no titles or summaries that would indicate their functions. The list on each respective sherd/vessel appears to have been written by a single administrator, judging from the paleographic consistency throughout the list, though this is merely a generic rather than scientific observation. Presumably, a label list indicates individuals who either took from or deposited into the respective vessel. One may reasonably speculate that those taking from a vessel were being paid rations or salaries for their work or status and thus were part of an identifiable labor team. If the label lists indicate individuals who contributed to the vessel, it may be reasonably concluded that the names are those of a designated taxation group. Accounting information does not follow the individuals' names, and this indicates that the administrator had a "standard" notion of the amount distributed to the individuals or deposited into the vessels on each list. Unfortunately, the publications of these sherds and vessels do not include a detailed ceramic analysis, and therefore it cannot be said which types of items may have existed in the vessels. The surviving examples of label lists are compiled in table 7.

As can be seen, Judeans or Northwest Semitic names constitute the majority of those found in the lists, and all individuals appear to be male.[1] There is some

1. Information about the origins of the sherds in Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, has not been published. Presumably, these six sherds were vessel labels, but I have not inspected them firsthand. The

TABLE 7. Chart of Aramaic vessel labels in list format

| Text | Translation | Prosopography |
|---|---|---|
| CG no. 177 | cv 1. ⌜Mîkayah⌝ son of {◦(◦)◦mn \| | Judean—??? |
| Egyptian vessel | ◦(◦)◦mk} | Judean—NWS |
| | cv 2. Malkyah son of Natan | NWS—Egyptian |
| | cv 3. ʾÔšeʿa son of Peṭeḥnu[m] | Judean—??? |
| | cv 4. Sa/emakyah son of ◦[. . .] | NWS—??? |
| | cv 5. ʾÔšeʿa son of [. . .] | |
| CG no. 192 | cv 1. ◦◦ . . . | ??? |
| Egyptian vessel | cv 2. {Hywmh \|Hzpnyh} | ??? |
| | cv 3. Yig⌜do⌝[l] | Judean |
| | cv 4. ◦[. . .] | ??? |
| CG no. 208 | cv 1. Gemaryah son of | Judean—Judean |
| Egyptian vessel | cv 2. Be⌜n⌝yah, Me⌜š⌝ullam | Semitic—Judean |
| | cv 3. son of ʾA⌜ḥya⌝[ʾ] | |
| | cv 4. Pelaṭyah son of | Judean—Judean |
| | cv 5. Neryah | |
| Röllig, | cv 1. Natan son of N[erya]h(?) | NWSemitic—[Judean] |
| *SDAIK* 36, | cv 2. {Np\|M}◦◦◦ˢ son of Neryah | ???—Judean |
| no. 32 | cv 3. Yigdol son of P◦[. . .] | Judean—??? |
| | cv 4. Maḥseyah son of . . . [. . .] | Judean—??? |
| | cv 5. [. . .]◦[◦]◦ son of M[s . . .] | ???—??? |
| | cv 6. Lṭy{d\|r}ʾ son of [. . .] | ???—??? |
| | cv 7. ʾElmaraʾ [son of] ◦ny◦[. . .] | NWS—??? |
| | cv 8. Šillem son of Ṣepan[yah] | NWS—NWS [or Judean] |
| Röllig, | cv i 1. Raûtah | All of Iranian origin |
| *SDAIK* 36, | cv i 2. ʾA . . . L | |
| no. 35 | cv i 3. ʾAtr(o)laya | |
| | cv i 4. Vahyarašnu | |
| | cv i 5. Maliya | |
| | cv i 6. ʾApûlaya | |
| | cv i 7. Suraya | |
| | cv i 8. Milanûr (?) | |
| | cv ii 1. Pûsamak | |
| Röllig, | cv 1. Natan son of [. . .] | NWS—??? |
| *SDAIK* 36, | cv 2. ʿAzarî son of H◦[. . .] | NWS—??? |
| no. 38 | cv 3. Pʾynbl a Caspian | Caspian |
| | cv 4. ⌜Q⌝◦◦◦◦◦ | ??? |
| | cv 5. . . . {HM \| H◦◦} | ??? |

cultural diversity among the names. It is worth noting that the first names of Judean or Northwest Semitic origin found here appear frequently in the administrative missives. If these are the same individuals, then they likely have a high-level administrative status, at least among the Judean community.

The presence of "a Caspian" in Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 38, may indicate that the list is of higher-ranking individuals.[2] As discussed in the last chapter, Caspians appear as legal parties, witnesses, and/or residents of Elephantine in at least four contracts (*TAD* B2.7, B3.4, B3.5, B3.12). There, and in a report or memorandum entry from a record roll from Saqqara, the ethnonym appears to stand in place of the individual's DGL-unit (*TAD* C 3.8 scroll IIIA 6).[3] Likewise, Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 35, stands out among the label lists because it contains a group of individuals identified only by their first names, which are of Iranian origin.[4] There is good reason to assume that, like the Caspians, those of Iranian origin held relatively high status in the imperial administration, particularly when they appear in a far-flung province like Egypt. No Elamite or Old Persian documentary evidence has been found at Elephantine or Syene, thus indicating that groups of individuals of Iranian origin accepted and likely operated within the Aramaic administrative language of the empire; certainly those that signed their own names on *TAD* B3.4 did.

In short, labels formatted as lists are surprisingly rare and are therefore difficult to interpret, in particular without the aid of ceramic analysis. Of the six lists only those in the Clermont-Ganneau collection have been identified as belonging to Egyptian vessels. This means that if they were rations, they were intraprovincial shipments to communities that were not Egyptian. What can be inferred from the presence of a list of Iranian names among the few extant sources is that at least that list—Röllig, SDAIK 36, no. 35—represents a homogeneous ethnic group, which likely held a high status relative to other groups at Elephantine/Syene. It suggests that persons of Iranian origin may have constituted a recognized community. If so, it is unclear whether this community lived in the region, served there as an itinerant military or labor contingent, or provided fully recognized state employees at the fort or royal-estate level. This datum, combined with the albeit loose possibility that some of the Judean names on the other list labels may correlate to recipients of ostraca missives,

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publications do not indicate whether the inscriptions on them are oriented in such a way that they could be considered labels. *TAD* D8.2 has been excluded because it is illegible and may be written in the Demotic script. Porten and Lemaire, "Personal Names," nos. 6–7 (one object), has been excluded because it appears to be a sherd used to note three or four names but not in list format. Additionally, bilingual jar labels, some of which may be interpreted as lists, have not been included.

2. For discussion of Caspians, see Becking, *Identity in Persian Egypt*, 58–59; Van der Toorn, "Ethnicity at Elephantine," 156–59.

3. Compare discussion of the concept in Van der Toorn, "Ethnicity at Elephantine," 158–59.

4. This is according to Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, p. 195.

TABLE 8. Short Aramaic lists and accounts from Elephantine

| Text | Palimpsest | Material |
|---|---|---|
| *TAD* C3.3 | TRUE | Papyrus |
| *TAD* C3.4 | | Papyrus |
| *TAD* C4.4 | | Papyrus |
| *TAD* C4.5 | | Papyrus |
| *TAD* C4.6 | TRUE | Papyrus |
| *TAD* C4.7 | | Papyrus |
| *TAD* C4.8 | TRUE | Papyrus |
| CG no. 63 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 96 | | Ostracon |
| CG no. 113 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 122 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 134 | | Ostracon |
| CG no. 141 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 143 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 145 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 178 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 181 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 182 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 220 | | Ostracon |
| CG no. 221 + CG no. 231 + CG no. X1 (= HL no. J9) | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 224 + CG no. 242 (= HL no. J10) | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. 250 | | Ostracon |
| CG no. 259 | | Ostracon |
| CG no. 266 | | Ostracon |
| CG no. 267 | TRUE | Ostracon |

suggests that label lists were special distributions or collections for people with a status higher than average individuals. This then leaves one wondering: What was the status of the administrator who oversaw the collection or distribution of those label lists? Unfortunately, this question cannot be answered.

## Short Lists and Accounts

As discussed in chapter 1, a large collection of short lists and accounts from Elephantine survive on ostraca and papyrus as well as on a wooden writing board. They are compiled in table 8.[5]

5. I have excluded ambiguous documents. *TAD* D8.4 is not included because its provenance is Edfu, and the orthography and prosopography suggest a Ptolemaic or later Egyptian context. See discussion in *APO*, p. 230, and Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*, 2:243–48. For the

TABLE 8. Short Aramaic lists and accounts from Elephantine (*continued*)

| Text | Palimpsest | Material |
|---|---|---|
| CG no. 275 | | Ostracon |
| CG no. X2 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. X4 | TRUE | Ostracon |
| CG no. X11 | | Ostracon |
| *TAD* D3.4 | | Papyrus |
| *TAD* D3.5 | | Papyrus |
| *TAD* D3.6 | | Papyrus |
| *TAD* D3.13 | | Papyrus |
| *TAD* D9.2 | | Ostracon |
| *TAD* D9.3 | Unknown | Ostracon |
| *TAD* D9.4 | Unknown | Ostracon |
| *TAD* D9.5 | | Ostracon |
| *TAD* D9.7 | | Ostracon |
| *TAD* D9.9 | Unknown | Ostracon |
| *TAD* D9.10 | Unknown | Ostracon |
| *TAD* D9.12 | | Ostracon |
| *TAD* D9.13 | | Ostracon |
| *TAD* D12.1 | | Stone |
| *TAD* D13.3 | | Wood |
| Moore, *MDAIK*, O 4945 | Unknown | Ostracon |
| Moore, *MDAIK*, O 5130(bis)/O 5139 | Unknown | Ostracon |
| *NAP* no. 2.2.2 | | Papyrus |
| Pap. Ber. P. 23101 (incorrectly placed by *TAD* on C3.15) | | Papyrus |
| Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 34 | Unknown | Ostracon |

This collection of documents is of considerable length and includes over four hundred name entries in total. Finding correspondences across the lists can be difficult because many individuals bear the same first name. For instance, there are at least fourteen occurrences of the first name Mešullam. Seven of those fourteen Mešullams include patronymics, and no single patronymic is the same. Therefore, one can only assume that the fourteen Mešullam entries refer to fourteen different individuals. Of the total names approximately one quarter (that is, only 102) are completely legible first names with legible patronymics, and of those 102, only four names appear twice:

tag *TAD* D9.6, see chapters 1 and 7. It is unclear that *TAD* D3.15 is a list. The following opistographs are probably contracts or letters based on material and scribal grounds: *TAD* D3.2, D3.7, D3.8, D3.9, D3.10, and D3.20. Fragments that are written parallel to the recto's fibers but remain unclassified, such as those in *NAP* nos. 2.5 or *TAD* D5.1–D5.41, are not considered here. *TAD* C3.17 is unprovenanced (Aimé-Giron, *Textes araméens d'Egypte*, nos. 77–78). *TAD* believes the papyri "may" come from Elephantine (C, p. xvii), probably due to the presence of a Yahwistic name, ʿAzaryah.

Zakkûr son of Mešullam (HL no. J9 cc 1, 7)
Gemaryah son of ʾAḥyô (HL no. J9 cv 7, 9)
Nihab son of Berkayah (CG nos. 178 cv 2, X2 cv 6)
Šemaʿyah son of Zakkûr (Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 34 cc 1; *TAD* D12.1 side 1 line 4).

It is highly probable that the occurrences of Zakkûr son of Mešullam refer to the same individual and those of Gemaryah son of ʾAḥyô also refer to the same individual because in each case the names are repeated on the same textual object, HL no. J9. This ostracon is a list of names, both sides of which were reused after earlier lists of names had been erased. The second occurrence of Gemaryah son of ʾAḥyô is in the erased list, which is still legible. This suggests that the administrator accounted for him in a previous list, then accounted for him again in an overwritten list. As for Zakkûr son of Mešullam, his name appears twice on the back of the ostracon, but it seems that a *vacat* separates the groupings in which he occurs. Here too, the administrator is counting individuals in groups on two separate occurrences for two separate purposes using the same ostracon, and Zakkûr son of Mešullam ended up in two separate groupings. This ostracon is a good example of an administrative notepad used for making lists that are either meant to be temporary—such as a roster for a daily ration distribution to a labor team—or meant to be transferred to a more permanent account document before they were reused. It should also be mentioned that the shape and size of the ostracon is fairly square and fits easily in one's hand, making it useful for writing while standing or walking around, and therefore the administrator may have been monitoring the men on the list as they completed tasks. Alternatively, he may have been monitoring the items the men were depositing, if they were taxable persons, or receiving, if they were ration recipients.

As for the other two individuals whose names are found on separate sources, Nihab son of Berkayah appears once on an ostracon list (CG no. 178) that also exhibits erasures, uses scribal check marks, is not well formatted, and has a commodity note, all of which suggests the list was used to record a ration distribution. If I am translating the abbreviations correctly, the ration was for one Ṭ-measure/Ṭ-vessel of barley.[6] Nihab also appears on an ostracon list

6. The meaning of the Ṭ-measure/Ṭ-vessel remains obscure. It appears on both Aramaic and Phoenician vessel labels. Siegfried Mittmann ("'Königliches Bat,'" 68–73; followed by Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, p. 190) argues that the Phoenician Ṭ is a ligature of BT "1 bat-measure." He acknowledges that in Aramaic at Elephantine the symbol is represented only by Ṭ, without B. His semiotic approach overlooks the social reality that the Aramaic administration is the defining administrative program in Egypt; the Ṭ must be comprehensible to the Aramaic administrator. Thus, Mittmann's view must be rejected. Mittmann's survey includes Lidzbarski's idea that it is the use of an alphabetic letter for the number 9, which seems unlikely given that the use of letters as numerals is not productive in Persian-period sources. He also discusses unsuccessful attempts by scholars to see an

(CG no. X2) that was also reused; the erased text too is a list. Unfortunately, the overwritten list and the palimpsest do not provide any clues as to their purpose(s), but since Nihab son of Berkayah appears to have received a small distribution of grain on the first list, it seems likely that the second list serves the same or a similar purpose.

Šemaʿyah son of Zakkûr appears on one ostracon list (Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 34).[7] The document only includes names and is formatted as a tabular list with two rows written perpendicular to the longer list on the convex side, where Šemaʿyah's name is found. His name also appears on the unusual limestone block that was used as a short list of names (*TAD* D12.1). Although the block is rather thick and heavy, it is rectangular. On side 2 it is possible that a third name appears with the number 10 standing right of the name. This would suggest that the broken bottom portion of the block once had room for two more names on side 1. In this case, it may have once been a roughly hewn rectangular block used for building. Perhaps it was material from the site of a building project, and the foremen simply accounted for the workers on a readily available piece of building material. The use of building materials to make notes is common at work sites, even today. If this hypothesis is correct, then it suggests that the list represents either a roster or ration distribution, and the two phenomena need not be exclusive.

Given how small the domestic quarter of Elephantine is, it is remarkable that of nearly four hundred names only four correspondences have been found on the short and fragmentary lists. It seems best to see these lists as administrative notes that the administrator took while monitoring humans off island. He then returned with the notes, likely to record them in longer accounts or to collect supplies to deliver to those on the list the next day.

As for the short papyrus lists, it is difficult to determine if any of the fragments or short lists studied here were in fact part of longer lists. There are though a few fragmentary papyrus rolls of much longer accounts from Elephantine. The surviving short papyrus lists exhibit the same features found on the ostraca lists. Thus, the choice of papyrus for a short list may have had more to do with the administrator's access to the writing material in the moment than with sociological distinction.

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Egyptian origin for the symbol. His survey includes Delavault's and Lemaire's views that it may mean "good-quality" (from ṬB) or "sealed" (from ṬNYʾ). These views are maintained by Lemaire regarding an Elephantine Phoenician label (Lemaire, Review, 182) and seem the best of the proposed options. But it must be remembered that an item known as ṬYN ŠMWŠ is imported in large quantities to Egypt from Ionian and Phoenician ships carrying largely vessels (Ahiqar Palimpsest, e.g., line G r ii 25). Alternatively, it may mean milled flour (Aram. ṬḤYN); see chapter 8.

7. The list *TAD* D9.12 includes the name . . . yah son of Zakkûr, and it is enticing to see this as Šemaʿyah son of Zakkur on the name list Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 34. But the evidence is not certain.

## Long Accounts (Tabular Lists)

Three long lists written on papyrus survive from Elephantine, and they are worth discussing as a collection. As I have argued elsewhere, the fifth year of Darius II (419 BCE) was remarkable because it is the only year for which a record survives of royal imperial intervention that affected Elephantine.[8] Generally, the Egyptian province was ruled not directly from the imperial capital but by proxy.[9] The fifth year of Darius II marked a major auditing and taxation moment, which was cause for a Judean leader outside Elephantine named Ḥananyah to write to Yedanyah and the Judean administrative leaders of the Yahô temple in order to advise them on procedure. This advice is found in Ḥananyah's so-called Passover Letter (= *TAD* A4.1). This letter informs us that Aršama's bureau was responsible for overseeing the imperial mandate. Within months of that letter a major tax collection took place among the Judean community. At or near the same time, a ration distribution to the active Syenean troop occurred as well as an auditing of storehouses across the land. This same period is the ideal time to date a census and taxation list of Egyptian family units. No individual in any of the lists is found in another, and therefore these three accounts serve as ideal data for understanding how administrators, as agents of the state, construed (and perhaps helped create) the site's sociology.

We do not know the administrators who wrote these three accounts, but the contents of the documents tell us, in general terms, how the communities of Syene and Elephantine were structured. There were at least three active state-recognized groups: the tax-paying Judean community, the tax-paying native Egyptian families, and the active ration-collecting Syenean troop. The administrators went through rigorous procedures to ensure that rations were distributed and taxes collected. One can only guess at the frequency with which this occurred. It is very probable that the four papyri that come from Darius II's fifth year were actually part of a yearly procedure in which the royal capital announces at the beginning of the year to the provinces that taxation and auditing must occur. By chance, only the record of one particular year survives.

As has often been noted, the other administrative genres indicate that Elephantine and Syene were diverse settlements with various cultural groups intermingled in the residential quarters of Elephantine, along with diverse individuals engaged in legal and business matters at Syene. That said, the label lists, short lists, and short accounts indicate that most of the time similar peoples

8. For a detailed argument, see Moore, "Administering Cult," 308–13.

9. Note the discussion in Moore, "Persian Administrative Process," 5in10 regarding Aršama's insistence that decisions that affect local Egyptian matters be decided in Egypt by those standing in his place. With rare exception, only decisions affecting his own estates and personnel are issued from abroad.

were grouped together by the administrator. The two taxation accounts, the Yahô Temple Collection List and the Account of Egyptian Family Units, demonstrate that administrators also viewed and grouped taxable persons by their state-recognized cultural communities regardless of gender. The Syene Ration List, however, stands out. The fifty-four "Syeneans" listed, presumably all men, who received a large sum of rations, constitute the most diverse list in the corpus.

### *Syene Ration List (=* TAD *C3.14 [+]* NAP *no. 2.2.3)*

*TAD* dates the Syene Ration List to 401–400 BCE (p. D:222) based on paleography (p. D:73), though Porten had originally dated it to the reign of Darius II, probably following Sachau's initial assessment (*APO*, 87).[10] The Syene Ration List is missing its initial column, and the final column is only partially preserved. This may be due to the roll having deteriorated from both the outside and the inside in situ. The administrative scribal features of this complex account were discussed in chapter 1; here it is worth studying the content of the list to understand its function and place within the Elephantine/Syene administrative system and what it tells us about the fort's sociology.

Not only is the title of the document lost, but with it the first column of names is. Fortunately, the account's section of names includes a total, which indicates that fifty-four persons were included on the list. Only approximately twenty-five entries survive, and of those, only thirteen preserve a complete or partial first and last name. Porten first noted that of the surviving names none can be identified as Judean with certainty, but later the *TAD* indicates that the reading of Haggay son of Šemaʿyah is certain.[11] I agree that the surviving strokes of all the letters in this name are visible. Thus, at least one individual on the list can be identified as Judean. Of the remaining names one finds a mixture of Phoenician, Egyptian, Babylonian, Iranian, Northwest Semitic, and other various foreign names. It is by far the most diverse grouping of individuals in the Elephantine corpus. Since Babylonians and Iranians, in particular, tend to represent individuals of high social status in the corpus, it seems possible that the entire list is of well-to-do Syenean state dependents.

Haggay son of Šemaʿyah is found elsewhere in the corpus. In fact, this is the name of a notary who works at Elephantine between at least 437–402 BCE (see table 6; chapter 4) and drafts contracts, most of which deal with the family of

10. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 72.

11. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 34. In a footnote he questions Cowley's readings of names thought to be Judean, but of them the most important for this study is Haggay son of Šemaʿyah, which Porten ultimately favors in the *TAD* (C3.14:3).

Ananî son of ʿAzaryah, the LḤN-servitor of the Yahô temple. It is noteworthy that Haggay son of Šemaʿyah does not appear on the Yahô Temple Collection List. I contend that as an active member of the Syenean troop he was serving his labor-tax term at a higher level than a mere century-unit member and was therefore exempt from the collection made on the Judean troop.

The Syene Ration List records the distribution of 100 ardabs of barley to the fifty-four individuals in the form of "food rations" (Aram. MKL or MʾKL). In the manuscript, "food ration" appears to be a synonym for the Iranian loanword PTP, "ration" (compare recto iv′ 7, 10), but it should be noted that "rations" could have been given in equipment as well.[12] Regardless of the various estimates of the size of one ardab of a food ration, which range between ca. 25 and 55 liters/quarts, this is a generous portion.[13] Twenty-two individuals received one ardab, two persons received 1.5 ardab,[14] and thirty individuals received two ardabs. All appear to have been men, according to the surviving names, though it is possible that a small number of women may have been included in the lost names. Those receiving the most were first on the list, and their names are therefore lost.

Following the list of recipients is a miscellany of the total ration expenditure that was distributed to regional troops from Syene to Thebes. These entries are audits from the Egyptian sixth month of year 4 to presumably the sixth month of year 5. The numbers are broken, but each regional troop received over 1,000 ardabs in this year and probably something closer to 1,500 on average; the largest surviving value is "1,690(+)" on recto iv′ 11. If this generalization is correct, it means that a group of fifty-four people received between 5 to 10 percent of the yearly regional ration distribution in a single event. This further bolsters the claim that those on the list are of a special status.

Porten has argued that the rations distributed here do not include the salaries paid in silver that these fifty-four individuals may also have received.[15] That is

12. See *ATNS* no. 26 recto 8, 16 and discussion herein, chapter 9.

13. Bivar, "Weights and Measures I." Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, 48, has equated the ardab to 30 choinikes, which is approximately 30 liters. In chapter 8, I calculate that 30–35 loaves of flatbread can be made from 2.5 liters of flour. The Syene ration is for whole corn grain, of which some volume would be lost in the processing of flour. Thus, the ration of one ardab to the lower-paid personnel would produce only about 1–2 loaves of flatbread per day for a year. This is hardly a sustainable income. This is good evidence that annual state-ration distributions were meant for only part of the year or perhaps as "bonuses" to the higher-ranking personnel. The inference is that the personnel were only obliged to work for the state during their tax obligation, for which they were paid. It is still feasible that they took a subsidy from their community contributions too.

14. The calculation was for one and two quarters ardab. The measurement of two quarters rather than one half (Aram. PLG) is likely owed to the containers in which the barley was transported. The containers may have been a fixed quarter-ardab size.

15. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 72. Reference to salaries paid in silver (PRS) come from contracts (*TAD* B4.4) and letters (*TAD* A2.3 [Hermopolis]).

perhaps so, but a fragmentary administrative account from Saqqara includes a section on taxes collected followed by a section of "the expenditures" (Aram. NPQTʾ) distributed (*ATNS* no. 38). There it states that some received silver while others received food rations. If the final two lines are related—the administrative formatting of the document suggests they are—then the food rations may be interpreted as having been calculated in silver but distributed in kind. At Elephantine the basic ration unit was a barley standard rather than a silver standard. In fact, the intercolumnar notations before each name may mean "b(arley)" (Aram. Š) and s(ilver)" (Aram. K). Note that K is only used twice (ii 7, 16) and only after Š had been written, then erased.[16] It seems, then, that the Syene ration distribution did not include an additional silver payment as Porten suspected.

A newly published papyrus fragment from a different record roll (*NAP* no. 2.2.4) indicates that food rations were also calculated in basic sums at Elephantine in addition to the itemized format found on the Syene Ration List. The calculations are small, as shown by the fact that each begins with the numeral 20, and therefore must range between 20 and 99 units for each group. As indicated in the Syene Ration List, each unit of food rations varies based on the individual's rank, and rather than receiving a basic food-ration unit, those on the Syene Ration List receive rations in ardab.[17] The little fragment further supports the claim that a barley standard was the basic rationing unit at Elephantine. It is enticing to suggest that *NAP* no. 2.2.4 records the sums of rations distributed to labor teams like those collected in the short name lists studied above.[18] The text reads:

16. The document preserves (nearly?) a single column of text. The initial entry in lines 1–5 refers to the transfer of silver and may be a reference to a taxation collection. This entry appears to have continued from previously lost columns. Note the traces of ink on the surviving numeral 1 in the middle on the right edge. Following the entry is found a dividing line, then a section of "the taxes" (Aram. GBYʾ; recto 6–13). The section of expenditures follows and reads:

*ATNS* no. 38 recto
14. the expenditure(s) ([. . .])
15. which was given to ◦[. . . (. . .)]
16. which was given in/with[. . .]]
17. silver, 2 k(arš) [#] ḥall[urs (. . .)]
18. gi⌜v⌝en into ⌜the ha⌝nd of {Zʾ[. . .] |Nʾ[. . .]}
19. according to the food-ration of Pˢṣ◦[. . .]
20. until the rest of the silver[. . .]

The Persepolis archive also preserves examples of a ration standard based on commodities that is then paid in silver, for example PT 1963–8. For the most recent edition, see Bakhtiari, "Reedition of the Persepolis Treasury Tablet."

17. In the legal documents one finds a unit of food to be a legally definable unit (*TAD* B4.4).

18. Compare below a similar format for the sums of *mandattu*-payments in an account from Saqqara (*TAD* C3.5).

*NAP* no. 2.2.4
r 1′. [. . . f]ood-rations, [20(+) . . .]
r 2′. [. . . f]⌜o⌝od-rations 20[(+) . . .]
r 3′. [. . . f]ood-ration ⌜20⌝[(+) . . .]
r 4′. [. . .]⌜f⌝ood-rations ⌜20⌝[(+) . . .]
v i 1′. [. . .]⌜Ṣ⌝
v i 2′. [. . .]T 2
v i 3′. [. . .]◦
v ii 1′. ◦[. . .]

The document accounts for at least 80–396 units of food rations, but the size of these units is not known; I assume the size is one *qab*-measure (approximately 2.5 liters). It seems probable that these are mere sustenance-sized rations like those requested from ʾAḥûṭab in the Elephantine ostraca (e.g., CG nos. 78, 255) and given to the Judean community. They may not represent the large state incomes/bonuses of those found in the Syene Ration List. They nonetheless indicate that rations large and small, community and state were documented to some degree.

The picture painted by these documents represents a multitiered administrative hierarchy in which community administrators kept track of their stores and distributions while the state operated in a parallel but higher-level structure that oversaw the accounting in the temples. A tantalizing document from Saqqara (*ATNS* no. 56) suggests that state administrators may have audited the community-specific temple economies. This comes as no surprise given the evidence of the Persians' reach into the temple economies, particularly the native temples. The fragmentary document reads:

*ATNS* no. 56[19] recto
1. [. . .]Tmose priest of Isis-the-g[reat . . .]
2. [. . .]y{r|d}nʾ of Isis-the-great
3. . . . his expenditure . . .
4. . . . Isis-the-great . . .
5. . . . these fields . . .
6. . . . all . . .
7. . . .
8. . . . Ḫatabi . . .

19. It is unclear which Isis temple priest this document refers to. While it is enticing to see this as a reference to the Isis temple at Philae, around the river's bend from Elephantine, there is no corroborating evidence to that effect.

Here we see an administrator—presumably a state official—accounting for the expenditures attributed to a priest of Isis, and this is followed by a reference to "these fields." This administrative note provides a glimpse into the auditing practices as it presumes "these fields" were a taxable unit under the control of a temple economy.

### *Tax Accounts*

Tax collection or ration distribution on larger groups such as that found in the Syene Ration List serves two purposes. First, it helps the administration keep record of who receives from or pays into state coffers. Long accounts also help record significant portions of the population at a given time and place. They are a way to monitor the people. The taxation structure of the Persian Empire took over that of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and, therefore, was mostly concerned with labor and manpower (see chapter 9). Thus, ration distributions and tax collection accounts function as rosters or a type of census that allows the imperial authorities to monitor population groups over time.

### *Comparative Taxation Data*

In their monumental publication of all known census and tax ledgers from Ptolemaic Egypt, known as P.Count, Willy Clarysse and Dorothy J. Thompson note that the act of census taking was a long-standing Egyptian practice that goes back to the New Kingdom (P.Count, pp. 2:13–14). They argue that the Ptolemies, however, first used the census "for primarily fiscal ends" and that references to the use of a census for tax collection during the reign of Nectanebo I "are probably anachronistic for fourth-century BCE Egypt and rather portray the Greek world of Aristotle" (P.Count pp. 2:14–15). Their views about when the census-taking and taxation practices merged in Egypt are incorrect;[20] the Persians were the first to directly link the Egyptian census to taxation in the fifth century as is clear from the Account of Egyptian Family Units, which is formatted like those documents in P.Count. Nonetheless, the large trove of P.Count data helps us speculate as to the meaning and function of the two tax documents that survive from Elephantine. Of them, the Account of Egyptian Family Units agrees in structure with the census-tax accounts from the Ptolematic period. In both, the administrators organize the groups by family units with the male listed first followed by his dependents. In P.Count the male is typically unidentified but listed

20. The tide of scholarship is changing from a classics-centric model to one that sees Hellenism as an evolution of the Persian period on an imperial administrative level. Consider Degen, "Alexander III."

with his patronymic. In this regard, the Demotic P.Count 9 is unique because it identifies the paterfamilias as either "man, # (area of field size)" or simply as "the one without fields." In all censuses, the paterfamilias's dependents are listed with titles indicating their relationship to the paterfamilias, such as "(his) wife," "(his) son," or "(his) daughter."[21] After each family unit, one finds a subtotal for the unit structured as "Total #: males #, females #." The rich data in P.Count indicates that census-tax accounts were used to collect the salt tax, a type of poll tax. They differ from those accounts solely used for taxation of recognized state groups in which administrators listed only taxable persons and the amount paid per person (e.g., P.Count 24). These accounts were organized by recognized state groups (*ethnē*), which included working classes as well as recognized ethnic communities (P.Count, pp. 2:123–205). The taxation of recognized state groups resembles the Yahô Temple Collection List, and the census-taxation documents resemble the Account of Egyptian Family Units.

Of these, the structure of the Persian-period Account of Egyptian Family Units from Elephantine is nearly identical to the P.Count census-taxation documents, such as P.Count 9 (Demotic). The only significant difference is in content; each male in the Aramaic account is indicated with his taxation status, YWR, while no such label is provided for the entries in P.Count. Some P.Count documents, such as P.Count 24, also resemble the Elephantine Aramaic Yahô Temple Collection List, which includes only taxed individuals from the recognized Judean community and is subdivided by those within the community serving in active state-labor units. To be added to this minor difference is the significant difference between the Persian-period and Ptolemaic-period taxations: in the Persian period, women, both colonial women and native Egyptians, could bear a tax status, even those within the households of taxable men.

Comparative evidence from farther afield is also worth noting. Documents from Mesopotamia illustrate that Persian-period administrators made rosters and taxation lists resembling the Aramaic short lists and the Yahô Temple Collection List. Assyriology has long considered the study of lists its own subdiscipline—*Listenwissenschaft*—which maps out the techniques, functions, and meaning of Akkadian lists.[22] Unlike the Egyptian material, no clear examples of census material from the Persian period survive in cuneiform, if they were ever created.[23] Most lists of persons from the period refer to taxation or labor

21. The long lists indicate that other relations could be dependents, for example, P.Count 6 iv 395 refers to "(his) brother."

22. Von Soden and Landsberger, "Leistung und Grenze"; von Soden and Landsberger, "Nachträge und Berichtigungen." In Egyptology, see recently Allon and Navratilova, *Scribal Culture in Ancient Egypt*, 6–8, 19–27.

23. Documents that may be considered census records survive from second-millennium sites, such as Mari and perhaps Alalakh. See Birot, "Un recensement de femmes"; von Dassow, "Lists of

teams.[24] While lists of labor teams, particularly of those teams assembled under the call for corvée service, represent lists of taxation in a sense, they are not the same as those found in the Egyptian material, though they serve as functional analogs.

The comparative evidence is telling. One can assume that the fourth-century Demotic administration of Egypt continued the Aramaic practice initiated by the Persians of tying census data with taxation. This was continued during the second Persian period from which the Ptolemies adopted the practice. Notable for the Aramaic dataset is its separation of taxation classes into the native Egyptian population and state dependents, which allowed colonial state dependents to be taxed according to their recognized ethnic communities and apart from the native population. The colonial communities were not monitored by households in the Persian period. Rather, only taxable persons were recorded. Accounting for every native Egyptian in a census, as opposed to just the taxable persons, may have been part of the Persian strategy for maintaining order in the rebellious province of Egypt.

### *The Account of Egyptian Family Units*

The Account of Egyptian Family Units was first discovered among the papyri in the Berlin collection in the 1980s and was published by Porten;[25] he and Yardeni updated their edition when they included it into the *TAD* (C3.9). Since that time, I have discovered fragments in the Berlin Museum that form another column of the manuscript, which prompted a new edition of the whole manuscript (*NAP* no. 2.2.1). Presently, evidence for six columns of text survive in addition to one unplaced fragment, which may indicate a seventh column. Evidence of twenty-six rows of individuals survives, though many of the names are fragmentary or illegible. That said, recto col. v′ 6′ contains a marginal note indicating the fiftieth name in the list. From this at least one lost first column can be restored. All of the surviving names are clearly of Egyptian origin, and therefore it has been interpreted as a list of Egyptian family units. Unfortunately, the ancient title of the list is lost, but a newly deciphered line on the verso refers to shekels, and a note in the final column of the recto refers to collection (*NAP*, pp. 173–74).

Judging from the break patterns, the document was stored as a rolled package, perhaps rolled end-to-beginning, then folded in half. Only fragments from one half of the rolled package survive, and it is unclear whether this is the top

People." If census making continued into the Persian period in Mesopotamia, one might expect it to have occurred in Aramaic. For large populations, cuneiform would not have been the preferred writing medium for a long census.

24. For example, MacGinnis, "Corvée Gang."

25. Porten, "Aramaic Papyrus Fragments," no. 10.

or the bottom half of the document. The manuscript is an opistograph, which was turned side-to-side as is typical of Aramaic record rolls. The surviving columns of names on the verso, however, sit deep in the manuscript rather than at the beginning on the right side of the verso. This matches the formatting of the Yahô Temple Collection List and is a further sign that the document was rolled beginning-to-end while it was in use. The right side of the verso contains a single long line, which is now badly effaced, but new high-resolution infrared photographs make visible the letters of the word "shekel." This indicates the account was used for collecting or distributing silver, and it seems more likely that it refers to silver collection, that is, taxation. The recto organized groups of Egyptians by family units separated by *vacats*, and each individual in the family unit appears on one row of the tabular list. The first individual in each unit is a male identified with the obscure Aramaic term YWR. This appears to mean fully "taxable male" in context, but its etymology is unclear.[26] The next individual is a female with her patronymic, who is identified as NŠN. This term is known from the legal papyri, where it seems to indicate a woman of status who can engage in contractual agreements over property. It seems that the term is broader in its administrative usage and simply means "taxable female." In this way the Aramaic census information differs from the later Ptolemaic P.Count records.[27] With this taxable status come a number of opportunities, such as the ability to engage in contractual agreements and perhaps also collect rations,[28] but the downside is that the woman must pay taxes. After the female, children of (presumably) the women (*NAP*, pp. 171–72) are listed. Each child in the account is identified by an administrative phrase. The only surviving legible phrase is TḤT MST[?] (recto iii′ 5′–6′; frag. f recto 1′). Due to the term's etymological association with the semantic domain of "measuring" or "limits," I have interpreted the phrase to mean "under the taxable limit." Not all the children are identified with this same phrase, but unfortunately the text is too fragmentary to read the other administrative identifications with certainty. One daughter's title begins with the Aramaic letter Ḥ (recto ii′ 3), and this may be a reference to ḤSYL found at the summation (recto vi′ 1). After each family unit is a calculated subtotal of the family unit. The summation accounts for all members of the family

26. The term appears also in *TAD* B2.10 discussed in chapter 4.

27. I have found only one example of a female-led single-person household in P.Count (P.Count 48 [Demotic]). In it is found a sole entry of a Persian woman (lines 4–6). It must be emphasized that "Persian" was a legacy category of special taxation status in the Ptolemaic period, and may not have referred to a Persian from the Parsu (see Moore, "Supposed Diaspora Community"). For a dynamic discussion of its later usage, see Vandorpe, "Persian Soldiers." Women in P.Count could represent themselves in the absence of a male (see P.Count, pp. 1:490; 2:68, 157–59).

28. Farther afield but well within the administrative world of the empire is the evidence from Persepolis. There, women "chiefs" represent a special class who received high-valued rations (Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, 30).

unit, and it is complemented by subtotals of YWR and NŠN, that is taxable people. In this sense the document clearly functions as a census that collects data on all persons in the Egyptian family unit and also as a taxation document to impose presumably a flat-rate head tax on taxable members of each family.

Additionally, when Porten published the first columns of the Account of Egyptian Family Units, he noted its relationship to *TAD* C3.10, which Edda Bresciani had published in 1971.[29] The fragment of this account is formatted similarly. The document reads:

*TAD* C3.10[30]
r 1. [◦◦◦◦◦]ʾ ◦[. . .]
r 2. ʾḥ◦[. . . son of . . .]◦mry, *ywr*
r 3. Ḥôr his so[n], under the limit
r 4. ʾEs[. . . son of ]◦⌜wrtt⌝[. . .]
r 5. Peṭeḥarpaḥrat s[on of . . .]
r 6. [. . .]◦◦◦◦ son of Ps[. . .]
r frag. 1. ◦P[. . .]
r frag. 2. ⌜P⌝◦◦[. . . son of . . .]y, *ywr*

Only the taxation terms YWR and TḤT MSTʾ, "under the limit," survive. It is unclear if recto lines 2–6 represent one family unit or two because a summation line for the unit beginning with the man ʾḥ◦ . . . is not present.[31] Alternatively, the family of ʾḥ◦ . . . may have included a large number of persons, in which case lines 2–6 are all part of a single unit. In either case, the format of the document appears to match the Elephantine manuscript. The legible names on the Saqqara document are Egyptian, and the remnants of the broken names may also be Egyptian.[32] Thus, this is a second example of an Aramaic census of

29. Bresciani, "Frammenti di un testo aramaico." There appears to be some confusion regarding the papyrus's inventory number. Bresciani claims that it is the same inventory number found on the Phoenician papyrus letter published by Aimé-Giron, "Adversaria Semitica (III)," in 1940. Aimé-Giron did not include an inventory number in the publication of that papyrus, and the names associated with the two acquisitions appear to be different. Bresciani claims Zaki Saad brought the Aramaic papyrus to the Cairo museum (529), while the Phoenician papyrus was found in situ by Étienne Drioton (Aimé-Giron, "Adversaria Semitica (III)," 433–34).

30. I did not have access to the manuscript. I collated the text from a poor-quality scan of the photograph published by Bresciani and from *TAD*'s hand copy. Note that neither *TAD*'s hand copy nor translation match its transcription.

31. It is possible that the summation is lost and appeared left of either line 2 or 3.

32. The first names on lines 2 and 4 represent the beginning of many different Egyptian names. The patronymic of line 2 could represent the Egyptian name element -mr or -mry. The patronymic of line 4 is complicated. I have retained the reading of Bresciani ("Frammenti di un testo aramaico," followed by *TAD*) here because I do not have a reliable photograph to read, but I am inclined to suggest instead ⌜Ḥ⌝RT⌜B⌝[ʾ] (Egy. Ḥr-tȝ-bȝ.t; Vittmann, "Ägyptische Onomastik," 103). The fragment's

native Egyptians used for taxation purposes. The presence of the same genre with the same organizational principles at both Saqqara and Elephantine further supports my claim that Clarysse and Thompson's P.Count represent a continuation of the Persian administrative practice of using census data for taxation. Unfortunately, the date of this Saqqara account is missing, and *TAD*'s paleographic dating to the "middle of the 5th century" is unsubstantiated. It is unclear whether this document represents the same imperial taxation initiative that I argued above was introduced in Darius II's fifth year or whether it is evidence that such taxation records were kept in many locations for various years. Comparatively, it should be noted that all known P.Count documents come from a narrow window of time and seem to represent one province-wide taxation event. At the very least the two surviving Aramaic sources are clear evidence of a standardized Aramaic taxation system and vocabulary found throughout the Egyptian province—formatting and Aramaic vocabulary used specifically for Egyptian native taxation assessments.

The newly published column of the Account of Egyptian Family Units belongs at the end of the document and appears to be subtotals and administrative notes much like those found toward the end of the Syene Ration List or the Yahô Temple Collection List. It includes a reference to "weaned girls," or perhaps a defective spelling for "weaned children" of both sexes. It also makes reference to underlings/dependents (Aram. ʿLYMN), but in both instances the context is frustratingly broken. One fairly clear line, however, reads, "[The total] of the ⌜pers⌝on(s) who were in ⌜S⌝yene in the month of {⌜Me⌝[sôrʿe | ⌜M⌝[eḥîr} (#)]" (recto vi′ 5′). After the list had come to an end (col. vi′), additional names were added to it in the middle of the verso of the manuscript.

The document is quite short to have accounted for *all* Egyptian persons at Syene. We must surmise that the census refers to state-recognized men and women—sometimes called "free" persons in classical studies. The purpose of the census undoubtedly was to monitor the native population. But were the Aramaic administrators monitoring Persian loyalists or all affluential natives? The newly published final column might shed some light on this question. It reads:

Account of Egyptian Family Units recto vi′[33]
1′. [. . .]weaned ⌜1⌝[(+) . . .]
2′. [. . .]to Ḥôr 10[(+) . . .]
3′. [. . .]great [la]dy: ⌜2⌝[(+) . . .]

first line was read by Bresciani as ⌜WBʿ⌝ . . . and by *TAD* as ⌜ZBʿ⌝. . . . No clearly attested Egyptian name in Aramaic begins with these letters. Instead, the first letter may be read as P with an effaced descending stroke. The second letter may be B or Ṭ. In either case PB . . . or PṬ . . . represent the beginning of known Egyptian names.

33. See *NAP* no. 2.2.1. I originally translated line 1 as "weaned girls."

4′. [. . .]Ḥôr and ◦[. . .]
5′. [The total] of the ⌜pers⌝on(s) who were in ⌜S⌝yene in the month of ⌜Me⌝ [sôrʿe (#)]
6′. [. . .]GNKM [◦◦] herein ◦◦[. . .]
7′. [. . .]collected in [Sye]⌜ne⌝[. . .]
8′. [. . .]to/for ⌜se⌝rvants/girls ◦[. . .]

Line 2′ calls to mind the balance statement found on the Yahô Temple Collection List, which states that the money was collected "to (DN)," here without reference to "the god" (Aram. ʾLHʾ; see *NAP*, p. 173). While the god Hor(us) is a common divine element in Egyptian names at Elephantine and Syene, and in fact many men simply bore the name Ḥôr, the preposition "to/for" in the balance statement of a census suggests that this may be a god to whom the taxes were collected. Furthermore, the name Ḥôr appears two lines later in line 4′ and in the same administrative unit as indicated by the *vacat* that follows line 4′. It seems possible that the line was a balance statement that referred to a total tax collected to the various Egyptian deities like that tax collected to Yahô, ʾEše⌜mb⌝êtʾel, and ʿAnatbêtʾel in the Yahô Temple Collection List. As I mention in the edition, line 4′ of the Egyptian account appears to end with the letter Ḥ. I am tempted to restore by analogy ḤNWM and translate "Ḥôr and Ḥ[nûm]." Although this is conjectural, it is noteworthy that the miscellaneous calculations of yearly ration distributions on the Syene Ration List included assessments of Thebes, indicating that Syene and Thebes were in a tightly associated administrative unit, and reference to Thebes is made throughout the corpus. Therefore, it seems reasonable that independent Egyptian individuals associated with Edfu, which is south of Thebes on the route to Syene, and with the temple of Horus found there were in Syene during the time of the census. Their associated "district" would have been Thebes and the temple of Horus there, and notations of taxes collected for them may represent revenue funneled to those administrative centers.

The Account of Egyptian Family Units is perhaps one of the most telling documents with regard to the native population and the Persians' Aramaic administration. The document continues a long-standing Egyptian administrative tradition of conducting censuses, but the Persians used this native enterprise for taxation. All census data is ultimately an act of control over a population, and the Persians were fortunate that the Egyptians were accustomed to this type of administrative oversight.

### *The Yahô Temple Collection List (***TAD** *C3.15)*

The Yahô Temple Collection List is referenced frequently in scholarship and used to justify arguments regarding the religious history of Elephantine. Occasionally,

it is also cited as evidence for the island's population size or the economic place of the Yahô temple among the Judean community.[34] Suppositions about its content shade the arguments and subsequently the results of each study. The misconceptions about the meaning of the "military" structure of the community and an overestimation of the "private" cultural autonomy of the Judean community often guide these assertions, in addition to the unfounded assumption that the account must refer to a collection from inhabitants of the island.

The account's initial line provides a description of the roll. It reads, "On the 3rd of Phamenoth, year 5. This is (the list) of the names of the Judean troop, which gave silver to the god Yahô. Each person (gave) [2] š(eqels) of silver" (r i 1). The phrase "which gave silver" indicates that the administrator sought to emphasize that the list is about giving. While the verb "to give" has a wide range of meanings, it need not be assumed that the act of giving was made willingly. Obligations in the legal documents make it clear that giving silver may be compelled. Furthermore, if a type of donation/contribution was intended, as some have argued,[35] one would expect one of the legal "free will" statements to modify the clause, such as "lovingly" (e.g., Aram BRḤMH) or "satisfying of the heart" (e.g., Aram. ṬYB LBB). Interestingly, the opening line of the Temple Collection List refers to an act of the Judean community rather than of the administrator. The responsibility for the giving rests on the individual Judeans and not on the administrator. This differs from some accounts for specific taxes in the Saqqara documents, which include only large sums of money collected by administrators. That said, the account's later recognition that Yedanyah (the priest) was responsible for the collection brings the document in line with the expected administrative protocol for tax collection.[36]

Such is also the case on the erased import account (or accounts) on the Ahiqar Manuscript, which uses the passive verb "(taxes were) collected" (Aram. GBY).[37] This administrative verb gave rise to a nominal form, which appears to be a substantive of a passive participle that came to mean "receipt (for tax)" or "(tax) collection" (*ATNS* no. 38). The Yahô Temple Collection List lacks reference to technical taxation terminology, but so too do all surviving Elephantine and Syene documents (see chapter 9). The documents from Elephantine rarely refer to specific types of taxes like those known at the royal bureau of Saqqara. That said, specific classes of individuals, which can be associated with taxation

34. For example, Knauf, "Elephantine," 235–36 or Becking, "Temple," 42–44.

35. Most prominently, Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 160–64.

36. Becking, "Temple," 39–44 considered whether the temple served as a taxation center and, by extension, whether the account could be considered a taxation document. His conclusion was: "The written evidence—as it is now available—hints more or less at a no to this question" (40).

37. See the erased import account(s) on the Ahiqar Manuscript, which systematically uses the phrase "the *mandattu*-payment which was collected from him and made to the government."

status, appear frequently in the Elephantine and Syene corpus. Furthermore, references to large-scale collections from recognized state communities identified as a "troop" (Aram. ḤYL) come from Saqqara and refer to taxation. This means that one should be careful to assume that the lack of reference to a technical term for taxation on the Yahô Temple Collection can be interpreted as a voluntary offering made to the temple.

The Saqqara taxation documents indicate that troops/communities (Aram. ḤYL) paid a *mandattu*-payment, and a short excursus into that evidence is warranted, though the meaning of the term is fleshed out in chapter 9. The term *mandattu*-payment was long translated as "tribute" based on its Biblical Aramaic attestation. The term now is better understood to have a basic meaning of "rent," including rent owed to the government by dependents using state lands or granted state professional privileges. When rent is paid to the state in any form, it is construed as a tax. What concerns us here about *mandattu*-payments are the social groups and personnel associated with their collection. The documents from Saqqara suggest that temple priests collected the taxes from the communities.

Among the rich data from Saqqara are two administrative texts that are important for understanding the organization of troops in Persian-period Egypt, *ATNS* no. 24 and *TAD* C3.5. Both are cited and discussed in chapter 9. It is noteworthy that both refer to the "*mandattu*-payment of the troop," which is paid in silver. The manuscript *TAD* C3.5 is particularly interesting because after a long register of silver sums collected by, presumably, administrators working in the district of Msṭy, for which the location/meaning is unknown, that text refers to the "[. . .]priests in the temples, silver[. . .]." This looks like a summation line or balance statement after the itemized register of subtotals. If my interpretation of the structure is correct, then it appears that the priests of the temples were responsible for collecting the various *mandattu*-payments of the recognized communities (troops) associated with each temple. This document is a higher-level administrative document than those used in the process of collection.

When this evidence is considered, there is no reason to assume the Yahô temple collection was voluntary, it seems best to interpret the collection as a *mandattu*-tax payment—the so-called "*mandattu* of the king"—collected on royal lands issued to the Judean troop. The comparative evidence from Judeans in Babylonia indicates that many community members there were issued state land, specifically bow fiefs (Akk. *qaštu*), and there is no reason to assume the general procedure differed at Elephantine/Syene even though the language used to describe that procedure may differ.[38] In addition to the evidence from

38. Mitchka Shahryari is preparing a study showing that *qaštu*-allotments and other similar Babylonian models of society are found in the Idumean corpus of the fourth century BCE (personal communication).

al-Yahudu, the archive of the Nappāḫu family and their many temple prebendary documents demonstrate explicit tax payments for bow-fiefs.[39] Thus, in lieu of further evidence, the Yahô temple's collection is best interpreted as a state tax collected by the Judean temple from the recognized Judean community as (part of) their obligation as state dependents. As will be discussed in chapter 9, the *mandattu*-payment becomes a general term for "rent" or "tax," but its specific meaning, I argue, is "a termed fee that is intended to compensate a master for the loss ensued by the payer's venture." This includes compensation to the state for lost potential income while allowing dependents to use the land. Based on the Judean-specific commodity-collection and ration-distribution procedures run by the Yahô temple (see chapters 7–8), one must assume that the recognized Judean community held farmland off island. For this reason, I believe we should even question the assumption that the Yahô Temple Collection List was written at Elephantine.

There are two known models of taxation collection used at this time. One model is known throughout the Mediterranean at Phoenician settlements. It indicates that individuals approached the temple to pay their taxes. The Egyptian model on the fringes of the frontier at the Kharga Oasis appears to be similar.[40] The other model is based on the Babylonian evidence, which more likely resembles the one the Persians would have adopted. In Babylonia administrators went into the farmland to collect taxes. The normal state landholder likely lived in or near his/her own farmland. The second model seems to be the most reasonable option to explain the Elephantine data, particularly given the difficulty and expense of traversing the Nile to arrive at Elephantine. After all, the ostraca missives indicate that shipments of commodities were ferried by a small number of vetted boatmen and trusted administrative couriers (see chapter 7–8). It seems more likely that the temple would send personnel to collect taxes, and the content and formatting of the Yahô Temple Collection List support this.

Further supporting the notion that collection was made off island is the lack of correspondences between the known onomasticon of those on island and the Yahô Temple Collection List. Only ten possible correspondences can be found throughout the whole corpus (table 9).[41]

Depending on how one restores some of the broken names, just under one hundred individuals with a first name and patronymic can be isolated from

39. Baker, *Archive of the Nappāḫu Family*, nos. 195, 198.

40. See Agut-Labordère, "Royal Taxes in Persian Egypt." The incentive of using the model from the frontier is that it self-selects for loyalists, who in turn are eligible for monetary subsidies, such as public works investments, and for state protection against nonloyalists.

41. The restored name Natan son of ʿAnanî (i 12) has been excluded. Additionally, the reading Peʳ1ˡûlyah son of {[Hô]šeʿa |[ʾÔ]šeʿa} (iv 20) is too damaged to conclude if it is the same as Pelalyah son of Hôšaʿyah (CG no. 252 cv 3).

TABLE 9. Correspondences between the Yahô temple's collection and the surviving documents

| Name | Role | Line | Corresponding references | Role | Attested date (BCE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ʾAḥyô son of Natan son of ʿAnanî | Contributor | vii 9 | CG no. 272 cv 1 | Label | |
| | | | Brooklyn 47.218.88 r 18 (= B3.11:18) | Witness | 402 |
| | | | Pap. Cairo EM JdE 37113 (= B2.10:19) | Witness | 416 |
| | | | Pap. Cairo EM JdE 43480 r i 1 (= C4.6:1) | Name in list | |
| Gadûl son of Mešullam son of Mibṭaḥyah | Contributor | ii 5 | CG no. X2 cc 1 | Name in list | |
| Gemaryah son of Maḥseyah | Patronymic of Mešullemet | i 2 | Brooklyn 47.218.89 (= B3.3:15) | Witness | 449 |
| | | | Brooklyn 47.218.91 (= B3.5:23) | Witness | 434 |
| | | | Pap. Cairo EM JdE 37114 (= B2.3:29) | Witness | 460/459 |
| | | | Pap. Cairo EM JdE 37106 v 7 (= B2.4:18) | Witness | 460/459 |
| Hôšeʿa son of Nattûn | Contributor | iii 9 | A4.10:5 | Petitioner | |
| | | | Cairo EM JdE 98518 + 98516 v 3 = D3.17 | Doer of ḤMY | |
| | | | A4.4:7 (sp!) | Prisoner | |
| Hôšaʿyah son of Natan son of Hôšaʿyah | Contributor (restored) | i 7 | Brooklyn 47.218.92 (= B3.10:24) | Witness | 404 |
| | | | A3.6:5 | Letter sender | |
| Mešullam son of Šemaʿyah | Contributor | vi 19 | Pap. Cairo EM JdE 43481 (= C4.5:5) | Name in list | |
| Menaḥem son of Mattan | Contributor | iv 2 | Pap. Cairo EM JdE 43480 (= C4.6:11) | Name in list | |
| Menaḥem son of Pawesî | Patronymic of . . . yaʾ and Ḥaggay | iv 18, 19 | Pap. Cairo EM JdE 43478 (= C4.4:7) | Name in list | |
| Natan son of Hôdawyah | Patronymic of ʾÔšeʿa | vii 8 | Pap. Cairo EM JdE 43481 (= C4.5:10) | Name in list | |
| Piltî son of Yaʾûš | Patronymic of Yaḥmôl | v 7 | Cairo EM JdE 98518 + 98516 v 8 = D3.17 | Doer of ḤMY | |
| | | | CG no. 96 cc 2 | Name in list | |
| | | | Brooklyn 47.218.92 (= B3.10:25) | Witness | 404 |
| | | | A3.6:1, 5 (LN restored) | Addressee | |

the account.[42] This includes some individuals who are the fathers of account contributors for whom a patronymic (father) and sometimes a papponymic (grandfather) are attested. Nearly all of those isolated individuals are unidentified in the Aramaic corpus; their first and only attestation is in the account. Other than the administrative priest who controlled the silver, Yedanyah son of Gemaryah,[43] there are possibly only three Judeans of note on the list.

The first may be Hôšeʿa son of Nattûn, who is known from three other documents. While his first name is common, his patronymic is relatively rare, appearing only thirteen times in the whole corpus, seven of those times as a patronymic. It is unclear if Hôšeʿa holds a high status within the community, but he is certainly a man of action who is affiliated with those of high status. He may even be one of the Judeans imprisoned with Yedanyah the priest at Thebes in a later event.[44] He is one of the petitioners who promised to financially support the Persian reconstruction of the temple after the Egyptian priests had damaged it (*TAD* A4.10:5). He was also one of those who made *ḤMY*, an unknown practice, according to the enigmatic list *TAD* D3.17.

The only two other possible Judean contributors on the account who may have been noteworthy were ʾAḥyô son of Natan son of ʿAnanî and Hôšaʿyah son of Natan son of Hôšaʿyah. Porten identifies ʾAḥyô as the brother of Maʿûzyah son of Natan son ʿAnanî, the notary who took over after his father.[45] Certainly the one by the name of ʾAḥyô son of Natan was a prominent figure who served as a witness on two contracts at Elephantine in 416 and 402 BCE. He appears in a name list with another contributor and also on a sherd label, which indicates that he directly received packages from across the river. The final possible prominent figure was Hôšaʿyah son of Natan son of Hôšaʿyah. Porten sees Hôšaʿyah as "probably identical" to a known letter writer and to a witness on a contract dated to 404 BCE.[46] It is important to recognize that in all three cases these men are not necessarily men of status at the time the collection was made in 419 BCE.

In addition to ʾAḥyô, who not only became important among the community but was likely the son of an important individual, only two other children

42. Only three occurrences of the same name and patronymic appear: Ḥaggay son of Haṣûl (2×: ii 9, 10); Menaḥem son of Pawesî (2×: iv 18, 19); Natan son of ʿAnanî (2×: i 12, vii 9).

43. Yedanyah (*TAD* C3.15 vii 2) is known from the dossier ascribed to him by Porten (*TAD* A4, his patronymic is only attested in *TAD* A4.4:7, A4.10:1) and as the final witness on two contracts *TAD* B3.11:20 (402 BCE) and *TAD* B3.8:44 (420 BCE).

44. So too Porten in Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, 135n18, who also sees Hôšeʿa son of Nattûm as a misspelling for Nattûn.

45. Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, 199n40.

46. Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, 240n60, with reference to *Archives from Elephantine*, 272–74.

of prominent Judeans from a previous generation are attested:[47] Mešullemet daughter of Gemaryah son of Maḥseyah[48] and Yaḥmôl daughter of Yaʾûš son of Pilṭî. It is unclear whether either of these women became figures of note in their own right among the Judeans.

Three more contributors were children of known Judeans: ʾÔšeʿa son of Natan son of Hôdawyah, . . . yaʾ son of Menaḥem son of Pawesî, and his brother Ḥaggay son of Menaḥem son of Pawesî. The fathers of these persons appear in two short papyrus lists.[49]

I have excluded from table 9 Natan son of ʿAnanî due to the popularity of the names Natan and ʿAnanî/ʿAnanyah among the Judeans. As for *TAD*'s reconstruction of Natan son of ʿAnanî (i 12), it should be noted that Mattan son of ʿAnanî is equally as likely given the break and surviving strokes. That said, if the contributor's first name was in fact Natan, he may be an otherwise unattested grandson of the notary by the same name (see chapter 4). Additionally, Natan would likely have been quite young in 419 BCE, the date of the account. Therefore, it seems best to see him as an example of an individual who bore the same name as someone else in the community.

Four final contributors appear on other name lists: Mešullam son of Šemaʿyah, who appears on the same list as ʾÔšeʿa's father Natan son of Hôdawyah; Menaḥem son of Mattan, who appears on the same list as the one who shortly thereafter rises to prominence; ʾAḥyô son of Natan son of ʿAnanî; and Gadûl son of Mešullam son of Mibṭaḥyah, who is known as one of the few persons found on the laborers' list CG no. X2 studied above. The attestation of these individuals supports the claim that the account was collected off island because it has been argued that the ostraca missives and lists were brought to the island.

One gets the impression in Elephantine scholarship that the Yahô Temple Collection List represents the Judean community, but after having assessed the paucity of correspondences between it and the surviving Elephantine/Syenean corpus, an obvious question arises: Why are there not more correspondences between the account contributors and the other surviving texts? A deeper look

47. I have excluded instances where individuals are referred to by their grandmother or mother, Gaddûl son of Mešullam son of Mibṭaḥyah (ii 5) and Ḥaggay son of Mipṭaḥyah (v i 3). It is extremely rare for texts to use matronymics. Here the female's name is the same as the business woman Mibṭaḥyah daughter of Maḥseyah. Although I am inclined to believe it is the same woman, admittedly it is not entirely clear.

48. See Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, 171n23, which claims that Gemaryah may have been the son of the same Maḥseyah whose daughter was Mibṭaḥyah, who in turn accounts for a substantial legal dossier of the surviving material. A Gemaryah by this name was a witness in both the ʿAnanî and Mibṭaḥyah dossiers: *TAD* B3.3:15 (449 BCE), B3.5:23 (434 BCE), B2.3:29 (460/459 BCE), B2.4:18 (460/459 BCE).

49. Curiously, Natan, a third son of Menaḥem son of Pawesî, is found on the enigmatic ḤMY-list (*TAD* D3.17:2) but not on the Yahô Temple Collection List.

at the administrative structure of the text may lead to an answer—an answer that may challenge notions of the social structure of the Judean community at Elephantine.

To segue into the account's structure, let us return to the three possible figures of repute mentioned above, assuming I have not misidentified them.[50] As alluded to above, Hôšeʿa son of Nattûn may be more of an affiliate of the community leaders than one himself. He is connected to the temple's, at least Yedanyah the priest's, inner circle, particularly as the century comes to an end and problems between the temple and the Egyptians begin to escalate. That is, he *develops* into a notable figure after 419 BCE. The other two contributors of repute are Hôšaʿyah son of Natan son of Hôšaʿyah and ʾAḥyô son of Natan son of ʿAnanî; they are the only contributors on the account who are found on legal documents (again, excluding Yedanyah who controlled the silver). Why did others known from the legal sphere not contribute to the Yahô temple's collection? The answer may have to do with the date of the account and the groups of contributors targeted for the collection by the administrators.

As noted in chapter 4, those engaged in legal procedure were never identified by century units but only by DGL-units. The opposite is true of the Yahô Temple Collection List on which only century-unit members and many unaffiliated names are found. The account begins with a section of three individuals and a summation. The affiliations of the individuals, two women and one man, are not stated. This is followed by two sections of active century units of men and women. The first is identified as the century unit of Šiniddin (i 19) and is delineated as a section by a scribal dividing line, which consisted of thirteen contributors and a summation line. A note that hangs into the margin indicates that the next section comprises contributors from the century unit of Nabûʿaqab (i 20), which consisted of eleven members. All contributors on the list appear to have paid, according to the surviving check marks and the notation "K Š 2," that is, "s(ilver), 2 sh(ekels)." Yet, the century-unit members may not have paid in person but through a representative. The name of each century-unit contributor is followed by the indirect pronoun LH, "for him/her." I take this to mean the contributors were away serving their *ilku*-labor tax obligation in a century-unit labor team, and the funds were delivered to the temple administrator on their behalf. Like Šiniddin's sections, Nabûʿaqab's section ends with a scribal dividing line and summation line, which may be restored as having a total of eleven

50. ʾÔšeʿa son of Natan son of Hôdawyah (vii 8) is one of twenty-one entries that include papponymics. Fortunately, the only other individual with a corresponding first and last name is ʾOšeʿa son of Natan son of Šemaʿyah (*TAD* D12.1 side 1 line 2), where a papponymic is also preserved. In this case, we can confirm that ʾOšeʿa on the name list is not the same as the one referenced on the stone block D12.1. This example also serves as a warning: not all first- and last-name correspondences indicate that two texts are referring to the same person.

contributors. The social implication is that while away in service on a century unit, individuals were grouped by communities, which were responsible to their community economic structure, even though they were serving the state at the time. Teams of various communities could make up a single century unit, and logically here only the Judeans from these two century units are accounted for on this Judean tax collection.[51]

An administrator had begun tallying the first three sections as indicated by an intercolumnar numeral 20 in column ii.[52] Unfortunately, there is damage to the lower portions of columns ii–iii, but when restoring columns ii–iii by counting backward from the well-preserved tally in column iv–vi, it becomes clear that the tally begins again after the summation line of Nabûᶜaqab's century unit. Therefore, the manuscript preserves two separate tallying events. *TAD* correctly restores the number of lines needed to complete the lacuna of column ii (*TAD* C, hand copies, 3.15A) but unfortunately misplaces Pap. Ber. P. 23101, putting it in the lacuna, though it does not belong to this manuscript.[53] This means that the long section of ninety-one names, which has no summation line, may have begun with a short note indicating a century unit.[54] Or it may have simply listed unaffiliated names, who must, by nature of the title of the account, be considered members of the Judean community not currently active in service to the state. Regardless, the names from the middle of column ii through column vi represent a second tallying event. So far overlooked by scholars, it must be noted that ninety names were written, then tallied, then a ninety-first name was added after the tallying (r vi 19).

Column vii begins with a statement regarding the total silver balance in the possession of Yedanyah, followed by three subtotals, each for a separate deity. *TAD* includes scribal lines above line 1 and below 6 of this balance statement, but these are stains on the papyrus, perhaps originally made by the Demotic

51. The basic principle is understood by Kottsieper, "From יהה צבאת to יהו מרא שמיא," 259, though misconstrued as a fairly independent cultic community rather than a state-sponsored temple economy.

52. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 160, 320, originally followed older editions, but *TAD* has since reconstructed the manuscript in a more convincing way. The numeral in column ii during the first tallying event appears to be off by one name. I assume that the administrator working quickly raised his head to ink his pen and in so doing misplaced the numeral, which sits well into the margin.

53. The fragment Pap. Ber. P. 23101 that *TAD* adds to column ii does not belong to the manuscript based on material grounds (see table 8). The account's papyrus roll has experienced a type of deterioration that resulted in a shredding pattern in the papyrus's fibers. While small illegible shredded fragments not glazed with the manuscript survive in the collection and likely belong in this lacuna (unpublished Pap. Ber. B/AM x 502; B/AM x 503), there is no hope that the missing lines will be recovered with this type of deterioration; most of column ii is lost.

54. Depending on the length of the name on column ii line 12 a short note indicating a century unit like that found on column i line 20 may have existed.

administrator who wrote the erased account. Nonetheless, the writer used them as dividing marks to set apart the note pertaining to Yedanyah's balance statement.[55] One hundred eighteen contributors, each of whom gave two shekels of silver, appear before Yedanyah's balance statement. After Yedanyah's balance statement are seven more names without affiliation or a summation line, and three more unaffiliated names appear on the verso behind the recto's column vi. Two names sit in the upper portion of the manuscript on the verso, one in the middle, and no summation line appears. The presence of names on the verso indicates that the administrator who added them did not unroll the papyrus, which had been rolled beginning-to-end, much like the Account of Egyptian Family Units.

Returning to Yedanyah's balance statement, scholars have been perplexed by the fact that the summary does not account for the total collected from the contributors on the list and that the subtotals within the summary are off by two shekels (table 10).[56]

Porten argued that the list is "a private accounting and not an official record," citing the used state of the roll and the lack of the king's name in the opening date.[57] Both suppositions can be rejected on the grounds of the surviving Aramaic administrative manuscript data.[58] He further notes that had two more columns appeared before column i, they could have included twenty-four contributors each and, therefore, would have made up for the discrepancy between Yedanyah's balance and the money collected by 118 contributors.[59] In this regard he may be closer to the answer, since the evidence suggests that a collection occurred prior to the two tallying events observable on the manuscript before the balance statement.

I fail to see why scholars have assumed that Yedanyah's balance statement must agree with the total amount of silver collected from the itemized list of 118 contributors. For one thing, the format of the Syene Ration List indicates that balance information can follow itemized accounts, and the large trove of administrative data from Saqqara and Bactria further supports this type of formatting on longer record rolls (see chapter 1). Furthermore, a summation line would begin with the word "total" (Aram. KL), but Yedanyah's balance statement is separated from the account by dividing lines and does not begin as a summation. So Porten is likely correct that other contributors existed, but he

55. As I have already noted in a rough working edition of the manuscript: ERC 306605.

56. One karš equals ten shekels.

57. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 163–64.

58. For example, the Account of Egyptian Family Units is also written on a palimpsest, and it, along with many surviving taxation/administrative documents, uses "Year #" without a royal eponym. Compare the Syene Ration List, *ATNS* no. 22, and ADAB no. C3.

59. Porten, *Archive*, 164.

TABLE 10. Yahô temple's collection calculations and Yedanyah's summation

| **Calculations** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Tallying events** | **Sections** | **Contributors** | **Total shekels** |
| First tally | Unaffiliated group | 3 | 6 |
| | Šiniddin's century unit | 13 | 26 |
| | Nabûʿaqab's century unit | 11 | 22 |
| Second tally | Large unaffiliated tally | 90 | 180 |
| Addition | Col. vi addition | 1 | 2 |
| Yedanyah's balance statement | | | |
| Not tallied | Col. vii addition | 7 | 14 |
| | Verso addition | 3 | 6 |
| | Total before summary | 118 | 236 |
| | Total after summary | 10 | 20 |
| | Total contributors | 128 | 256 |

| **Yedanyah's summation** | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **In shekel** | **Stated** |
| Yahô | 126 | 12 karš, 6 shekels |
| ʾEšembêtʾel | 70 | 7 karš |
| ʿAnatbêtʾel | 120 | 12 karš |
| Calculated total | 316 | |
| Stated total | 318 | 31 karš, 8 shekels |

is incorrect to assume they need to be found on the manuscript of the Yahô temple's collection. Yedanyah's section is not formatted as a summation but rather as a balance statement. It begins: "The silver that stood (i.e., was balanced = Aram QM) today is in the hand of Yedanyah son of Gemaryah on the month of Phamenoth" (vii 1–2).[60] Fortunately, balance statements such as that found on the Temple Collection List are attested elsewhere.[61] One is found on the Elephantine Boat Papyrus *TAD* A3.10, and two are found on a fragmentary account from Saqqara. The account reads:

60. Aramaic QM may be a calque from Mesopotamian administrative scribal culture. The Akkadian verb *izuzzu*, "to stand," is equivalent to Aramaic QM found here. The C-stem (*šuzzuzzu*) means "to register, book (in an account)." See Weszeli, "Zur Buchführung in Babylonien."

61. In addition to those below, consider possibly also *ATNS* no. 51 line 6. Although *ATNS* separates QM from what precedes with a word break, it mistakenly analyzes QM as the end of a name.

*TAD* C3.11
frag. a 1. The [silver] which stands (i.e., is balanced) in year 6. Silver: [x] karsh, [y shekels. Herein]:
frag. a 2. 1 [. . . of] beer (amounting) to silver, 1 karsh, 4 shekels;
frag. a 3. 1 [. . . of] ṭyq bread (amounting) to silver, 1 karsh;
frag. a 4. 1 maker of oil of (the) seed of ʾytšry flax (amounting) to silver, [. . .]
frag. a 5. K[◦◦]◦ (the) grinder for the miller of ◦◦ (the) grinder for[. . .]
frag. b 1. [. . .] . . . ⌜M⌝ . . . [. . .]
frag. b 2. There was a surplus of silver, which stands (i.e., is balanced) in year 6
frag. b 3. silver, 2 karš, 3 ḫallurs, herein.
frag. b 4. The silver which was added to the miksu-tax of Peṭesî son of P[N . . .]
frag. b 5. ʾytšry which is in part of the year 6: silver, [#] ḫall[urs].
frag. b 6. The miksu-tax of the persons who will be added in year 7
frag. b 7. {[◦]dsnyw | [◦]rsnyw} son of Peṭôsirî, maker of oil of (the) seed of[. . .];
frag. b 8. 4 {rackers of | carpenters of} QTN whose names are not kno[wn . . .]

In this account the administrator uses the same phrase as in Yedanyah's balance statement. Here it first refers to the total amount existing in the financial record for year 6, which is then itemized into, regrettably fragmentary, subcategories.[62] The same phrase is then used to express the total amount of surplus in the financial record for year 6. When this evidence is considered, it becomes clear that Yedanyah's section in the Yahô Temple Collection List refers to the total financial record for the silver collection counted up to the penning of the balance, including the two separate tallying events made in columns i–ii and ii–vi *in addition to the silver collected prior to the drafting of the roll*.

As for the discrepancy between the total balance and the itemization of the balance among the three deities, this too is explainable when the manuscript is interpreted through the lens of administrative scribal culture. The discrepancy is two shekels, that is, one contributor. As noted above, the last contributor on column vi was added after the second tallying event had been made. That contributor, Mešullam son of Šemaʿyah, was a latecomer, who contributed after Yedanyah's balance statement was written. The administrator who accepted the two shekels simply added them to the total of Yedanyah's balance statement without assigning them to a deity. As more latecomers contributed,

62. Further afield one can even find similar administrative accounting in, for instance, the Elamite grain journals edited in Mikołajczak, "Accounting Texts," Appendix B. For one example, see PF-NN 2040, especially lines 34–37 (pp. 503–8).

an administrator added their names after the balance statement to indicate that, although the silver had been collected, it had yet to be tallied into the balance or assigned to a deity. Three very latecomers contributed after the roll's ink had dried and it had been rolled. To avoid confusion, an administrator slightly unrolled the manuscript and wrote the names on the verso behind column vi.

The Temple Collection List is an official document, but its function was short-lived. The Persian administrator who would have audited the temple would have been concerned with the final balance as indicated by the Saqqara evidence. Therefore, we can confidently hypothesize that the temple's collection by the end of Phamenoth year 5 was reported as at least 338 (i.e., 33 karš, 8 shekels). The procedure for distributing the balance among the three deities remains unknown; no Aramaic evidence exists explaining how funds were assigned to particular deities. Although they are from far away and culturally different contexts, the nearly contemporary administrative grain journals kept by Elamite administrators in Persepolis suggest that the chief *magus* (comparable to the chief priest in the Semitic sphere) was the one responsible for allocating ration offerings to cultic personnel as they were collected, so in lieu of a better explanation, the Elamite grain journals may be considered a heuristic model to consider. It seems, therefore, Yedanyah may have borne the task of assigning income to the cultic personnel of various chapels, temples, or divisions under the administrative control of the Yahô temple at Elephantine, such as ʿAnatbêtʾel or ʾEšembêtʾel. After all, the balance statement claims that responsibility for the silver lay in his hands. It is unclear if Yedanyah wrote the account, and the fact that the first latecomer's contribution was tallied to the total but not assigned to a deity suggests to me that the process of assigning the contributions involved a committee led by Yedanyah or performed by Yedanyah himself, who was no longer present when the latecomers arrived. The Persian-period Nappāḫu family archive from Babylonia presents a similar practice in which various types of accounting were registered on "the writing board of (the god) Bēl."[63]

To summarize, the Yahô Temple Collection List reflects an administrative task which likely occurred among the Judean community off island. It occurred in stages including a prior collection for which the itemized list of contributors is lost. (For further explanation of the timing of the tallying and check marks, see section "Babylonia in Comparative Perspective" below.) The purpose of the collection is not stated, but it may represent the *mandattu*-tax payment the Judean community owed to the state. This differs from the *ilku*-labor tax obligation, which twenty-four of the contributors were serving in the form of century-unit labor conscription at the time of the collection. These laborers paid by proxy as indicated by the administrator's note in the account, the phrase "for

63. Baker, *Archive of the Nappāḫu Family*, nos. 203–5 and p. 76.

him/her" (Aram. LH). It seems reasonable that the stated century-unit leader or his representative(s) collected the taxes from their laborers and delivered them to the Yahô administrator to be accounted. After all, one of the century-unit leaders mentioned, Nabûʿaqab, identifies himself as "the scribe" elsewhere (*TAD* A6.2). One might even envision a collection made in a sealed vessel, which included a label list like those studied above. Similar administrative notes appear following the names of latecomers on the verso.[64] The remaining 101 Judeans, who were not serving *ilku*-labor tax service, were not community members of high status according to the surviving documentation, though at least two of them were children of well-to-do members from the previous generation. One of them later becomes part of the inner circle of Yedanyah the priest, while two others later achieve a status that allows them to participate in the legal sphere. It can be concluded, however, that the common Judean recognized as a taxable entity, likely due to owning state-allotted land, was of the status that could be conscripted into century units. Lastly, like the Account of Egyptian Family Units, here too women are identified as taxable entities. This point makes it difficult to use the Yahô Temple Collection List for demographic data as some have tried to do. Ultimately, the manuscript was part of an administrative record that could be used for a short time to confirm who, in part, contributed to the payment owed by the Judean community. The collection was facilitated by the community's own temple for themselves and affiliated groups. The account would have ultimately been summarized and reported to high-level provincial administrators, that is, representatives of the fort/district or the royal estates.

## A Memorandum Record Roll

I have discussed at length the features and functions of the administrative genre of memorandum entries (Aram. ZKRN or DKRN) and the formatting of record rolls on which they appear.[65] In addition, I discussed in the introduction how to interpret *TAD* A4.9, which was necessary to debunk the currently indefensible claim that the Judeans had settled their temple on Elephantine prior to the Persian occupation of Egypt. A memorandum entry is an administrative note that provides a précis of a legally binding document; the précis is an excerpt of the information relevant to the administrator who wrote it and/or his institution.

64. Two of the notes appear to include the names of the proxy followed by the name or abbreviations of the name for whom the contribution was for. The third was simply delivered by proxy as indicated by "for him."

65. Moore, "Legality of Persian Period Memoranda"; chapter 1 above.

On the verso of the Darius Inscription manuscript is one of two surviving lists of memorandum entries, *TAD* C.13, the only to come from Elephantine. I have collated it, providing new readings and a new translation.[66] One may classify this document as an administrative miscellany or journal. Its collection of administrative data and persons provides interesting insights into the social function of administrators. The Elephantine manuscript's entries focus on the collection of two deliveries of extremely valuable accouterment followed by abstracts of legal conveyances. The deliverers of the valuable accouterment are unknown. The first is one named Yedanyah, but his patronymic is broken. The second appears to be a woman, according to the grammatical gender of the verb, whose name begins ʾAḥ[. . .].[67] Of the known onomasticon, only ʾAḥuṭab the administrator can be restored here. (This causes a problem for the traditional view of the dating of the ostraca; see chapter 7). The recipients of the items, however, are identifiable: Ḥanan son of Ḥaggay, who was a contract witness at Elephantine in 410 BCE, and Menaḥem son of ʿAzaryah, a witness on two contracts written in the year 420 BCE (*TAD* B2.9, B3.8). Contract witnesses are undoubtedly men of standing, and the conveyances also include figures of notable status. Memorandum 5′ refers to a business woman named Tavyaʾ wife of ʾAḥertays during year 7 (of presumably Darius II, 417 BCE). Other men and women are mentioned in barley conveyances in Memoranda 6′–8′. Memoranda 9′, 11′, and implicitly 12′ refer to ʿAzaryah the temple oblate in the context of wood (Mem. 1′) and rods (Mem. 12′). In the latter, someone named Yedanyah son of ʾOšeʿa, who is not otherwise identified, took rods from ʿAzaryah in year 13 (411 BCE) and did not deliver them to Ramnadayna, who was known to be the Frataraka at Elephantine from at least year 420 BCE. Memorandum 13′ is fragmentary but mentions Ḥanan, presumably son of ʿAzaryah. Memorandum 14′ has an additional note above it providing a context for the Memorandum as pertaining to "The century of Nabûʿaqab," who was one of the very few attested "scribes" (Aram. SPR) at Elephantine (*TAD* A6.2). His century unit was a unit taxed in the Yahô Temple Collection List. That fragmentary memorandum provides a quotation from an unidentified document. Lastly, one named Menaḥem son of Šalûm is found in the context of small units of measure (length) in Memorandum 10′. He is known as a witness on contracts from 416 and 402 BCE. In 400 BCE he was involved in a legal dispute regarding the money and goods written in a wifehood document for someone named Sallûʾaḥ daughter of Sammûaḥ.[68]

66. For the most recent collation and translation, see Moore, "Legality of Persian Period Memoranda," 160–69.

67. In context, the verb YHBT may be translated as "which she/I gave," but based on the parallel entry, the verb's subject is most probably the owner of the items.

68. Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, 263n11, implies that Menaḥem here is Sallûʾaḥ's husband and divorce has occurred. Alternatively, the wifehood document in question may be *TAD*

This document appears to be an administrator's collection of relevant transactions related to a temple collection and the responsibilities of Ḥanan and his father ʿAzaryah the Yahô temple's LḤN-servitor. It is related then, to the dossier of ʿAnanyah son of ʿAzaryah known from the Brooklyn documents. It appears to provide a perspective on the administration of the Yahô temple, the role of its administrative figures in the business of the Judean community, and the process of taxation as regards the temple as a collector of imperial taxes (see further in chapter 9). This collection gives us a sense of how a Judean administrator in the temple conceived of his own archival interests. Those interests focus on the documentation of valuable (taxable) goods that are delivered to the imperial state and the legal transactions of business dealings among the Judean community, particularly those dealing with commodities, such as barley, which was likely stored in the temple's complex or its storehouses.

## Babylonia in Comparative Perspective

The Persian-period Babylonian data evince a complex administration that monitored land registration and taxable persons as well as records of large temple economies. Darius I advanced this administrative domain, and the state became more ambitious about maintaining its own archival records on land and taxable goods or persons during his reign. These state records were legally binding; in court cases, they even—for the first time in Mesopotamian history—took precedent over local contractual documentation that was legally binding and witnessed.[69] Although references to such documents are found in the cuneiform evidence, very little cuneiform data survive that can be directly connected to state bureaus.[70] I assume this is due to such documents having been composed in Aramaic. For instance, the official state documents from Saqqara in Egypt contained many fragments of land registries (e.g., *TAD* C3.6, C3.20–C3.24), which call to mind the references to *karammu*, "registries," in the cuneiform sources. Unfortunately, the Saqqara evidence, both registries and the official summation accounts discussed above, is very fragmentary, and the Elephantine material provides a perspective on imperial economics in so far as it relates to state-recognized but community-specific administrative activity, with the

B6.4. In that text, one can see Yahôḥen (mother of the bride) having lent to a third party (Menaḥem), and the dowry given with Sallûʾaḥ (bride) in *TAD* B6.4 to Hôšeʿyah (husband) needed to be acquired directly from Menaḥem. Compare the transference of legal responsibility particularly in the case of a female creditor in Mesopotamia in chapter 4.

69. Stolper, *Entrepreneurs and Empire*, 29–31.

70. See references to the official registries (Akk. *kalammaru* from Iranian **kārahmāra*) in the previous note and Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 80.

exception of few documents, including the Syene Ration List. For this reason, the evidence from Babylonia can help us imagine the dynamics between the community administration of the Judeans and the state administration in the Egyptian province.

Firstly, the long Aramaic collection accounts indicate that native and colonial state dependents were assessed differently, each according to their own "ethnic" grouping. The Babylonian evidence, particularly the Judean and deportee community evidence, functions in a similar way. The communities in Babylonia operated under their own jurisdiction, so long as they did not cause problems for the state and so long as they paid their taxes. While there is no evidence of a temple economy in the Babylonian region of al-Yahudu, local storehouses (Akk. *kalakku*) appear to have provided an administrative center for such business and community matters.[71] That said, when serving their *ilku*-labor tax obligation, Judeans in Babylonia were integrated into the larger state military or labor systems. The long Aramaic accounts from Elephantine suggest an analogous model whereby the recognized communities of colonists, in this case Judeans and natives, remained administratively separate but were integrated when serving in state units.

Secondly, taxes were due for each year's harvest, and these could be converted into silver payments. Three related texts from al-Yahudu and affiliated documents demonstrate the possibility of converting tax payments, which were generally paid in kind, into silver (C17, C18, and B6). Interestingly, these texts also indicate that while taxes were anticipated and owed for a given year, collections of payments may have occurred on a less precise schedule.[72] This brings us back to the question of timing at Elephantine, especially regarding the administrative and community materials that survive from Darius II's fifth year. It is possible that while tax assessment of the Judeans in Elephantine/Syene was likely an annual event, the collection of the taxes may have been less consistent.

That said, the state offices in Babylonia sent administrators into the rural regions to assess the tax owed on state dependents' lands. They appear to have left record of the assessment with the rural office or family firm, then returned at some point in the future to collect the taxes. The texts C14, C15, and B12 are relevant to our understanding of taxation and collection according to administrative accounting practices. These documents were written in year 5 of Darius I (517 BCE) by the same scribe, Šamaš-ēreš son of Marduk-mukīn-apli from the family of Mudammiq-Adad. They are about estimated "rent" (Akk. *imittu*) owed on lands held by state dependents. Two (C14, C15) were written in al-Yahudu probably on the same day (see CUSAS 28, p. 116 n. "Dates"), another

71. See the passing remarks on temple courts in Sandowicz, "West Semites," 26.
72. See discussion in CUSAS 28, p. 127, and BaAr 6, pp. 99–101.

in a place called "Merchant Town" three days later. Clearly Šamaš-ēreš traveled to make and write these assessments. The assessments are only for Judean-held lands, even though some of the fields are outside of al-Yahudu (B12) and non-Judeans may have possessed land in the administrative district of al-Yahudu.[73] This is consistent with the recognized community management found in the Judean material from Egypt.

Šamaš-ēreš's assessments are the only surviving texts in the Babylonian corpus of Judean materials in tabular format. They list the names, the size of the state-granted land allotment, and the estimated tax owed in dates followed by the sign $šu_2$.[74] A note at the bottom of the table indicates that the dates are owed to Iddinaia son of Šinqaia, the deputy of the one in charge of the mares, who was, according to his title, a regional underling of the imperially appointed governor (BaAr 6, pp. 42–43). The dates are owed by men with Judean names. These men must represent the community administrators responsible for exacting taxes from those on the list, whether as official community personnel or as entrepreneurial businessmen. The documents read:

C14
obv. 1. [. . . . . are his dates];
obv. 2. [◦◦◦]-ma ½ [bowfief share . . . are his dates];
obv. 3. [Abdi]-Yāḫû (1) bowfief share 3 kor [(are) his dates];
obv. 4. [Abdi]-Yāḫû son of Nabaḫa ¼ [bowfief share . . . are his dates];
obv. 5. [◦◦◦]-ma ¼ (bowfief share) 1 kor (are) his dates;
obv. 6. [◦◦◦]-ma son of Ta-qu-a-ma ¾ (bowfief share) 2 kor (are his) d[ates];
obv. 7. [Y]āḫû-izrī ¼ (bowfief share) 0.1.3 kor are his dates;
obv. 8. [. . .]butâ ¼ (bowfief share) 1 kor are his dates;
obv. 9. Azar-Yāma ¼ (bowfief share) [◦]+0.1.5 kor are his dates;
obv. 10. Ilta-râma ½ bo[wfief share . . . are his dates];
obv. 11. In total: 9 kor of dates, [the estimated imittu rent of the bowfief fields of the šušanûs]
obv. 12. under the management of Iddinâ son of Ši[nqā],
bot. 1. deputy (of the one in charge) of the mare[s, (are) owed by]
bot. 2. Šamā-Yāma son of Pili-Yāma.
rev. 1–2. In Araḫsamna (8th month), he will deliver those 9 kor of dates in full in Judahtown.
rev. 3. Witnesses: Nabû-zēr-ibni son of Il-gabrī;

73. Note Wunsch's statement on text C18 regarding assessment and the estate of Bīt-Šinqāma: "It comprises only a part of the estate, presumably neighbouring settlements of other ethnicities."

74. The editors of the texts translate this final $šu^2$ as a suffix rendering "his dates," but I suspect it is an administrative abbreviation. Perhaps it means *šuzzuzzu* "to book."

rev. 4. Bēl-ēreš son of Šalāmān;
rev. 5. Ḫiqammu son of Rapā-Yāma;
rev. 6. the scribe: Šamaš-ēreš son of Marduk-mukīn-apli, descendant of Mudammiq-Adad.
rev. 7. (Written in) Judahtown, [day and month broken],
rev. 8. ⌜4⁺⌝th year (in the reign) of [Darius].

C15
obv. 1. Ṣurāia ½ bowfief share 1 kor are his dates;
obv. 2. (erasure)
obv. 3. Yāḫū-kullu ¼ (bowfief share) 0.0.2 kor are his dates;
obv. 4. Niḫiammu (1) bowfief 0.3.2 kor are his dates;
obv. 5. Banā-Yāma ¼ (bowfief share) 0.1.5 kor are his dates;
obv. 6. Qaṭib-Yāma (1) bowfief 0.1.3 kor are his dates;
obv. 7. Abdi-Yāḫū ¼ (bowfief share) 0.0.2 kor are his dates;
obv. 8. Yašub-ṣidiqu ¼ (bowfief share) 0.1 kor are his dates;
obv. 9. Yašub-ṭil(ī) ¾ (bowfief share) 0.1 kor are his dates;
obv. 10. Abdi-Yāḫū son of Ṣalamā ¼ (bowfief share) [. . .] are his dates;
obv. 11. Yāli-Amma ¼ (bowfief share) [. . . are his dates;]
bot. 1. [. . .] [. . .] [. . . are his dates;]
bot. 2. [. . .] [. . .] [. . . are his dates;]
rev. 1. Abdi-Yā[ḫū] [. . .] [. . . are his dates;]
rev. 2–3. Šalim-Yāma and [. . .] ½ bowfief 0.1 kor are his dates;
rev. 4. Abdi-Yāḫū son of Kīnâ ¼ (bowfief share) 0.1.5 kor are his dates;
rev. 5. Abdi-Yāḫū son of Nabaḫa ¼ (bowfief share) 0.1 kor are his dates;
rev. 6. Šikin-Yāma . . . who/which/that doesn't have dates;
rev. 7. Abdi-Yāḫū, the fuller ¼ (bowfief share) 0.1.4 kor are his dates;
rev. 8. Total: 5.1.5 kor of dates, the (estimated) imittu rent of the fields of the šušanûs under the management of Iddinâ son of
rev. 9. Šinqā, the deputy (of the one in charge) of the mares, are owed by Qaṭib-Yāma,
rev. 10. son of Naṭi-Yāma and Pakkâ son of Maqin-Yāma.
rev. 11. In Araḫsamna (8th month), they will deliver those 5.1.5 kor of dates in full.
rev. 12. They guarantee for each other. Witnesses: Nabû-zēr-ibni son of Il-gabrī;
rev. 13. Bēl-ēreš son of Šalāmān; the scribe, Šamaš-ēreš, decendant of Mudammiq-Adad.
rev. 14. (Written in) Judahtown, the 6th day of Tašritu, the 5th year (of the reign) of Darius,
rev. 15. king of Babylon and the lands.

In the texts, the taxes were owed on a single month, which calls to mind the Yahô Temple Collection List, particularly the unspecific date in Yedanyah's balance statement recording the balance for the whole month of Phamenoth.

Šamaš-ēreš's assessments prompt one to consider the administrative use of the Yahô Temple Collection List. Šamaš-ēreš went to the rural administrative centers to make and deliver his assessment over the course of at least three days. Evidence from other documents in the corpus indicates that he was infrequently around but returned to the region over the course of many years (BaAr 6, p. 129). The Yahô temple's collection appears to also have been made in stages as indicated by the two tallying marks, and the lost collection event evidenced by Yedanyah's calculations. It seems likely then that the Yahô temple's collection was part of a multiday and multidestination trip by temple administrators into the residential and probably rural regions of the Judean settlement off island.

The difference between the Yahô temple's collection and Šamaš-ēreš's assessments is that the former appears to have collected a flat tax, while the later was an assessed tax. Both of the long tax accounts from Elephantine refer to the collection of silver rather than taxed commodities in kind as do the Babylonian materials. The above-cited Saqqara balance account demonstrates that taxes may have been assessed in kind, but payments were converted to silver. The Yahô Temple Collection List assumes this feature. The flat tax of two shekels in the Yahô temple's collection calls to mind a different set of Babylonian evidence, so-called temple donations. The donations to the cash box (*quppu*) of the temple of Eanna, for instance, were mostly two shekels, with an "average daily income from the cashbox [of] about two shekels of silver, or one mina per month."[75] On the other hand—and perhaps apropos here—two shekels of silver was also the standard conversion rate for a temple tax on those dealing in commodities. Therefore, instead of paying tax in kind, silver became a fungible currency, standing in place of the commodity, and the preferred collection rate was two shekels for the standard temple tax.[76]

By further comparison one can look to the Neo-Babylonian and Persian-period lists from Mesopotamia. Assyriologists of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods refer to slave classes of persons, free unemancipated persons, and free persons. Members of the free unemancipated class are frequently identified as *širkus*—that is, temple oblates—whose status was bound to the temple, but these persons could engage in similar social and economic ventures as could free persons. MacGinnis has edited and discussed rosters of workers from the early years of Cyrus, and in at least one of those texts similar designations to

75. Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History*, 545.
76. Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History*, 547–48.

those found in the Account of Egyptian Family Units are made.[77] MacGinnis's study of BM 60453 shows that the roster identifies (nearly) each individual in a list of over fifty men with classifications such as "old (man)" (*ši*) or specific "feeble bodied" persons. The largest group are the *itbāru*, "able-bodied," and other menial professions who appear to be able-bodied. Surprisingly, there are significant numbers of children, mostly between three and five years old, and then those who have fled (*ḫalqu*) are noted. The old and feeble or the children are accompanied by an able-bodied individual, so it seems that these were persons whom the worker could not leave unattended or with an attendant. Laborers such as these would have been paid in rations, so while there is a striking similarity between Late Babylonian rosters and the Account of Egyptian Family Units with regard to identified statuses, the two are not directly comparable. Instead, the Late Babylonian rosters appear to be more akin to the short lists on ostraca studied above because, as MacGinnis states, they are the likely monthly statements collected from daily roll calls.[78]

## Conclusions

The lists and accounts of administrators reflect how society was ordered at Elephantine and Syene. The degree to which this order was imposed by the administrators is yet to be determined, but these documents show that state-recognized communities were supported by the administrators. Thus, one may posit a reciprocal effect: the imperial state acknowledges communities who may self-govern to a degree, but that system of self-governance is maintained by imperially trained administrators.

The provincial administration of Egypt appears to have promoted a number of administrative scribal practices to facilitate order. The three long accounts represent three independent social structures. The Account of Egyptian Family Units continued the Egyptian practice of collecting census data on (likely affluent or influential) Egyptian family units. Provincial administrators made two innovations in this already invasive administrative process. First, the data was collected in Aramaic rather than Egyptian. This represents a significant social shift in the history of Egypt. For the first time, Egyptian families were registered in their own land using a language other than their own. Second, to each Egyptian individual in this Aramaic census was added a taxation class. In this way, the Persians' Aramaic administrators used the Egyptian census beyond its

77. MacGinnis, "Corvée Gang." Joannès, "La mention des enfants" focuses on the role and status of children in similar texts with an appendix of many similar rosters.

78. MacGinnis, "Corvée Gang," 100.

intended function to monitor the population and to develop it into a tool of fiscal control.

The Yahô Temple Collection List demonstrates that the colonized settlement of Persian loyalists operated as a single recognized community, the "Judean troop." As was the case among the deportee communities in contemporary Babylonia, the Judean community at Elephantine was responsible for its own oversight with regard to collecting taxes and monitoring labor in the form of ration/salary distribution. The Yahô temple was the center of this administrative activity with the priests, or at least Yedanyah the priest, serving the function of community accountant. Under him were other unnamed accountants trusted and responsible for collecting the flat-tax imposed on the community. The evidence from the manuscript's tallying events and its implicit earlier round of collection, indicated by Yedanyah's balance statement, shows that other administrators were working with him to collect taxes by *going into the Judean community*. It was not incumbent on the Judeans to cross the river and come to the temple. Instead, they encountered collecting agents at currently unknown locations in their neighborhoods. The comparative data from al-Yahudu provides heuristic information that helps one piece together how the Yahô temple's collection may have come about. An administrator entered the Judean rural neighborhoods and informed a representative member of the community of the amount of tax that needed to be collected and from whom. It is unclear as of now how that representative was selected. The administrator then returned to collect the money from these neighborhoods.[79] Additionally, notice was sent to the active century units among whom some Judeans were enlisted. Tax was collected from them and delivered to the Yahô temple tax-collecting administrators, who reported the collection and notated the condition of the tax delivery. Though this model of tax collection is unique in its own right, its basic structure calls to mind the model witnessed among the Judeans in al-Yahudu and neighboring villages: an administrator visits the community members, provides tax estimates to a community representative, and sometime later a *dēkû*, "summoner," from the community comes to collect the taxes from those representatives on behalf of the state.[80] In both, the communities operated with a level of self-governance regarding fiscal matters, but in each community representatives collected and channeled state taxation through the community and ultimately through a final state representative to the provincial administration.

The Syene Ration List provides a perspective on how the state organized its own active officials. While the census dealt solely with Egyptian natives

79. I am inclined to see the rural community storehouse as an extension of a lost temple economy.

80. Zadok, "Yamu-Iziri the Summoner."

and the Yahô temple's collection solely with a recognized community of colonists, the Ration List provides a window into the sociology of the fort. The "Syeneans" constitute the only truly mixed ethnic group found in the over fifty lists and accounts. The Ration List is a ledger of state employees. It is unclear if these employees were permanent beneficiaries of the state or if they only received these privileges while serving their corvée labor tax in an active unit. In either case, a "Syenean" was a secondary designation representing a state status, much like "Aramean" was deemed to be in the study of the contractual data in chapter 4.

The social picture painted by the three long accounts is rather clear: administrators were responsible for monitoring populations by collecting taxes and overseeing distributions. The society was tripartite with a state-recognized native population, colonial communities, and active state employees at the fort level. The colonial communities and the fort structure were described by the same Aramaic term ḤYL, literally "troop." In the context of colonial communities this could represent women and men of taxable status. I consider landholdings, whether in the form of native ownership, prebendary ownership, or state-dependency ownership, as the default measure of fiscal viability, but other fiscally viable sectors of society may be implicit in these accounts, such as industrial production, commerce, or skilled trade. After all, the sole surviving Judean on the Syene Ration List's high-level ration recipients, Haggay son of Šemaʿyah, was the same man who functioned as a temporary notary before the state during legal proceedings involving Judeans. He served as a specialized tradesman, a notary, rather than as a laborer and landholder.

The short lists and accounts supported this larger tripartite social structure. These short documents were created by administrators watching and monitoring *the people*. Concern over commodities or money were always linked to individual tax payers. This was the primary function of the administrator: to control the population using administrative systems of control over the fiscal resources. The short lists and accounts were temporary records that likely supported the data collection and archival efforts of accountants forming longer ledgers, such as the three long scrolls discussed above. The media on which most of the lists and accounts were recorded demonstrate the temporary nature of the endeavor.

The memorandum record roll *TAD* C.13 offers a unique glimpse into the archival priorities of a Judean temple administrator, highlighting the intersection of legal, fiscal, and social obligations within the Elephantine community. The memorandum entries reflect a selective recordkeeping practice centered on taxable goods and the monitoring of key individuals involved in temple-related transactions.

The label lists were the most rudimentary administrative system of control. They are records that remained with the vessel on which they were written

rather than with an administrator. Label lists were more transparent, if only slightly. The contributor/recipient could have viewed the process with less skepticism. Nonetheless, these lists were part of the state system. As in the case of the short lists and accounts, one can safely assume that the function of label lists was to ultimately aid the administrators in monitoring the populations and controlling resources.

CHAPTER 6

# Correspondences and References to Peoples and Groups

FROM AN ADMINISTRATIVE PERSPECTIVE, the Aramaic correspondences exhibit a trove of data, but unlike contracts, lists, and accounts that data is not generally organized for administrative use. The purpose of written correspondences was to transmit specific information, normally concerning a business task. The dialogical tone of written correspondence includes markers of interpersonal communication, that is, "I" and "you." Cultural formalities embedded in loosely standardized formatting governed the language of the written correspondences and produced an artifice of interpersonal communication. That is, the politesse of the genre may mask the true tone of the relationship between the sender(s) and addressee(s). One must not overestimate the relationship between the sender(s) and addressee(s) because the reader is not privy to what is left unwritten.[1] In short, because Aramaic correspondence required some type of contextualization—even if limited—for the sender to convey information to the addressee, one finds in letters remarks on, assumptions about, or allusions to the administrative system but normally no direct statements describing it.

As discussed in chapter 1, correspondences serve many functions in the Aramaic administration. Papyrus and leather letters, the subject of this chapter, were used to convey instructions across vast distances. While a basic form of epistolary formatting was also used in the ostraca missives, they served a different purpose then the papyrus and leather letters and they will be discussed in the next chapter. As for papyrus and leather letters, the surviving documents may be organized into community or institutional business communications and official provincial decrees. This chapter will focus on the dialogical content of the papyrus letters from Elephantine, which were sent to personnel in the Yahô temple's community, and to a lesser extent on those from Hermopolis, which were sent

1. For example, in Elephantine's most famous document, the letter of Yedanyah to the governors of Samaria and Yehud (*TAD* A4.7), one expects the addressees of this unusually long and seemingly intimate letter to be supportive, but the reader learns on the verso that previous letters had gone unanswered.

to comparable temple communities at Syene. The aim is to elucidate how the papyrus letter writers understood the sociology of the colonial communities.

Before delving deeply into the data, I must express my position about the authorship of the surviving papyrus letters. While it is possible that the letters were written by a type of amanuensis, there is currently no evidence for this. In fact, as will be seen in chapter 8, scribal tools were part of the commodities that were requested in the ostraca missives, and these were not on behalf of others but from the perspective of the missives' writers. There is no reason to assume administrative literacy was limited by class or gender—no evidence would support such assumption. This means that unless otherwise stated by the sender, a letter's sender was the letter's writer. The only exception to this rule are the bureaus of Aršama, which wrote in his name. When writing provincial decrees (Ṭ$^{ʿ}$M-documents), the writer of the documents was identified as "the scribe." Furthermore, some of those documents, which are not decrees but instructive correspondences to high officials, at times identify Aršama's opinion in the third-person with the statement "Aršama says thus" (e.g., A6.3:6). This is a good indication that even those instructive correspondences that do not identify Aršama in the third person still may have been written on his behalf.[2] Furthermore, when the sender is a group of individuals, one in the group composed the letter (e.g., A4.7 ‖ A4.8). These exceptions do not affect the data presented in this chapter, which focus on the other papyrus correspondences to community-level personnel rather than on fort or royal-estate bureaus operating under the names of their leaders.

Scholars have mined the language of the papyrus letters for a myriad of reasons, and such studies will not be reiterated here. Instead, in this chapter I will study the sociology reflected in the letters in order to counter the assumption that the papyrus letters are foremost "private correspondences." The familial language in the texts has been misinterpreted as pointing to biological familial relationships and the multiple confusing attributions of familial labels have long been thought to be errors. Instead, I will show that the papyrus letters' writers, and by extension the communities, mapped familial terminology onto the labor and workforce of those communities.

## Father, Brother; Mother, Sister; Infants

Those writing letters, especially on parchment or papyrus, rarely used labels and descriptions when writing about private business affairs. Sociological

2. It is unclear to me if this is related to the different formatting of such letters, which begin with "From PN to PN." Future research may find a way to test such inquiries.

identifiers are mostly limited to kinship terms, though one need not assume that such terms referred to biological connections. Some social institutions, particularly apprenticeships, borrowed familial language and mapped it on to the social structure of the institution. This is well known from the scribal profession.[3] The extended family of those with means maintained a complex hierarchy that included perspectives on servitude and mastership. The ambiguity of terms such as "servant" muddies the distinction between familial and professional roles.

What has long been seen as confusion in the sociological descriptors used in the papyrus letters sent to Elephantine, particularly those held today in the collection in Padua, is owed to the simplistic view that the letters were private family communications rather than community business correspondences. For example, *TAD* A3.3 was sent by one ʾÔšeʿa to one named Šelomam, and it reads:

*TAD* A3.3 (= Padua 1)
r 1. [Greetings] to the [T]emple of Yahô in Yeb. To my son Šelomam [fr]om your brother ʾÔšeʿa. [I send you] peace and strength.
r 2. [And now,] from the day that you went on that way, (there has been) dissatisfaction, even mother. Now, blessed are you [by Yahô the God
r 3. that he may sh]ow me your face in peace. Now, from the day ⌜that⌝ you (m.p.) left (Lower) Egypt, salary has not been g[iven . . .]
r 4. [And when] we complained to the governors/governorship about your (pl.) salary here in Migdol, thus it was said to us, saying: "On account of this [. . .]
r 5. [. . .] the scribes, and it will be given to you (pl.)." Now, when you come to (Lower) Egypt ʿL[. . .]
r 6. [. . .] all your (pl.) [s]alary which has been withheld. Now, how is the household doing and how was your (journey) out? If it will be/Yahô
r 7. [. . . com]pensate, and there is none who causes (legal) damage. Be a man. Do not be emotional until you come [. . . .]
r 08. [. . .]
v 1. [. . .]
v 2. [. . .] in your letter about a tunic and a garment. Your tunic and your garment are made ◦[. . .]
v 3. [. . .] for your mother I made. Do not be full of anger because I did not bring them to Memphis. When T[. . . . . .]
v 4. [. . .] them before you. Now, I bought for me myself 1 linen tun(i)c. Now, [. . .]
v 5. [. . .]◦KN and a garment until you come. Greet your (m.s.) mother and all the children. Now, here we have been [. . .]

3. This is true of both the Egyptian (Schipper, *Proverbs 1–15*, esp. 14) and Semitic (Moore, *Literary Depictions*, 51–52) milieux from the second millennium BCE through the Persian period.

v 6. [. . .] of Mehir. I wrote this letter when thus we heard, saying: "You (pl.) will be released ◦[. . .]"
v 7. To my brother Šelomam son of ⌜ʾÔ⌝šeʿa, your brother ʾÔšeʿa son of Peṭe◦[. . .]

The text is curious in that the opening salutation calls the addressee Šelomam "son," but the sender ʾÔšeʿa also identifies himself as Šelomam's "brother." Bresciani pointed out this discrepancy in the editio princeps but offered no explanation.[4] Joseph Fitzmyer held that the discrepancy is owed to the fact that ʾḤ "brother" is shown to be "a polite form of address to an equal."[5] Porten also glosses over the discrepancy but interprets the text as though Šelomam was the biological son of the sender ʾÔšeʿa.[6]

The evidence from the Hermopolis papyri also demonstrates that the term "father" extends beyond its use in the nuclear family unit. In *TAD* A2.1 the writer Nabûšah writes to members of the temple economy of Bethel and the Queen of Heaven concerning his own garment's care, with a passing request for a ration of castor oil to exchange for cooking oil (r 7). The letter ends with a series of salutations to members of that temple's administration, including a greeting "to my father Psamî from your servant Nabûšah." While one may be tempted to see here Nabûšah writing to his actual father but mistakenly adding the salutatory formulaic element "your servant" it seems more likely that the use of "servant" was intentional since it does not occur in the letter's many other greetings. It seems most fitting to interpret Nabûšah as a professional underling of Psamî and not his biological son. The same appears to be true of *TAD* A3.3.

Returning to *TAD* A3.3, it also contains a discrepancy, but here it concerns the use of the term "mother." Line recto 2 makes it clear that both the sender and the "mother" are dissatisfied with the addressee. The addressee's mother must also be in Migdol, where the sender resides. However, in the closing salutations the sender writes, "Greet your mother and all the children." How can one's mother be simultaneously in Migdol and Elephantine/Syene? Fitzmyer struggled to explain this by arguing that the salutation ŠLM + PN must be a noun phrase meaning "the greetings of PN," a circumlocution for "greetings from PN."[7] Bresciani similarly translated it as though it were the same as ŠLM + L + PN, "Greet PN."[8] Recent research has overwhelmingly showed that the person in the clause ŠLM + PN is an addressee, though the grammatical form of the word ŠLM in these constructions is not fully settled. The letter is clear, if one does not limit

4. Bresciani, "Papiri aramaici egiziani," 20.
5. Fitzmyer, "Padua Aramaic Papyrus Letters," 17.
6. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 272–73.
7. Fitzmyer, "Padua Aramaic Papyrus Letters," 21.
8. Bresciani, "Papiri aramaici egiziani," 19.

the scope to the simplicity of a family unit, particularly for letters such as this that were explicitly addressed to temple communities. The sender uses the term mother here to refer to temple personnel who were not his biological mother.

It is no surprise that in addition to the use of sibling and parental terms to identify community relations the term "children" was frequently used to identify community members of lower status. The term "children" (Aram. YNQ, always in the plural) etymologically means "suckling/infant." If they were actual infants or toddlers, it is difficult to understand why a written greeting would be addressed to them.

Similar problems are found in the second Padua letter, *TAD* A3.4. It reads:

*TAD* A3.4 (= Padua 2)
r 1. To ⌜my mo⌝ther ⌜Ye⌝h⌜ôyiš⌝ma, your (m.s.) son Šalôm. [. . .]
r 2. to you (m.s.). Greetings, Galg\û/l my deputy. G⌜ree⌝tings, (to) the children. And [now], that ◦[. . .]
r 3. of mine give it to Paḥnûm son of Nabûdalah, and he will mak[e/do . . .]
r 4. they will sue him. And if there is silver, give (f.s.) to him. ◦◦[. . .].
r 5. I have sent this letter. Greetings, \my mother/ Menaḥemet. Greetings [PN] son of Paḥn⌜û⌝[m. Greetings PN son/daughter of]
r 6. Yehôyišmaʿ.
v 1. [To] ⌜my⌝ [mother] ⌜Yehôyišmaʿ daugh⌝[ter of . . .]

In his earlier work Porten followed the reconstruction of the second Padua "family" letter based on the editio princeps but updated the placement of the fragments in the *TAD*. One of the fragments does not belong on material grounds to this papyrus and the other I have placed on line r 5. Like *TAD* A3.3 and the Hermopolis letters, a problem arises if one reads the familial labels literally. Firstly, the sender Šalôm refers to the addressee Yehôyišmaʿ as his "mother," but in the closing salutations he greets others in the community including Menaḥemet, whom he calls "my mother." This calls to mind the two mothers found in *TAD* A3.3. Fitzmyer insists that "mother" and "father" are only biological terms and, therefore, struggles to explains how Šalôm can have two mothers.[9] He speculates that the opening salutation and address line where Šalôm calls Yehôyišmaʿ his mother may be a formal greeting, as he argued "brother" is in the first Padua letter. Dealing with a similar problem, Porten further notes that in the Hermopolis papyrus *TAD* A2.6 the addressee is identified as "my sister" in the opening salutation but as "my mother" in the address line.[10] Recto line 2 of the second Padua letter begins with "to you (m.s.)" and is likely the end of the opening

9. Fitzmyer, "Padua Aramaic Papyrus Letters," 23.
10. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 213.

salutation, perhaps even as *TAD* has restored it. The fact that Šalôm uses the masculine rather than feminine indirect object pronoun can be easily explained as an error for the stock salutation, which is often grammatically masculine. Regardless, this pronoun can be seen as ending a clause. What follows is difficult. The phrase ŠLM GLG\W/L, "Greetings Galg\û/l," is clear and so too is the clause ŠLM YNQYH, "Greetings (to) the children." The word in between is problematic. Bresciani ignored the obvious word break and read a single unintelligible name, Glgltnm.[11] Fitzmyer recognized the space and that Galgul was a known patronymic among the witnesses at Elephantine but could not explain TNM.[12] *TAD* reads the word as TNH, "here." This produces a difficult translation: Why would Šalôm greet someone "here"? Furthermore, the final strokes do not look like the letter *he*, and *TAD*'s reading must be excluded. The stroke following TN is another long stroke descending below the line, as Bresciani's reading M would indicate. Her M rightly suggests that there is something written on the imaginary hanging line following this long stroke. I propose instead reading TNNY, which nicely matches the surviving strokes. This, then, should be interpreted as Galgûl's title, "my TNN." The title TNYN, "deputy" (lit. "[number] two"), is known in Aramaic as one of Ahiqar's many titles, and a frequently used title in contemporary Syria-Mesopotamia, from where the name Galgûl might originate. Thus, we may read the line as "Greetings Galgûl my deputy." The next clause is rather curious and ultimately the focus of this lengthy discussion: "Greetings (to) the children." This phrase is also found in Padua 1, and here the same question applies: What is meant by infants?

Both Padua 1 and 2 indicate that the individuals can have two "mothers" and that "infants" are cognitively developed enough that they can comprehend abstract greetings conveyed to them. Padua 1 demonstrates further that a "father" could be a "brother," and so too a "son" could be a "brother." Additionally, the Hermopolis letter *TAD* A2.1 refers to a father-servant rather than father-son relationship. How does one reconcile these discrepancies? The simplest answer upsets decades of scholarship on the social lives of Judeans and other communities in Persian-period Egypt: terminology pertaining to the nucleus of the family was extended to the social domain of administrative professionals in the temple communities. Familial terms need not refer to biological family units but can indicate professional relationships; what was thought to be "private" letters are better interpreted as community business letters.

The use of nuclear family terminology to describe relationships outside of the biological family unit is already a known phenomenon in the scribal communities of Semitic cultures from the second through the first millennium

11. Bresciani, "Papiri aramaici egiziani," 22–23.
12. Fitzmyer, "Padua Aramaic Papyrus Letters," 23.

BCE. In both public schools and later in (presumably) apprentice-model scribal craft environments, a student is identified as a "child" of the institution or of the teacher, who was the parent. In Hebrew, particularly Late Biblical Hebrew, institutions of workers or guilds were identified as "sons of" the institution. Possibly due to the close relationship between scribal training and professional administrative work, the phenomenon of using family terminology to refer to the nonbiological members of an institution appears in the Judean and Northwest Semitic administrative worlds of Elephantine and Syene. In administrative Aramaic one finds it attested in this corpus in the term BR BYT$^{?}$, "son of the house," that is, "prince." This is further supported by references in the ostraca missives studied in chapter 7 in which "mother" is used to refer to the female manager of dried foodstuff, "children/infants" (as here YNQY$^{?}$) is used for the persons to whom she issues rations, "brother" refers to a professional peer, and "daughters" refers to female couriers who transport messages for a senior male administrator.

It seems Fitzmyer, who has dealt with this problem more than anybody, could not move beyond the idea that "mother" and "father" are reserved for almost exclusively biological parents or legal adopters. Modern western cultures, though, use "brother" and "sister" loosely, as well as familial terms outside the nuclear family, such as "uncle," "aunt," or "grandpa," and "children" goes well beyond meanings limited to a nuclear family unit.[13] In the same way, we can postulate that the Judean community throughout Egypt related to each other as a kinship group in which the notion of parenting extended beyond the nuclear family unit and metaphorically into other social domains.

This phenomenon was not unique to the Egyptian and Aramaic sphere in the Persian Empire and went beyond the terms often interpreted as biological kinship terms. As discussed in chapter 4, and relevant also to the letters (*TAD* A3.5, A4.3 [of a non-Judean]), the technical Aramaic term $^{c}$LYM, "underlying/dependent," has a more basic meaning of "boy," but like familial terms, it does not mean "boy" in administrative contexts. The Persian-period Elamite evidence from Persepolis also uses terms such as "boy" (Elam. *puhu*) in administrative contexts, where it, according to Wouter Henkelman, "refers to subordinate members of a company, hence 'servants.'" It can be used interchangeably with the technical term "servant, assistant" (Elam. *libar*), which in turn functions like Aramaic $^{c}$LYM.

## Conclusions

In sum, the evidence from Aramaic papyrus letters compels us to reconsider the assumption that familial language in these texts reflects biological kinship.

13. For "children/infants" in particular, see *TAD* A3.5, A3.6; and *NAP* 1.1.22.

Rather than interpreting terms like "father," "mother," "brother," and "children" as literal, it is more plausible to see them as sociological metaphors mapped on to the administrative and professional culture of Persian-period colonial temple communities in Egypt. This chapter has argued that such kinship language reflects the structured hierarchies and labor relationships within these institutions. Just as scribal and apprenticeship traditions throughout the ancient Near East employed familial metaphors to frame pedagogical and professional bonds, so too did the Judean communities in Egypt extend family terminology to denote roles, status, and affiliation. Far from being private or domestic in nature, these correspondences reveal the communal and administrative underpinnings of social organization, offering a window into the symbolic kinship structures that governed daily life and institutional function.

## Approaching the Ostraca Missives: Formally Formatted Ostraca Letters

While the difference in writing media—papyrus/leather versus ostraca—generally indicates a difference in purpose and function, a few ostraca are nonetheless formatted as formal letters. Unsurprisingly, these also exhibit the use of familial terminology and the language of servitude found in the papyrus letters from Elephantine and Hermopolis. Chapter 7 will discuss the social networks and administrative dynamics within the Judean community evident in the ostraca missives, including their use of familial terminology. Here, it should be noted that out of the hundreds of missives only fourteen ostraca are formatted with the formal structures consistently found in the papyrus and leather letters. Of these, two are too fragmentary to interpret (CG no. 87; *TAD* D7.31). The remaining examples concern business matters—most notably, commodity shipments (CG nos. 167, 186, 269; *TAD* D7.29) and specialized labor (CG no. 70 [garment care]; *TAD* D7.6 [cooking]; D7.1 [ovine acquisition and cooking]). One additional formally formatted ostracon was a scribal exercise (CG no. 277).

Furthermore, two ostraca missives employ the hierarchical letter format primarily known from the Aršama dossier—"From PN to PN" (CG no. 228; Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 37)—suggesting managerial instructions from a superior to a subordinate administrator. One ostracon (CG no. 144) may and another[14] certainly does refer to labor-related mobility. The latter, still unpublished, was sent by Hôšeʿa to his "brother" (i.e., peer) Maḥseyah. In it, Maḥseyah states, "And I shall send (word) to you. As for the servants, as known, they shall arrive to work . . . , and (4) one (3) must supervise them on the boat." Although the

14. Moore, *MDAIK*, unpublished DAIK/SI O 4928, Fund-Nr. 44200.

exact nature of the task is unclear, it pertains to units of wood. It appears that these administrators were in charge of the "boys" (Aram. ʿLYMYʾ) who constituted part of the labor force.

Unlike the papyrus letters, these formally addressed ostraca can be contextualized within the broader sociology of temple personnel evidenced by the hundreds of ostraca missives. Had these been found in isolation, as the papyrus letters often were, similar interpretive difficulties would have emerged regarding the relationships among the individuals mentioned. As the next two chapters will demonstrate, the larger corpus of ostraca correspondence requires that formally formatted letters be understood within an institutional context. Likewise, assuming a more complex sociological setting for the papyrus letters—namely, an institutional framework in which they address matters of community business—helps resolve interpretive problems in that corpus while reshaping our understanding of the cultural history of the Judean and other colonial communities represented in these documents.

PART 3

# Judean Experiences of the Economy and Empire at Elephantine

CHAPTER 7

# The Network of Yahô Temple Administrators According to the Ostraca

SO FAR, THIS STUDY HAS ATTEMPTED to show how the Aramaic administrators worked on and off the island of Elephantine and how their administrative strategies organized the Judean colonial settlement. Part 3 will focus on the connections between the administrators and the professional domains for which they were responsible. Although the data is rich, it is too incomplete to write biographies on the individuals, detailed descriptions of the commodities used by the community, or a comprehensive assessment of the taxation system at Elephantine. Instead, this seventh chapter will present selective vignettes of administrative life of the Yahô temple's personnel by describing the social networks of the administrators and their professional domains. Chapter 8 will trace the general processing and use of the commodities found in the ostraca, and chapter 9 will consider, to the degree possible, Elephantine's place within the larger provincial and imperial taxation system of the Egyptian province.

Since the birth of sociology, scholarship has recognized the value of studying human networks. In recent decades technology has facilitated the study of networks by speeding up the process of locating and identifying nodes—that is, individuals, items, or concepts—in a given network and the extent of their connections. Although incomplete, the ostraca from Elephantine provide an excellent dataset from which one can flesh out a social network. As noted in chapter 1, the administrative ostraca missives from Elephantine use mostly a terse epistolary format to indicate administrative orders, delivery procedures, or receipts. This epistolary format often includes the addressee to whom the administrative note was sent, and on rare occasion a formal address or a sociological descriptor provides a window into the social dynamics of the relationship between the sender and addressee or the sender and third parties mentioned in the text.

The titles of the administrators are almost never provided in the missives. An objective of this chapter is to identify and describe the responsibilities of a core team of Yahô temple administrators—namely, Mîkayah, ʾAḥûṭab, Natan, and Yedanyah—as well as a few other significant players in their network. This will not be a comprehensive study of the Judean administrative network because

such an enterprise would be a monograph in itself. Furthermore, while there has been substantial effort by scholars to understand the titles in the Aramaic corpus from Egypt, these titles mostly refer to positions held at the fort/district or royal-estate level. Therefore, I will not connect known titles to the administrators in the ostraca who work at the colonial community level. Instead, I will assign them functional titles because it is unclear that any known title corresponds to those serving in the temple administration of the Judean community.[1]

Those familiar with scholarship on Elephantine will immediately notice that this approach resembles in no way the suppositions of previous studies. Previous scholarship views the economic life of the Judeans as a collection of "family" and "private" matters. That said, one with a wider view of ancient Near Eastern textual sources finds immediate parallels between the administrative ostraca missives from Elephantine and administrative epistolography of temple economies from Neo-Babylonian and Persian-period Mesopotamia.[2] Borrowing from this wider perspective, I hold in this study that the administrators mentioned in the sources are functionaries of the Yahô temple economy, who maintained lists of labor teams and ration distributions and were responsible for storing, accounting, and distributing community goods.

## Network Dataset of Administrative Ostraca

Of the approximately 331 Aramaic ostraca from Elephantine and Syene, at least one partially preserved name is attested on 188 ostraca missives. The 37 ostraca-lists are excluded here because they were studied in chapter 5 and, as discussed there, refer to the specific labor- and ration-distribution procedures of the community. Of the 188 ostraca missives that preserve names, only 9 are not classified as administrative missives.[3] This leaves a dataset of 179 administrative ostraca missives based on which a network can be observed. These 179 objects include approximately 416 attestations of names, which may be assigned to approximately 194 individuals.

Unfortunately, this data lacks clear periodization. For this reason, only immediate relations between two individuals can be securely identified. Those

1. Given the dearth of Aramaic evidence, comparative studies with the rich Babylonian material promise a fruitful study, but such an investigation is supplementary to and outside the scope of that found here.

2. By way of introduction to the subject, the reader is advised to see Levavi, *Administrative Epistolography*, and Hackl, Jursa, and Schmidt, *Spätbabylonische Briefe*.

3. CG nos. 7 (label/tag), 103 (votive promissory note), 261 (receipt), X12 (tag); Moore, *MDAIK*, DAI/SI O 4927, Fund-Nr. 44200 (label/tag); Elephantine, excavation *TAD* D11.2 1596 (label/tag); *TAD* D11.3 (label/tag), D7.50 (better read as a Phoenician list), D9.6 (label/tag).

are the relations observed when two individuals appear on the same ostracon. Second or third degrees of relationship will be assessed with more caution based on a number of factors, such as the frequency of the individual serving in the same role on multiple ostraca or the rarity of the name. This means, for instance, that a social network can be identified if person X exists on the same ostracon as other individuals, including person Y. This does not necessarily mean, however, that person X is alive or knows a third person, Z, who appears in person Y's immediate social network based on another ostracon. Furthermore, an individual's network changes overtime, so while according to one text person X's network includes person Y, this does not mean that person Y is in that network during the writing of a different text that includes person X. That said, when a cumulative body of evidence emerges, extended networks can provide valuable insights into the community of administrators at Elephantine. Unfortunately, the Aramaic ostraca provide no secure internal dates to assess changes over time in the network. Therefore, I take a synchronic view and see the bulk of the Aramaic administrative missives as a static dataset representing an unidentified period of time in the fifth century BCE, likely the latter half of it, according to my rebuttal of dating Aramaic sources based on paleography as well as the dated Phoenician and Demotic evidence presented in part I.[4]

## The Jargon of the Dataset: Receipt Requests, Receipts, Orders, and Promissory Statements

The dataset of ostraca missives uses a number of jargonist terms; the epistolary formula and topical markers have been studied by Margaretha Folmer and to a lesser extent by Dirk Schwiderski.[5] The opening salutation on these missives is usually followed by a verb or at least a verbal clause. These verbal clauses convey sociolinguistic information. Notably, the verbs ŠLḤ, "to send

4. I suspect that the ostraca date to a period anchored around the Phoenician label dating to 435 BCE (Moore, *Semitica* 64, no. 25). Note that the bilingual tag CG no. E3 also dates a wine shipment to this year (in Demotic) and associates the shipment with Hôšeʿa son of Qôn (in Aramaic). For Hôšeʿa, see below, and for Qôn, chapter 4; Hôšeʿa son of Qôn was likely a mid- to late fifth-century person of status and corresponds with my dating of the bulk of the ostraca. It is plausible that after the Inaros rebellion, Aršama sured up relations between the native population and the colonial settlers by expanding economic advantages. This lasted until his departure from Egypt. Since the core team of Judean administrators relies on Egyptian boatmen to ferry goods, it is possible that the system collapsed between 413 and 10 BCE as tensions between the Judeans and Egyptians rose and Aršama left the province.

5. Folmer, "Hi Aḥuṭab"; Schwiderski, "Epistolographische Elemente." Schwiderski's earlier work does not consider the bulk of the evidence, and therefore its conclusions are skewed (Schwiderski, *Handbuch des nordwestsemitischen Briefformulars*).

(word)," and YŠR, "to send (items)," (only attested in the C-Stem) are used in a uniquely administrative manner in most occurrences. ŠLḤ frequently means to send word about a previous order requested in an earlier correspondence. Thus, ŠLḤ in administrative speak is a receipt request. Likewise, the root YŠR in the suffixing conjugation—that is, the past tense—refers to an order that was sent, and therefore is functionally the response to a ŠLḤ receipt request. Thus, YŠR in the suffixing conjugation is a receipt statement.[6] On the other hand, YŠR as an imperative is an order statement, while YŠR in the prefixing conjugation is a type of promissory (or debt) statement, much like an informal promissory note. The use of these verbs and the deictic nature of the missive genre stand in place of the administrative genres of receipts, orders, or promissory notes, which one expects to find in a complex administrative network.

## Administrative Recipients

The additional data supplied in the terse missive format, as opposed to that found in the expected administrative genres of receipt, orders, and promissory notes, allows one to reconstruct sections of the administrative social network that would otherwise be difficult to identify. Most important are the addressees of the ostraca missives and, when attested, the senders. Table 11 lists the ostraca, with salutations to identifiable figures.[7]

Unfortunately, on most ostraca the addressee is missing. This is the case either because the ostraca sherds are broken or because the administrative procedure by which the missive was sent did not warrant salutatory information. For instance, one can reasonably assume that the shipment of goods destined for the administrative personnel at Elephantine included many individually sealed packages or vessels, in each of which could have been packed a missive. The professional domain of some administrators or the limits of their network may have facilitated a one-to-one administrative relationship in which the sender and the addressee were the only two people to communicate about a particular commodity. In such a case, a sealed package of a known commodity would not have needed salutatory information.

6. Only one clear example of the administrative genre of a receipt survives, CG no. 261. The unusual text Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 43, may also be a receipt.

7. In the table, "count" refers to the number of times the individual is addressed, not to the number of documents. Asterix (*) refers to a broken reading for which there is some doubt of restoration. In addition to the occurrences in the table, one named Malkyah may be found in CG no. 265 as a second addressee, but the context may also allow for the meaning "compensate Malkyah." The imperative of the D-stem verb meaning "to compensate" (Aram. ŠLM) is spelled the same as the salutatory noun "greetings." Similarly, ŠLM in the broken context of CG no. X9 may mean "compensate(d)."

TABLE II. Recipients of ostraca missives

| Recipient | Sources | Count |
|---|---|---|
| Natan | CG nos. 4; 9 + 23 (= HL no. J1); 14; 17; 36; 45; 48; 53; 57 + 99 (= HL no. J3); 60; 64 + 227 (= HL no. J4); 71; 81; 97; 154; 164; 200; 203 (= HL no. J12); 223; 247; *TAD* D7.28 | 21 |
| ʾAḥûṭab | CG nos. 78; 135; 157; 169; 173*; 202; 228* (from Mîkayah); X19; *TAD* D7.4; D7.8 (2nd); D7.3 | 11* |
| Yedanyah | CG nos. 44; 84 + 88 (= HL no. J5); 136; 255; X6; X13*; *TAD* D7.1; D7.32* | 8* |
| Mîkayah | CG nos. 70 (from Giddel/Gaddul); 144 (from Yešaʿyah); 214; *TAD* D7.20 (missive 1: from Natan son of Gemaryah; missive 2: from Yedanyah) | 5 |
| ʾAḥyô (?) | *TAD* D7.34; Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 37 (from ʿObadyah) | 2 |
| Maʿûzyah | CG nos. 33; 75. | 2 |
| . . . yah | CG no. 186 | 1 |
| Belnatan | CG no. 269 | 1 |
| H . . . | CG no. 133 | 1 |
| Ḥaggay | (CG no. 277 from Yarḥû but = Lemaire's "exercise"); *TAD* D7.29 | 1 (2) |
| Hôšeʿa | Moore, MDAIK, O 4928 (from Maḥseyah) | 1 |
| Hôšeʿyah | *TAD* D7.6 (formal, no sender) | 1 |
| Menaḥem | CG no. 270 (2nd) | 1 |
| Mešullak | *TAD* D7.31 (formal, sender lost) | 1 |
| Mešullam son of Hôšeʿa | CG no. 239 | 1 |
| Qawîlyah | *TAD* D7.1 (formal, but no sender) | 1 |
| Qly or Qlh | *TAD* D7.33 | 1 |
| Teṭepsakmaḥi | CG no. 138 | 1 |
| Yislaḥ | CG no. 152 | 1 |
| ʾÛryah | *TAD* D7.8 (missive 1) | 1 |

This means that in order to compile the administrative network without knowing the individuals' professional titles one must consider the commodities with which they are associated. A network of four main administrators with an extended network of lesser known administrators can be fleshed out when considering the attested individuals on the missives, their roles as senders or recipients, the types of missives (i.e., requests, orders, etc.) that mention the individuals, combined with data on the commodities or actions most associated with the individuals.

Lastly, all missives found on island are assumed here to have been sent from individuals off island. Accounting for the difference in the location of personnel helps to establish the relative locations of associated industries, such as community farmlands or, as will be argued, off-island textile and storage facilities.

## Vignettes of Core Judean Administrators: Mîkayah, Yedanyah, ʾAḥûṭab, and Natan

Four core Judean administrators are found on approximately sixty-one distinct ostraca, which mention approximately seventy-one individuals, including patronymics of individuals. These individuals constitute the network of the core Judean administrative team.

### *Mîkayah: The Foreman*

Of the recipients, Mîkayah stands out because nearly all missives addressed to him are formal addresses. Additionally, he sends missive CG no. 228 probably to ʾAḥûṭab; indeed, they are part of the same network as indicated by the fragmentary ostracon CG no. 214. He structures CG no. 228 with the formal "From PN. To PN.": "From Mîkayah. To ʾA[ḥûṭab]" (cc 1).[8] Similarly, the fragmentary text *TAD* D7.22 may also be a formal address from Mîkayah. Another source, CG no. 144, is from Yešaʿyah to Mîkayah, and like CG no. 228 it uses the "From PN. To PN" structure, which implies that Yešaʿyah may be Mîkayah's superior. The ostracon *TAD* D7.20 contains two separate missives on one sherd, one from Natan to Mîkayah, another from Yedanyah to Mîkayah. These are structured as "Greetings PN. From PN." While this structure is formal, it suggests that Mîkayah might professionally stand closer to Natan and Yedanyah than he does to Yešaʿyah. This double missive entreats Mîkayah to "come" presumably off island where Natan and Yedanyah are and bears no administrative information other than the fact that we learn Yedanyah's "daughters"—that is, his female subordinates—are moving to and from the island with ostraca missives.[9] One may parse the details further and notice that Natan refers to himself with his patronymic; this is rare in the ostraca missives. Yedanyah, however, does not use his patronymic. It seems probable that Yedanyah and Mîkayah are professionally on a similar level, while Natan works below them but closely with them. Alternatively, the mention of Natan's patronymic could be owed to social norms of respect for an elder. Whatever the reason, this ostracon indicates that a meeting of the administrative inner circle occurred off island, but Mîkayah stayed behind. Lastly, one Giddel/Gaddul sent CG no. 70 and addresses Mîkayah as "lord," the only surviving occurrence of the term in the ostraca missives where the title is identifiably ascribed to an individual.[10] In this source Giddel/Gaddul

8. Folmer, "Hi Aḥuṭab," who notes the salutary formula but does not associate it with a social hierarchy. But see Tuplin, "Bodlien Letters," 62.

9. As discussed in chapter 6, terminology for the nuclear family unit was extended to the professional domain of administration within the Judean community.

10. See *TAD* D7.37; CG nos. 70, 87, 147, and 226.

requests Mîkayah send word about Mîkayah's garment, should it need to be hemmed/inspected, "Now, send (word) to me (about) the garment which is on you. Shall it be hemmed/inspected?" (CG no. 70 cc 4—cv 1). At first glance, this is a rather curious missive because ancient Near Eastern temples are known to be centers of textile production, but the presence of the sherd on island suggests that garment mending occurred off island, not in the temple. This agrees with the archaeological finds from the island, which to my knowledge did not uncover evidence of large-scale textile production from Persian-period strata. Therefore, it is highly possible that the temple's oversight extended to a network of locations off island, and this missive would be in support of such a hypothesis.

*TAD* D7.23 cc 5 is the only clear reference to Mîkayah as a third party in the missives; here one administrator mentions to another "your (m.s.) brother Mîkayah." This evidence further supports the role of Mîkayah in the professional hierarchy, relative to the other administrators. He is their peer or "brother." That said, for some yet unidentified reason, he appears to see himself as a superior of ʾAḥûṭab (CG no. 288). Is this because he is older than she is, or is he officially her superior, or is it owed to a social norm regarding the address between males and females, whether misogynistic or cultural? Previous (linguistic) descriptive studies on the ostraca's epistolary formula have overlooked the social clues at play in such formulae,[11] and, therefore, such questions cannot yet be fully answered. That formal addresses are sent largely to and from the same individual indicates not a variation in the epistolary form of the ostraca missives but rather socially attuned usages of various forms. Most of the administrators are more intimately connected in a social network, but Mîkayah stands within and also adjacent to this network.

The name Mîkayah appears in a few lists as well, though, as discussed in chapter 5, it is difficult to secure identifications between the lists and persons found in higher-level administrative texts without a clear understanding of a list's social setting.

Mîkayah appears to be in charge of labor among the Judean troop (CG nos.144 and 214). CG no. 144 is a key text in this interpretation. In it, Yešaʿyah asks Mîkayah for "a son of Zakkûr." It is highly unusual to refer to a person solely by a patryonmic. What may be happening here is that Zakkûr's family's service obligation is due, and any member of his family (or larger business) can perform that obligatory service. If this is correct, it is enticing to identify Mîkayah as a foreman overseeing conscripts of Judeans in the fort's troop.[12] And if he is the

11. Folmer, "Hi Aḥuṭab"; Schwiderski, "Epistolographische Elemente"; and Schwiderski, *Handbuch des nordwestsemitischen Briefformulars*.

12. The only other ostracon to explicitly refer to labor is the formally addressed source Moore, *MDAIK*, unpublished DAIK/SI O 4928, Fund-Nr. 44200. Here one Hôšeʿa and Maḥseyah discuss the labor and supervision of ʿLYMYʾ, "underlings." The reference to ʿLYMYʾ suggests that

writer of CG no. 255, as I suspect, then he is in charge of dispensing salaries (Aram. PRS)—at least to Natan. As an apparent labor manager or foreman, it is probable that he works not only within the Judean community but also with the fort's administration, particularly when they employ, whether by contract or tax-service obligations, those who are part of the Judean community. He then may serve as the Judean handler for the imperial administration at Elephantine/Syene. If so, this would certainly evoke a sense of respect for him from within the Judean community and explain why the missives addressed to him have a more formal tone than the others. The ostraca missives are predominantly about commodities. Therefore, it is not surprising that so few ostraca mention Mîkayah. That he appears to be a labor foreman, however, leaves one wondering whether he is perhaps the sender of many of the ostraca missives that demand rations be sent from the island and, in particular, of those missives that are related to wages. Furthermore, it is enticing to consider him to be the writer of many of the lists of persons, though admittedly this extends outside what can be proven.

### *Yedanyah: The Head Accountant*

Most of the ostraca missives present an intimate network between three key administrators who appear to be based on island, Yedanyah, ʾAḥûṭab, and Natan. Figure 4 illustrates the immediate network of Mîkayah and this core administrative team, Yedanyah, ʾAḥûṭab, and Natan.

Eight missives are addressed to Yedanyah, none of which identify the sender(s). He is affiliated with scribal materials and appears to function as an accountant. CG no. X6 refers to Yedanyah in the context of supplies of ink and pens. Likewise, in CG no. X9 is found a broken context and a reference to ink and Yedanyah. The third and final reference in the ostraca regarding ink is fragmentary and no names survive (CG no. 26). Yedanyah's relationship to scribal supplies is further highlighted by his statement to the foreman Mîkayah in which he indicates that he may compose missives on behalf of other key figures. He writes, "Greetings, Mîkayah. From Yedanyah. Now, indeed, I sent (word) to you (m.s.) yesterday in the name of Hôdawyah son of Zekaryah, saying, 'Come this day.' But you did not come. In the hand of my daughters, send (word) to ⌜me⌝" (*TAD* D7.20 cv 1–5). It is clear from these sources that Yedanyah is a scribal figure, and further evidence leads to his identification as the accountant for the island's Judean temple administration.

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entrepreneurial business endeavors are at play, but this does not exclude one sending his underling to perform the *ilku*-tax labor obligation for his firm. One is tempted to see Hôšeʿa and Hôšeʿayah as the same individuals; see *TAD* D7.6. Both are men of status but only loosely connected to the core team, and, therefore, not found frequently in the ostraca.

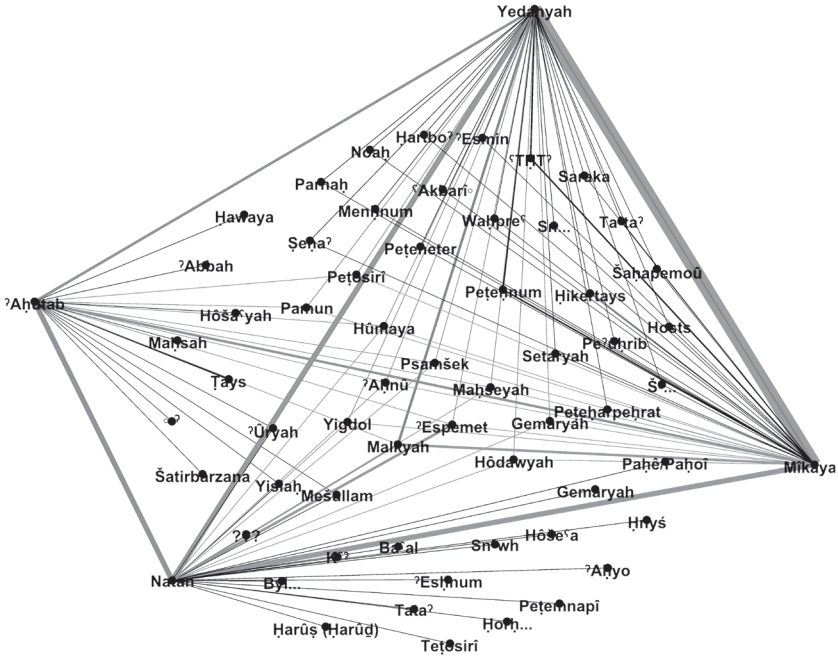



FIGURE 4. Network of associations according to the ostraca missives.

A few ostraca allude to the professional hierarchy of the main administrators and Yedanyah's role among them. One ostracon sent to Yedanyah stands out among the commodity shipments, CG no. 44. This fragmentary source appears to be a report on the unnamed writer's own turmoil. Orthographically, the initial verb's subject is ambiguous, but I read the text as follows: "Greetings, Yedanyah. Now, lest I be put in confinement, then no administrator shall withhold from him (i.e., me) bread and water. [Them] (i.e., bread and water) ?Aḥûṭab [must sen]d me" (CG no. 44 cc 1–4). The writer orders that if he is confined (Aram. √SGR), ?Aḥûṭab shall still supply bread and water (CG no. 44 cc 3–4). After a broken line (cc 5) the message continues on the convex side claiming, "Now, [i]f they have not captured Natan there, let him come out to me. I am going to destroy that one (i.e., punish Natan)" (cv 1–3). Here the whole team is led by Yedanyah, to whom the missive is addressed and who conveys orders to ?Aḥûṭab and Natan. It seems quite plausible that CG no. 44 was sent from Mîkayah to Yedanyah during a period of professional (and perhaps wider political) distress. The sociological value of the missive is in its indication of the administrative power structure on island.

A similar missive, CG no. 255, remains cryptic due to its fragmentary state, but here too the message is addressed to Yedanyah. The team is mentioned,

Natan pejoratively as before and ʾAḥûṭab merely indicatively as someone who can release honey from long-term storage.[13] Like CG no. 44, CG no. 255 goes beyond a commodity order into a social matter of concern to a paranoid writer, who claims "Are you all conspiring?" (Aram. ʿŠTN ʾNTM, CG no. 255 cv 4). This too may be the foreman Mîkayah, who, seeking his own self-interests, writes to the lead administrator Yedanyah.

Other ostraca sent to Yedanyah support the claim that he oversees all aspects of administration.[14] CG no. 136 refers to many commodities and an order/decree, which one expects only a lead administrator, a SPR, "secretary, scribe," to have the power to request, issue, or enact.[15] CG no. 84 + 88 (= HL no. J5) is very fragmentary, but the commodities mentioned in it are highly varied, and the writer sees Yedanyah as having authority over Natan. *TAD* D7.1 refers to Yedanyah's scribal role as one with knowledge of documents and part of a professional hierarchy, including those individuals referred to as "lord." The remaining two ostraca possibly sent to him are too fragmentary to comment on, but one TAD D7.32 refers to an obscure administrator Mešullak, and another mentions a rare item, a wheel (CG no. X3 cv 4). Yedanyah has connections beyond the inner circle of administrators and oversees a variety of unique commodity requests.

From this evidence it can be surmised that Yedanyah is the leader of the island's temple administration—at least the facet of administration depicted in the ostraca. This brings up a tantalizing question: Is Yedanyah in the ostraca the same administrator who is found in the papyri (see chapter 5) and perhaps the same as the priest who issued the famous letter to the governor of Yehud? While it seems enticing, one must be reluctant to jump to this conclusion since the ostraca missives are difficult to date and papponymy would explain the same administrative role held by two Yedanyahs at separate times. That said, we cannot rule out the long lifespan of a high-ranking administrator, whose tenure may run the course of half a century. It is tempting to consider that a Yedanyah son of Maḥseyah, who was a witness on two contracts in B2.3:31 and B2.4:20 (both 459 BCE) and who as an example of papponymy names his son Maḥseyah (CG no. 223), was the lead administrator in the middle of the fifth century and continued in that role into the last quarter of the century.

13. This text was not excavated by the French but purchased from Seymour di Ricci. For discussion of its unusual history, see Moore and Gorea, *CRAIBL*, p. 600, and Moore and Gorea, "AIBL-CIS de Ricci 2," 130–33.

14. Although broken, the first message of CG no. 9 + 23 (= HL no. J1) may have been addressed to Yedanyah, given its fragmentary, though explicit, interest in a document trail. The second message is to Natan.

15. For discussion of the meaning of "decree" as an administrative document and its issuing procedures, see Moore, "Persian Administrative Process," esp. 54n30 for reference to this ostracon.

### *ʾAḥûṭab: Dry Goods and Durable Products Storage Manager*

Eleven documents are addressed to ʾAḥûṭab in addition to at least ten more that refer to her in the third person. These documents include twenty-one other distinct individuals, all of whom are male. In a previous study, which has remained in publication limbo for years but has been available online,[16] I identified ʾAḥûṭab as the manager of ration distribution. The missives addressed to her certainly support this claim, as evidenced by the technical term for "food ration" (Aram. MʾKL) in at least two sources (CG nos. 78 and 255).[17] In other instances she appears to be the recipient of shipments (e.g., CG no. 157). The remit of her duties includes dried commodities: bread (CG nos. 78, 112, 173), grain (CG no. 228, implied), flour (*TAD* D7.8), honey (CG no. 255), leather (CG no. 228), seed (*TAD* D7.3), wool (CG no. 16), perhaps sandals (CG no. 112), or wood (CG no. 228).[18] She is also responsible for releasing an unidentified commodity called in Aramaic PKLWL (CG no. 16). Of these commodities, "bread" is perhaps a circumlocution for flour, barley, or grain, as it explicitly is in *TAD* D7.8 and as it seems to also be in *TAD* D7.6, which mentions "ground" bread. In fact, the industrial kitchen recently excavated at Syene by the Swiss Institute (Area 2) provides an example of how a group's rationing system may have worked for the Judeans (see chapter 8). Of the commodities overseen by ʾAḥûṭab only salt was not part of the Judean's own lines of production; ʾAḥûṭab must purchase it for the community, then disburse it (CG no. 169).

Before the complete publication of the French-held ostraca, ʾAḥûṭab was seen as the humble wife of ʾÛryah.[19] This is based on *TAD* D7.8, which includes a surprisingly illustrative missive to ʾÛryah with a second missive to ʾAḥûṭab. While certainly this text demonstrates that ʾÛryah is part of ʾAḥûṭab's network, it is most interesting for what it reveals about ʾAḥûṭab's professional domain. She does not manage the industries associated with livestock, as does ʾÛryah. In fact, while parts of large shipments that include meat can be associated with her (CG nos. 2, 223), the surviving evidence does not attest to her managing fish, duck, or meat distributions; nor dairy, such as milk, sour milk, or cheese; nor alcoholic rations of beer or wine. It is possible that she facilitated the shipment

16. Moore, "Social and Historical Observations."

17. See chapter 9 and discussion in *NAP* nos. 2.2.3 and 2.2.4.

18. CG no. 79 + 160 (= HL no. J11) may refer to vines and perfumes, but the context is uncertain. Stored raisins and powders would fall under ʾAḥûṭab's professional jurisdiction.

19. Grelot, *Documents*, 95. Recently Azzoni, *Private Lives of Women*, 131–33, and Lozachmeur, *La collection*, 489–90, have questioned Grelot's view but have not supplied alternative interpretations. Van der Toorn expanded the social perspective on ʾAḥûṭab but still did not identify her as an administrator (Van der Toorn, "Previously, at Elephantine," 261–62). ʾAḥûṭab is surprisingly absent in Nutkowicz, *Destins de femmes*, and I do not see as she does the texts referring to a "private" (household) economy (Nutkowicz, "Quelques aspects des échanges économiques").

of these commodities with short shelf life, but her main role was to manage the dry goods storage. In the previously mentioned CG no. 44, the dramatic writer, perhaps Mîkayah, demands that Yedanyah convey to ʾAḥûṭab that she must continue to send him "bread and water." Since bread is likely an alternative term for raw grain and the writer is exaggerating, the phrase bread and water is probably idiomatic meaning "sustenance." By looking at what ʾAḥûṭab is not responsible for, it becomes apparent that the packaging of the commodities and the storage locations of those commodities are what govern the items she manages.

Her administrative role is to serve the Judean community (i.e., the Judean troop) at the highest levels. In one ostracon she is apparently invoked by the unknown writer to check her records because a higher-level claim against a (purported) Judean needed to be confirmed (CG no. 135). An individual of Persian origin, a son of Šitrabarzana, was involved. In another frustratingly fragmentary missive to ʾAḥûṭab, CG no. 202, the writer may have ordered a list of rations, which were itemized on a document (a previously lost missive). It is unclear, but she may have denied the order, which was followed up with a silver payment that accompanied CG no. 202. If this interpretation is correct, it suggests that her position as storehouse manager included an accounting role that allowed individuals to order extra commodities at a price. It is unclear if these extra commodities were ordered by a member of the Judean community or someone outside the community. It also remains unclear whether ʾAḥûṭab handled the money, which seems like something within Yedanyah's domain. As noted above, Yedanyah most frequently dealt with the foreman Mîkayah, but one formally addressed missive from Mîkayah to ʾAḥûṭab survives (CG no. 228).[20] Surprisingly, this ostracon is a palimpsest, and the erased text was formally addressed "To Mîkayah."[21] The overwritten text reads:

CG no. 228
cc 1. From Mîkayah to ʾA[ḥûṭab (. . .)][22]
cc 2. Greetings to you (f.s.). Now, look [. . .][23]
cc 3. the large one and also the small one [. . .]

20. This is mistakenly referred to as CG no. 169 in Moore, "Social and Historical Observations." Although the addressee's name is ʾ[. . .], the addressee is referred to in the grammatical feminine in the message. The fact that Mîkayah and ʾAḥûṭab are part of the same network, that ʾAḥûṭab is mentioned frequently in the ostraca, and that ʾAḥûṭab is the only female name in the ostraca to begin with *alef* confirms that her name should be restored in CG no. 228.

21. The reading MN MYKYH is clear.

22. The address is formal but elliptical. One is inclined to add the verb ŠʾL to the end of line 1, but when the full name of ʾAḥûṭab is spelled out, there is probably not enough room.

23. Probably only one word missing, such as HWŠR, "send."

cc 4. It must not be sifted from them. Indeed([. . .])[24]
cc 5. there is not much.
cv 1. [. . .]them. Look at the wood, which
cv 2. I[ sent] to you (f.s.) in the hand of Pamun. Give (f.s.)
cv 3. [to Petô]sirî. Moreover, seek (f.s.) the leather
cv 4. [. . .] I said to you (f.s.), indeed, (it is in) your (f.s.) authority/possession.
cv 5. It must not go missing!

The two of them are also found on CG no. 214, which is addressed to Mîkayah but mentions ʾAḥûṭab in the context of "(the) troop."[25] The direct back-and-forth exchange between Mîkayah and ʾAḥûṭab over matters of responsibility and labor (in addition to commodities) is striking. It is clear that she plays a senior role in the temple administration. In fact, the reference to ʾAḥûṭab and ḤNKʾ, which may mean "the Hanukkah ceremony" (CG no. 50), leaves one speculating whether the priests had to gain approval for grain offerings from her and her stores before performing ceremonies.[26] In turn, as with CG no. 228, in which ʾAḥûṭab conveys instructions to one Petôsirî, she most often appears to be in charge of the courier Natan (e.g., *TAD* D7.4). In this way, she is involved in matters of labor, likely because rationing overlaps with labor. Therefore, she is privy to the compensation owed to individuals (e.g., perhaps CG no. X19).[27] Ultimately, she serves as the community "mother" (*TAD* D7.6) and may be referred to simply with this title rather than by name (CG no. 203).[28] As discussed in chapter 6, "mother" need not be construed as a biological statement; it is more likely an identifier of a female community leader.

24. It is likely that no words are missing.

25. Lozachmeur, *La collection*, read originally line cc 2 as ḤY L[YHH], "by the life of Yahô" (i.e., paraphrastically, "God damn it"), following the vulgar idiom found elsewhere in the ostraca, but there is no space between ḤY and L. I believe ḤYL(ʾ ZY) YHWDYʾ, "the troop of Judeans," is a better reconstruction, especially given the roles of and apparent formal relationship between Mîkayah and ʾAḥûṭab.

26. Admittedly, the context is broken, though the reading ḤNKʾ is clear. If this is not the Hanukkah ceremony, then it might be an idiom for hunger with the root meaning "palate" (see CAL, n.m ./f. "ḥnk, ḥnkʾ").

27. While CG no. X19 seems to make mention of the "children of" (LBNY[. . .]), the normal word used for child in the context of ʾAḥûṭab is YNQ. Here, LBNY looks more like the Aramaic classification of administrative personnel such as the BNY ʾṢRʾ, "sons of the treasury." Note the proposed "Son of the S(cribes)" in the Judean Hebrew epigraphs from Babylonia and the evidence marshaled in the argument of that text (Moore, "Aramaic and Hebrew Epigraphs"; Moore, "Traces of Administrative Reform"). The very fragmentary CG no. X19 is likely addressed to ʾAḥûṭab because the syntax "PN. Now" is most often in the form "Greetings, PN. Now."

28. Additionally, CG no. 21 may refer to her alongside the female temple oblate (Aram. LḤNH), though this word, which in context is determined (LḤNTʾ) could also mean "as the gift," a circumlocution for a "temple tax." Later in the text, however, "your (m.p.) mother" is found.

### *Natan: Head Courier*

References to Natan are by far more numerous than to anybody else. He appears 33 times in the ostraca missives in 31 distinct documents; 21 of them are directly addressed to him (table 11).[29] His immediate network includes 31 distinct persons, including his potential father, Gemaryah (*TAD* D7.20). Of his 33 appearances, he occurs with ʾAḥûṭab on 5 ostraca, and from these ostraca their immediate shared network of 10 individuals can be reconstructed: Yedanyah (CG nos. 44, 255), Malkyah (CG no. 255), Hûmî/Hûmaya (CG no. 255), ʾEspemet son of Tabaʾ (CG no. 255), Yislaḥ (CG no. 157), Mešullam (CG no. 157), ʾAḥnû (CG no. 233), Psamšek son of Harsîsî (CG no. 223), and Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah (CG no. 233). Natan occurs 6 times with Yedanyah and their shared immediate network includes a small circle of 10 individuals: Mîkayah (*TAD* D7.20; CG no. 255), Hûmî/Hûmaya (CG no. 255), ʾAḥûṭab (CG nos. 44, 223, 255), ʾAḥnû (CG no. 233), Maḥseyah son of Yedanyah (CG no. 233), Psamšek son of Harsîsî (CG no. 223), ʾEspemet son of Tabaʾ (CG no. 255), Gemaryah (*TAD* D7.20), Hôdawyah (*TAD* D7.20), and Malkyah (CG no. 255).

Despite the seemingly pejorative way in which the foreman Mîkayah refers to Natan (CG no. 44 see above), he is a vital part of the core administrative team. He is entrusted with not only securing the shipments to and from the island but also handling the exchange of valuable shipments, including large loads of silver (e.g., CG no. 4, perhaps CG no. 57 + 99 [= HL no. J3]). In one case he is required to settle accounts with the silver (CG no. 64 + 227 [= HL no. J4]). Generally, he oversees the transport of goods in ʾAḥûṭab's domain, such as barley (CG no. 14; CG no. 64 + 227 [= HL no. J4]; CG no. 84 + 88 [= HL no. J5]),[30] grain (CG no. 57 + 99 [= HL no. J3]), PKLWL (CG no. 53), salt (*TAD* D7.28), skin/hide (CG no. 57 + 99 [= HL no. J3]), possibly malt (CG no. 84 + 88 [= HL no. J5]), and wood (CG no. 57 + 99 [= HL no. J3], CG nos. 81, 127, 154, 223).[31] Furthermore, standardized types of shipments are identified only by their

29. If reconstructing his name at the beginning of the first line in CG no. 154 is correct, then Gemaryah son of Qylh, found on line cc 2, might be his father, but this is pure speculation since Gemaryah is a rather common name in the corpus. If his name is correctly restored on CG no. 97, then one named Hôšeʿa belongs to Natan's network. The nature of the broken content is surprisingly different from other ostraca associated with Natan; it refers to the ʿLYM-status, something called in Aramaic QLYT (see Lozachmeur, *La collection*, no. 97; Gzella, Review, 471). Some documents mentioning Natan are too fragmentary to glean information, such as CG no. 48 and *TAD* D7.4. One of the more frustrating is CG no. 200, which contains references to fasting, interrogation, and "crushing" a house (for the latter, see Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," 50–51).

30. The use of "bread" for "grain" is discussed above. Natan delivers "bread" in CG no. 60 and CG no. 154.

31. Some commodities cannot be completely identified due to lacuna or effaced texts, for example, CG no. 84 + 88 (= HL no. J5) cc 6: oi[l]/leath[er]/sand[als](?).

packaging. The closely related Aramaic terms for containers QPT or QPYR (chapter 8) are often mentioned without qualification (CG nos. 45, 60), while the Aramaic term MʾSRH, "package," may be once qualified (CG no. 57 + 99 [= HL no. J3]) as containing wood[32] and is twice found in broken contexts (*TAD* D7.28; CG no. 157).[33] Sometimes the most general term "vessel" (Aram. MʾN) is used (CG no. 223 and, if the text is correctly assigned to Natan, CG no. 235).

Natan's work extends beyond the core administrative network to commodity domains that are outside of the labor and dry goods storage that ʾAḥûṭab oversees. For instance, he works with the accountant of animal husbandry, ʾÛryah, apparently transporting garments and animals for temple sacrifices (CG no. 17) in addition to meat (CG nos. 223, 247). He transports sour milk (CG no. 45) and (cured) fish (CG nos. 81, 164). Unusual objects are found on ostraca sent to or associated with Natan, such as perhaps a net (CG no. 53), special types of storage vessels (Aram. NʿBṢ, CG no. 53; Aram. ʿR[Y], CG no. 57 + 99 [= HL no. J3]), and pomegranate(-shaped containers) (CG no. 71).[34] If his name is correctly restored on CG no. 235 cc 3, then a pick(axe) was related to one of his shipments. In CG no. 157, a missive addressed to ʾAḥûṭab, Natan is requested to ship an item, which is lost in the break but described as flattened or hammered. Who knows what it may be?

He deposits shipments into facilities, that is, "houses" (HL no. J1). As courier he is a trusted official and, therefore, understands the security features of the transport industry, particularly keeping careful documentation and verifying sealed goods (CG nos. 60, 71, 164). It is no surprise then that in a fragmentary context the term ḤYṬ, which I have argued elsewhere is borrowed from Babylonian, meaning "to inspect," is found on an ostracon associated with him (CG no. X14).[35]

His role as courier forces him to interact with the greater administrative infrastructure of Elephantine and Syene. On two occasions he plays an

32. While it is possible to read [MʾS]RH ZY ʿQN, "a [pack]age of wood," we cannot rule out something like [Šʾ]RH ZY ʿQN, "the [rem]aining wood."

33. For further discussion of packaging, see chapter 8 and Moore, "Farm to Table Approach."

34. The word used here is simply pomegranates (Aram. RMNN pl.), but the quantity "2," without measurement, is curious. The document concerns leather, a labor intensive and therefore expensive commodity, and something sealed. This is not a typical shipment but a valuable and specialized shipment. Pomegranates are not part of the ordinary rationing system; therefore, one would expect a measure for pomegranates here, which syntactically would sit between the commodity and number. Pomegranates were cultivated in ancient Egypt (Murray, "Fruits, Vegetables," 624–25), but to my knowledge no archaeological evidence for them has been found at Persian-period Syene or Elephantine. As noted in Mary Anne Murray's study of them, many artifacts are shaped after the pomegranate, including vessels ("Fruits, Vegetables," 625). Pomegranate-shaped vessels were long known in Egypt, such as the one famously found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, and the Phoenicians appear to have circulated similar vessels around the Mediterranean into the Persian period, such as Moyta MC.16.5046/1 (see Spagnoli and Nigro, "Pomegranate," esp. the figures).

35. See Moore and Becking, "Note on the Translation of Ezra 4:12."

accounting role as purchaser of commodities for the community while he is in transit (CG no. 45; perhaps CG no. 64 + 227 [= HL no. J4]). Most specifically the ferry system and perhaps any land transporters necessary to move the shipments are under his supervision. He certainly is not carrying most of these loads himself by hand. Lesser known couriers were sent to him with documentation (CG no. 36), so it is possible that he oversees a larger team. In fact, in CG no. 223 he appears to be managing other couriers coming to him, in particular one named ʾAḥnô, as well as accounting for distributions of barley for the writer, who grants part of his ration delivery to one with the Egyptian name Psamšek son of Harsîsî. His team may also be responsible for collecting from specialized laborers their dues to the temple administration. CG no. 36, for instance, refers to the writer's confirmation of a shipment sent to him—rather than couriered by him—followed by a promissory note that the writer will still deliver leather. It is possible that these are records written later in Natan's career, after he took on a bookkeeping role, perhaps replacing ʾAḥûṭab, as she either became elderly or incapacitated. He still nonetheless reports to her (CG no. 223) in the expected custom of those holding scribal positions.[36] But because the ostraca cannot be firmly dated in a relative chronology, this explanation remains tentative.[37]

The ferry system, which Natan uses to transport goods, appears to remain under the operation of native Egyptians, judging from the names of the boatmen mentioned in the corpus. The ferry system likely extended to a larger labor network of loaders and transporters, who may have also been native Egyptians. It is, therefore, no surprise that Natan's network includes a number of Egyptian-named individuals: Teṭôsirî (CG no. 14), ʾEspemet (CG no. 81; CG no. 203 (= HL no. J12); CG no. 255), Psamšek son of Harsîsî (CG no. 233), Peṭemnapî (CG no. 9 + 23 [= HL no. J1]), Ḥarûḏ (CG no. 9 + 23 [= HL no. J1]), Ḥaraḥebê (CG no. 89), ʾEsḥnum (CG no. 235, if Natan is correctly restored), and Paḥî (CG no. 17).[38] Although, Natan is clearly a Judean working for the Yahô temple's administration, in at least one source he appears to engage with the Khnum temple's administration (HL no. J12).

As a courier for the Judean community, he likely supplies even those Judeans serving their *ilku*-tax labor obligation in the state troops. This may be why CG no. 53 makes mention of an otherwise unknown troop (Aram. ḤYL) and CG no. 127 of a DGL-unit, though admittedly both contexts are fragmentary. That said, CG no. 255 (studied above) clearly refers to both state-sponsored salaries (Aram. PRS) and food rations (Aram. MʾKL) in Natan's care, within the larger

36. Scribes associated with the state are not expected to retire but rather to die in their posts (see Moore, *Literary Depictions*, 57–64).

37. This would also explain the fragmentary sources CG nos. 97 and 200.

38. Note other individuals associated with Natan whose names are not yet identified: Ḥnyš, Kʿ, and Snʾwh, if these are in fact names, CG no. 53.

context of ʿLYM-status (see chapter 4). In his missive to the foreman Mîkayah, Natan insists that Mîkayah come to the island where a beer ration/wage is waiting for him (*TAD* D7.20).

As courier, it makes sense that the majority of the missives are addressed to Natan. He is by far the most dynamic character, trusted by many, suspicious to some, and working on the daily regular shipments in transit for the community. On occasion he is involved in state shipments or in those intended for the Khnum temple's administration. There is reason to suspect that over the years he grew in influence and ultimately moved into the managerial domain of ʾAḥûṭab.

## Key Players in the Core Administrators' Extended Network

The ostraca refer to a few key players outside the core network of administrators. Understanding the roles of these players helps fill out the larger picture of the Judean community's administrative activity.

### *ʾÛryah: Accountant of Animal Husbandry*

The ostraca refer to ʾÛryah in only five documents. He is associated with sheep, particularly wool (*TAD* D7.8), garments (*TAD* D7.18; CG no. 17), and even sacrifices (CG no. 17). His administrative domain, then, can be established as the administrator of animal husbandry, which oversees, or at least keeps accounting for, the sheep of herdsmen and textile commodities. From *TAD* D7.18 in particular one may surmise that he also oversees the temple's industry of garment care, those who launder or mend garments for others. It is unclear where the garment industry was centered, but due to the limited number of ostraca referring to ʾÛryah and the evidence from CG no. 70, a missive to Mîkayah from a tailor Giddel/Gaddul who works off island, one may postulate the temple's textile facility was off island. Since there is not enough room on island to keep herds or the facilities for large scale wool processing or slaughtering, much of his administrative focus is likely off island. This explains the lack of data referring to his administrative domain as an accountant of animal husbandry.

### *Malkyah: The Arbitrator*

A player of significant social status in the ostraca is Malkyah.[39] While he interacts with the core team, his role exists outside of their normal operations, and all

39. It is possible that Malkyah son of Neferpasʿi in CG no. 215 is the same figure. He is affiliated here with ʾAḥnû, who is a courier and part of the core team's network (CG no. 223).

the ostraca mentioning him convey an official and serious tone. He is clearly an important figure, who is involved in the highest levels of interactions between the state and the Judean community. He appears to reside in Syene (*TAD* D7.9, D7.13); no ostraca found on Elephantine are addressed to him. He interacts with Persians in one of the few ostraca in which the social term "lord" is found (CG no. 147) and appears to be involved in adjudicating proceedings (with Yedanyah in *TAD* D7.13). In another fragmentary source a quotation is followed by "what is evil," and it seems that Malkyah is serving a judicial role here as well (CG no. 65). In CG no. 46 he appears with reference to "agitators," and one gets the sense that he has been consulted to arbitrate a dispute. In CG no. 265 he orders or oversees one Maʿûzyah in the act of swearing, which was a judicial procedure. His name is found on an ostracon concerning matters of a DGL-unit (CG no. 179). Most interestingly, this source concerns a matter of "favor" (Aram. √RḤM, "to love"), which can be understood as official jargon, and a decree/order, which has been shown to be a formal judicial document.[40] He is even perhaps involved in high-level decision making for the community (CG no. 163).[41] Apart from a complex shipment that includes the perishable goods of cheese and cucumbers (CG no. 115), he is associated with relatively rare items (see CG no. 265); and a curious ostracon connects him with temple libations (*TAD* D7.9). In short, Malkyah is an intriguing figure and a link between the temple administration, community life, and the state.

### *Yigdol/Yigdal*

The core team makes reference to one by the name of Yigdal/Yigdol, which was a relatively common name in the community. Assuming the individuals mentioned in the missives are the same, the Yigdal/Yigdol whom the core team knows is privy to administrative workings but seemingly distant from the domains of administration that are mostly of concern in the ostraca. In both texts where he appears with core team members, we find explicit references to documents. In the first of these, CG no. 9+ 23 (= HL no. J1), he is either "administrating" or receiving an administrative command (Aram. √PQD). In the other, *TAD* D7.1, he appears in the context of traveling and delivering messages, followed by a second correspondence to Yedanyah concerning "your lord," documents, and cups. He is clearly an administrative scribal character. Assuming he is the same person found in *TAD* D7.29, he is the trusted accountant responsible for escorting the silver for the Marzeaḥ. As I have noted elsewhere, the silver

40. See Moore, "Persian Administrative Process," 52.

41. This very broken text reads either ḤYLʾ, "troop, community," or YDLH, "Yidleh," on the line following Malkyah's name.

here may refer to silverware that was used in a temple ceremony, then some of it was taxed and collected by the state.[42] He may also be the Yigdal son of Psamî found on the name list CG no. 143. All these individuals by the same name appear to be figures of high status in the sources. Hopefully, as research develops, we can better place figures like Yigdal/Yigdol, who are clearly important, but whose exact role eludes description.

### *Yislaḥ*

Yislaḥ appears to be a member of the core team's extended network. He is a courier who works with Natan, according to CG no. 157. Although the name Yislaḥ is common, one wonders whether he is the son of Gaddul found on the sherd label *TAD* D9.6. Whether this is the same Gaddul who mends garments at an off-island textile facility is unknown (CG no. 70). In CG no. 152 an angry administrator off island sends a threatening letter to Yislaḥ demanding that he meet the next day's shipment of malt before it spoils. This rings of the disdain Mîkayah has for Natan and by extension his team. In this source, it is unclear whether Yislaḥ was a negligent employee or he worked for a manager with poor social skills. Regardless, Yislaḥ is a recognizable node of the core team's extended network.

## The Egyptian Administrators

Scholars have long pondered the relationship between the Khnum temple and the Yahô temple (see Introduction). The ostraca reveal that, in fact, key administrators in the respective institutions interacted. Some shipments to the Khnum temple's personnel were managed by the Judeans, and although it may have been separate from the Khnum temple's administration, the ferry system remained under the control of Egyptian family businesses. At least some of these families owned boats that were sponsored by the state, which in turn became part of the trusted network of Judean administrators.

### *Peṭôsirî: Khnum Temple Administrative Liaison*

Peṭôsirî is a non-Judean recorded on five ostraca, who bears a good Egyptian name.[43] In *TAD* D7.39 he is the recipient of barley destined for (the temple economy of) Khnum, which was channeled through the Aramaic administration.

42. Moore, "Administering Cult," 317–19.
43. For the Egyptian name P3-dj-Wsir, see Vittmann, "Ägyptische Onomastik," 101.

On the surface one would not ascribe this ostracon to a Judean dossier, if read in isolation. When read alongside of CG no. 228, however, it becomes apparent that Peṭôsirî does interact with the Judean administrators. In CG no. 228 the foreman Mîkayah instructs ʾAḥûṭab that an Egyptian courier, Pamun, was bringing her wood, which she must give to Peṭôsirî's office (lit. "house"). The data taken together suggests that the Yahô temple's core administrative team can receive and transfer shipments to the Khunm temple economy and that Peṭôsirî is the Khunm temple's representative and administrative liaison for such transactions.[44] Presumably, the two economies intersect in more complex ways, which are not entirely clear at this stage of research. In *TAD* D7.13 Peṭôsirî is Yedanyah's first point of contact in a dispute resolution over beams. From this, it can be inferred that Peṭôsirî was Yedanyah's counterpart in the Khnum temple's administration. Finally, Peṭôsirî appears in a fragmentary text that makes mention of an *ʾuppiyatu*-ration (see chapter 9). This further supports his role as an administrative liaison, not just between the Judean and Egyptian temple economies on island but also in the Persian state. To what degree the state moderated many of its Egyptian-focused ventures through the Judean temple administrative remains an open question.

### *Pamun: An Egyptian Head Courier*

Four ostraca refer to Pamun,[45] one of which presents the name as a patronymic of Peṭeḥarpeḥrat (Egy. Pꜣ-dj-Ḥr-pꜣ-ḫrd).[46] Pamun's role is that of a courier, and he functionally serves as Natan's counterpart in the Khnum temple's administration. In CG no. 42, the unknown writer states that his DGL-unit had employed Pamun's office (lit. "house") to make a legal inquiry into rope measurements, boats, and property. Two figures with Northwest Semitic names that are normally associated with the Judean community, Šillem/Šalam and Giddel/Gaddul, are named in the inquest concerning their presence in the office of one bearing the Iranian name TNKTʾ.[47] Thus, the DGL-unit appears to be a city unit

44. I have avoided ascribing known titles to the administrators in this chapter, but here it is tempting to see Peṭôsirî as the *lesonis*-priest of the Khnum temple, whose appointment was approved by the Persian authorities. The system was in place in the Khnum temple since the days of Darius, from which survives the Farandata archive.

45. In *TAD* D7.13 his name is misspelled as PWMN.

46. The name may appear on a recently deciphered Egyptian name list written in Aramaic from Elephantine, "{[Peṭḥar]pkhra[ṭ |Teṭḥar]pkhra[ṭ} son of PN]" (*NAP* no. 2.2.2 r 7′), but presumably a different individual with this name has been known from Aramaic documents excavated at Saqqara (*TAD* C3.10 r 5) and from *TAD* C3.19 r 7 (provenance unknown). The role of the figure at Elephantine is unclear, but the Pamun there is probably involved in the boat or shipment industry like his father (see *TAD* D7.13).

47. For the name, see Lozachmeur, *La collection*, 514.

that included active Judean community members about whom an inquest over boundaries was made. It seems there may have been an administrative conflict that the higher-level Persian administrators adjudicated, and the writer requests the final decision (line cv 4). It is unclear from the text if Pamun was supportive of the Judeans or the one who brought the charge. In either case, his role in the matter reveals the power of his office and an extended role of the administrative courier; the courier could be tasked with any type of remote work, in this case auditing boundaries to collect evidence for a legal dispute.

### *The Boat Operators*

The boatmen who ferried goods to and from the island were integral to the function of the Judean administrative network. All the boatmen mentioned in the sources bear Egyptian names, and at least some of them were identified as state-certified transporters. One can only imagine the contention this caused for the native Egyptians, many of whom were seeking to expel their Persian overlords. That said, state-sponsored boatmen would have had a number of advantages, not least of which was access to substantial amounts of state rations, at least according to a ration-distribution list from Saqqara (*TAD* C3.26) in which large amounts of emmer are given in ardab-measures, that is, 25–55 liters/quarts per measure (see chapter 5). To be a state-sponsored Egyptian boatman was likely a social and economic gamble.[48]

Of the boat operators attested at Elephantine, two appear frequently in the texts, ʾEspemet and Ṣeḥaʾ. ʾEspemet is the only individual ascribed the Aramaic title "the boatman" (Aram. MLḤ, CG no. 203) in the missives, and it seems—due to his presence among the Judean core administrative network—that all nine attestations of this name in the ostraca refer to the same person. That the Aramaic uses the article "the" in his title does not mean that he is the only boatman but rather that "the boatman" was a recognized office.[49] He was certainly a trusted transporter for the Judean core administration, and his title implies that even the Persian state administration recognized him as a certified transporter on behalf of the state and subsequently on behalf of the Judean colonial community of state loyalists.

48. In CG no. 149 + X3 (= HL no. J6), the unnamed sender tells the unnamed (or lost) addressee, "Go, PQD to Paôhr (Egy. Pa-whr) over the boat" (cc 1–2). The Aramaic term PQD means "to administrate," here I interpret the imperative as a D-stem meaning "to entrust administrative authority to." If this interpretation is correct, then we have the transference of a boat using administrative jargon. The implication is that the state administrators may have deputized vessels and their operators for short-term state (or state-recognized) purposes.

49. Compare SPRʾ, "the scribe," as found on the decrees.

The other frequently mentioned boat operator is Ṣeḥaʾ. It is more difficult to determine if all seven references to Ṣeḥaʾ are to the same individual. If one presumes so, then he is the son of the boat operator Ḥikertays and likely a boat operator himself.[50] Certainly, most references to him are in connection with commodity shipments. Unlike the Judean administrative roles, Egyptian ferry services appear to be family-run businesses, though reason dictates that they would have paid their taxes to the Khnum temple, likely in the form of their labor and service (see chapter 5).

Other boat operators are found in the ostraca; one text directly states that a boat has state certification: "The boat of Ḥapîû son of Peṭeḥons is gi⌜v⌝en (as) the boat of the ki⌜n⌝g" (Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 43). As a state boat owner, Ḥapîû likely received financial benefits from the state, and presumably also special rations. In fact, a Phoenician vessel label from Elephantine is ascribed to his son Ḥormaḥî, who in turn may be associated with ʾEspemet and the Judean transport network.[51] The boat of Pmhn is attested on *TAD* D7.24, which refers to Pesach (Passover) but more importantly retains a statement about interpreting a decree.[52] Pmhn may also be a state-sponsored boat operator. In fact, according to another ostracon, which has no clear association with the Judean community (CG no. 138), he transports two Persian earrings for a writer requesting them from someone with the (female?) Egyptian name Teṭepsakmaḥi.[53] This is either a reference to a luxurious intra-Egyptian shipment or a reference to an exchange of Egyptian and Persian-state appurtenances. Additionally, the boat of Parnaḥ is associated with Yedanyah's network (CG no. X9). He is further found transporting fish and perhaps the items associated with an *iškaru*-tax (CG no. 62), and he too may be state sponsored, at least on a contractual basis as the *iškaru*-tax suggests (see chapter 9).

Three boat operators are named in the dispute found in *TAD* D7.13, the boat of Menḥnum, the boat of Š◦[. . .], and the boat of Ḥikertays, and apart from the connection to the family of Ṣeḥaʾ, there is no indication that these are state-sponsored boats.[54] According to *TAD* A6.2, there is no reason to assume that the state sponsored a business's or family's fleet of boats rather than individual boats, which were inspected and repaired by state-monitored personnel and funds.

50. Alternatively, Ṣeḥaʾ may be a courier, like Pamun, since no surviving text refers to a boat of Ṣeḥaʾ. It is also possible that a family of Egyptian boatmen—Ḥikertays is Egyptian Ḥkꜣ-l.lr-dj-s (see Vittmann, "Ägyptische Onomastik," 103)—may overlap with the role of courier, thereby extending their transporting service beyond the boat.

51. See CG no. 121. The name preceding Ḥormaḥî is possibly restored as ʾEspemet, as André Dupont-Sommer (followed by Lozachmeur in *La collection*, 275) proposed.

52. Moore, "Persian Administrative Process," 53–54.

53. For the term, see *NAP*, p. 68n40.

54. *TAD* also restores "[boa]t of Ḥartboʾ," but the reading is uncertain.

## The Location of the Temple Administrators

The social network of Judean temple and community administration outlined in this chapter is a complex system. There is no evidence that the roles of the administrators are dynastic. While nepotism may be at play in hiring practices, such as the presence of Yedanyah's son Maḥseyah in CG no. 233, there is no evidence that a single biological family controls the temple administration. Instead, they form an administrative family and, like the scribal culture in which they were trained, use familial terminology to refer to each other and other Judeans in the administrative system.

Families need homes, and administrators need offices. The island of Elephantine has finite physical space, and the Judean temple's real estate had to compete with that of the Khnum temple's complex and administration. It appears that only the essentials of the food-rationing system and wooden building supplies, such as beams (*TAD* D7.13) or cedar (CG no. 118), were stored on island. It is reasonable to assume that larger secure facilities existed off island as well, and the order missives to the island's administrators should, at times, be interpreted as a request for a written statement allowing the release of commodities from a facility off island. That said, the island is an ideally secure location for storage, and the many references to transporting commodities by boat suggest that the main storage facilities for food were on island. It is no surprise that little archaeological evidence of the island's Persian-period storage facilities survives because later developers and building projects frequently dismantled and reused material from the site rather than built over existing strata with newly ferried materials. In fact, it is rather astonishing that some Persian-period loci do survive, and even more so that one of them revealed a government-marked storage facility of mostly Phoenician imports, house *k* = Haus G.[55] According to the archaeological evidence, smaller buildings surrounding the temple—which was housed in a courtyard—could have served as administrative offices, but this will never be known for sure.[56]

55. For discussion of this locus, see *NAP*, pp. 7–9, and Schütze, "Aramaic Papyri and Ostraca."

56. Von Pilgrim, "Textzeugnis und archäologischer Befund," 486, originally used the schematic of Porten, which was developed solely from the property-boundary statements found in the contractual evidence, and mapped it on to the surviving "homes" surrounding the temple. The government mark on Haus G, purportedly the house of Gaddul, seriously complicates this finding (von Pilgrim in Dreyer et al., "28./29./30. Grabungsbericht," 192–95). The problem may lie in, firstly, the highly technical language of the Aramaic documents, in which directional terminology is not readily clear, and secondly, the diachronic developments of the construction and renovations that took place throughout the fifth century BCE—developments that cannot be traced easily in the archaeological data but are alluded to in the contracts. While I do not propose a correction to the current model, I recommend deeper exploration into the personas in the sources, their roles, and whether the archaeological data is consistent with such findings.

In addition to storage facilities, one expects to find administrative offices. These could have been small rooms in the Judean temple complex, perhaps even overseeing its courtyard, but since the building was dismantled in the fourth century BCE during the Khnum temple's extension project and much of its footprint has eroded off the side of a cliff, there's no hope of confirming this. Wherever the offices were, there is reason to believe that they were clustered together or perhaps even shared. They appear to have been accessible to those administrators whose work was predominately managed off island. For example, the *TAD* D7.8 places ʾÛryah, who, as I concluded above, was based off island, in the same or neighboring office space as ʾAḥûṭab, while he was on island.[57]

## Conclusions

The sociological data mined from the ostraca missives provides a complex picture of the key players and their immediate professional network. The evidence indicates that their role was to manage labor and supplies for the state-sponsored dependency system. The pragmatics of this system of distribution is in focus in the next chapter.

Neither this chapter nor this larger study will explore in detail the relationship between the colonial temple administrators and the references to the state financial institutions on island, such as the king's treasury. The documents provide no clear connection between this enigmatic institution and the Yahô temple's administration. In fact, it remains a mystery as to why no identifiable state personnel associated with the treasury are mentioned, even in passing, in the surviving corpus.

57. With caution, one may consider the undatable and literary account of Baruch using the Jerusalem temple's scribal chamber, which was otherwise under the control of the Shaphan family (Jer 36). There is little reason to challenge this story's historical allusion—at least on this point (see Moore, *Literary Depictions*, 102–4).

CHAPTER 8

# Local and Imperial Dynamics of the Production Process and Use of Commodities

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER ESTABLISHED the major players involved in the administration of the Judean community and the professional roles they held. Those roles centered on the management of either labor or product. As noted in chapter 5, the surviving lists bear witness to the organization's taxable persons or labor teams deserving of product rations. The two types of lists are related in that one accounts for institutional income (taxation) and the other for expenses (salaries or rations paid to laborers). While taxation payments and renumeration for labor could occur in the form of currency such as silver, most often state- and community-level expenditures were made as rations. Rationing relied on administrators organizing a complex system of production, shipment, storage, and distribution. While the previous chapter focused on the social structure of that system, this chapter will explore the processes of production and use of commodities that the administrators managed.

I modeled the concepts for this chapter in a previous case study in which I attempted a "farm to table" approach that sought to explain the so-called *chaîne opératoire* of the life of a fresh-produce commodity (Aram. QṬYN) from its farming and harvesting to its shipping, storage, and distribution. Rather than detailing the life of each commodity, which would entail a monograph in itself, this chapter surveys the various domains of commodities by tracing their textual attestations through, mostly, the ostraca corpus. First, I will extend the discussion from the previous chapter into a larger framework of the landholdings system as it functions within the institutional structure of the Egyptian province, as I proposed in the thesis of this book. This is followed by a survey of the major commodities that the temple personnel managed. Due merely to the statistically higher number of occurrences of terms, it can be deduced that the temple managed basic ration distribution to the labor teams in its charge in addition to a few luxury items that higher-level staff received. This cannot be a comprehensive discussion of all commodities; instead, the focus will be on those that occur most frequently. Going beyond the survival rations of foodstuffs and firewood, the data makes surprisingly many and detailed references to the textile industry,

as I mentioned in the previous chapter. In this chapter the investigation into the products mentioned in the ostraca that refer to clothing or fabrics will lead to the argument that the Judean temple, as a colonial venture, was partially responsible for promoting a cultural revolution in fashion to which even the archaeological record attests.

## Land: Judeans and the Fort System

In the introduction to this study, I postulated that five institutional levels of administration, which were based on landholdings, existed in the Egyptian province. I propose that the Judean community at Elephantine/Syene existed as a recognized entity between the imperial administration, in particular the district's fort system, and the native population's temple center. Unfortunately, little survives that would explain how the Judeans came to possess the farm and pasture lands supporting their community. Clearly Elephantine and Syene were densely populated before the Persian occupation. How the Persians came to delimit state land remains unknown, but there are two favorable options, which are not mutually exclusive. First, the Persians found some uncultivated but arable land within a day's journey from Elephantine that was manipulated by Persian labor forces into farmable land and pastures and then given to the Judeans. The rough topographical landscape north of Elephantine/Syene does not favor cultivated fields, nor do the steep slopes on the western bank of the Nile directly across from Elephantine. The most suitable area was the small valley that makes up Syene; however, as the excavations show, the fort's walls extended to the edge of the valley's hilly terrain. By elimination, the most suitable location for the Judean farmland was north, along the western banks of the Nile, where farmlands exist to this day. Presuming some of this northern land along the banks was uncultivated during the Persian conquest, its conversion would have required a large labor and resource investment in landscaping and irrigation funded by the Persian state. The process would have occurred over time, and as the land became available and expanded, one expects to see a population increase and with it further investment in institutions responsible for the land.

The second option is that the Persians took arable land from the Egyptians and gave it to the Judeans. Recent research has shown that the Persians did this in the Babylonian province in the city of Ur. Olga V. Popova has observed that bow lands (Akk. *qaštu*), which is a name for farmable land plots granted to communities of state dependents, were in some cases created from newly allocated poor-quality land—as Michael Jursa had previously proposed—but that the Persians also took eminent domain over some of the temple of Sîn's

prebendary lands and redistributed them as bow lands under the crown's supervision.[1] Remarkably, evidence for this type of control is also found in the rural texts from Šaṭir, neighboring al-Yahudu (see DUBSAR 31, pp. 56–66, 111–16). The degree to which the Persians were able to confiscate native temple property was likely owed to the complex reach the Persians extended into the larger temple economies of native providential populations, like the one of Ur. As we know from Sippar, Karnak, and Elephantine, the Persians took administrative control over the large temple economies in both the province of Babylonia and in Egypt. The Mesopotamian evidence makes it clear that state-held shares in the temple economies were managed through the temple's prebendary systems but overseen by the state's appointed official, the *qīpu*.[2]

Both models of land acquisition and redistribution were likely followed, at Elephantine. The Khnum temple economy continued, and like at Ur, it appears that through eminent domain the state took land from the Egyptians and redistributed it to colonial settlements. That land was likely then landscaped by Persian-organized labor into state-of-the-art irrigated plots that could support imported produce.[3] This process of land reallocation explains why the Judean temple and its storage facilities are located so close to the Khnum complex. Furthermore, as described in the last chapter, it seems that, at times, the Yahô temple oversaw the state's investments in the Khnum temple. Administratively, the Persians favored its colonial Yahô temple over the native Khnum temple. This favoritism was the ultimate reason for the attacks by the Khnum temple's priestly administrators on the Yahô temple's facilities at the end of the fifth century BCE—an attack that was supported at the fort level by a colonial commander who had "gone native." He was in turn rebuffed by the royal estates for his actions against the colonial Yahô temple economy.

The Yahô temple's land was necessary for the commodity production that sustained the Judean community's responsibility to support its labor teams. The surviving documentation, particularly the majority of the ostraca, refers to practical administration, and the circumstances of these practical matters can be deduced by reasonable inference. Most of the commodities referenced are foodstuff, particularly farmed products and some products of animal husbandry.

1. Popova, "Taxation in Neo-Babylonian Ur," 241–42, with reference to Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History*, 405–18. It is noteworthy that this was one of the state's administrative operations. The owners of the temple prebends remained the same, and the property was still referred to as the *makkūr Sîn*, "property of Sîn." At this stage, the state began to encroach on the temple's earnings by co-opting property as bow lands and levying the typical state *ilku*-labor tax as an additional burden on the prebend. Popova's dataset focuses on the Gallābu family, who as urban elites never worked the lands themselves but hired replacements even for the *ilku*-labor tax's service obligations.

2. Wunsch, "Temple Economy," 983–84.

3. Moore, "Farm to Table Approach."

The obvious deduction is that off island, from where the ostraca were sent, sit swaths of cultivated land and pastures supporting herds. There is no room on island for, nor does its topography support, large-scale cultivation or animal husbandry to the size necessary to support the Judean community.

From the ostraca, one can deduce that the Judeans' landholdings were on the mainland and not far from the docks of transport ships that supplied Elephantine. The courier system, which Natan managed, operated daily, as indicated by the ostraca's references to "yesterday," "today," and "tomorrow." This system required close proximity between the temple and the mainland's farms and facilities, where accounting, rationing, and distribution occurred. The distance from farmable land, presumably northwest of the island, to Elephantine by boat must have been no longer than half a day's journey, and it should be remembered that boats loaded with cargo would be sailing, paddling, or punting upstream.[4] Additionally, the temple's labor and industrial centers where the community's other operations took place, notably the animal processing or garment facilities managed by ʾÛryah, must have also been within a day's journey of the river's docks. Though those facilities need not have been located in the farmlands, I presume they were. I do not reject the notion of a single and large multipurpose Judean administrative facility, but in lieu of archaeological evidence, it is analytically valuable to keep these administrative domains separate because they were managed separately. The herding territories could have existed farther away from the temple's processing facilities or even in the eastern or southern hills outside Fort Syene's walls. Regardless, the community's resources, at least their off-island processing centers, were close to the island. It must be remembered that the Hermopolis papyri refer to similar recognized colonial communities off island, such as the temple economy of Nabu or that of Bethel and his consort. In order to support all these communities and their needs, the Persian administration must have developed a highly organized network of labor to maintain an irrigation system and to keep track of herds.

## The Commodities

The corpus of ostraca from Elephantine and Syene contains references to various types of resources such as foodstuffs and farming items, building or

4. Henry Colburn has taught me that the prevailing winds are from the north—so too Herodotus 2.96—and sailing upstream would not be difficult (personal communication). While sailing seems possible for the larger ships, such as the Carian vessel in *TAD* A6.2, and perhaps aided by punting in the low season, the daily cargo loads appear to be roughly a modern palate or two in size and could be traveling east and westward from Syene to Elephantine. Ropes for small barges to make the crossing are also a feasible strategy.

precious materials and tools, garments, vessels and containers, in addition to other things.[5] As was argued in the previous chapter, administrators managed professional domains. Each domain consisted of various resources that were organized in more or less pragmatic terms based on their modes of production, collection, packaging, and storage. Storage is the most prominent feature of organization, though direct references to the facilities are hardly extant. One must postulate different types of storage facilities for the different products, but these may be divided into two general types of storage: dry and durable goods and perishable goods. Other types of storage must have existed. For instance, it is unclear where rare or valuable items were stored, such as silver and gold, though reason dictates the elusive state treasuries would have been a good candidate for storing these items. Large building materials, even if they were allocated to the Judean community, were likely stored and monitored by fort-level administrators in currently unidentified storage yards.

In terms of the number of occurrences, it is no surprise that dry grain products make up the majority of the attestations of commodities in the ostraca. Second to these are cucumbers/melons and fish. References to beverages are limited to either water or a beer malt starter, and there are some rare mentions of wine. One may conclude from this data that those Judeans eligible for basic rations from their own community stores received these items: bread, fish, cucumbers/melons, and water or malt. Managed by the same personnel were durable goods associated mostly with the textile and fashion industry such as wool, linen, and various types of leather or hide.

### *Fresh Produce and Perishable Commodities*

My aforementioned "farm to table" approach attempted to use textual and archaeological data to explain the production and use of the cucumber or melon in the Judean community. I chose this subject because it was clear from Egyptian textual evidence from Elephantine that the inhabitants of Elephantine/Syene preferred to eat fresh produce, and scholars have yet to explain how fresh produce was farmed and stored. In the ostraca missives only two of the frequently mentioned commodities have been interpreted as produce: those represented by the Aramaic terms QṬYN and BQL. I will argue below that the term BQL is not produce. The term QṬYN was the focus of my study because etymologically it

5. For a concise list, see Lemaire, "Judean Identity," 366–68. The ostraca attest to (1) foodstuffs: bread (LḤM), cheese (GBNH), gourd (DLʿ), grits/groats (GRŠ), honey (DBŠ), sour milk (DWGH), vines/grapes (GPNH); (2) parts material and tools: beams (GŠWR), door (DŠ), mortar (GṢ), wheels (GLGL); (3) scribal materials: ink (DYW[H]), inkwell or palette? (DYWT BWBH); (4) unknown items: GŠYL, ṬḤ, KWK; (5) clothing and fabrics: tunic (KTWN); (6) currency: silver (KSP) and gold (ZHB); (7) packaging or vessels: package (MʾSRH).

must have referred to a type of cucumber/melon or, less likely, gourd. Despite some remains of seed discovered in modern archaeological contexts, the exact species of QṬYN cannot be determined. Nonetheless, the evidence led to two very important conclusions: First, the cultivation of the QṬYN on a scale large enough to serve as a ration distribution, which appears to have been the case, required the introduction of Persian state-sponsored irrigation at Syene.[6] The system enabled, for the first time in Egyptian history, the mass farming of a fresh produce. Previously, Egyptians had only grown vegetables in small quantities by intercropping and forming small gardens where space, water, and loamy soil were naturally accessible. The second important finding from my study of QṬYN was that the Persians must have introduced QṬYN to Egypt. Previously, it had been thought that cucumbers derived from India and were introduced to Egypt by the Ptolemies. While I could not confirm that QṬYN were cucumbers as opposed to a closely related type of melon, by elimination the textual and archaeological evidence showed that neither edible cucumbers or melons, which could be grown and consumed in mass, were present in ancient Egypt, especially not at Elephantine/Syene prior to the Persian occupation. This was not the first study to demonstrate that the Persians introduced cultivatable species to Egypt; rather, the study adds to the growing evidence for the many ways in which the Persians significantly altered ancient Egyptian culture.

A problem that I could not solve in the previous study was how fresh produce was stored in ancient Egypt. In fact, I discovered that while research on dry goods is abundant, for decades scholars have struggled to explain fresh-produce storage. QṬYN are summer crops, and storing fresh produce in the tropical summer of Syene is challenging even today. This challenge is compounded by the fact that QṬYN were shipped to the island, then redistributed, each transportation effort taking at least half a day, depending on the time and access to the ferries. The limited number of references to fresh produce in the ostraca may indicate that this was truly a seasonal ration.

Despite the challenges of studying fresh produce, the process of the production, collection, storage, and distribution of QṬYN is generally similar to that of all farmed goods. Figure 5 provides a glimpse at the complex production and use of QṬYN.

In addition to QṬYN, there are passing references to other fresh products, which in context appear to have been luxury food items that the Judeans may have occasionally stored. This includes cress, perhaps grapes in the form of "vines," a type of gourd or squash that is only referenced in seed form, and

6. The Egyptian evidence shows that the practice continued as indicated by the mention of "fresh vegetables" in fourth- or third-century BCE Demotic ration distributions (Pap Ber. P. 15504).

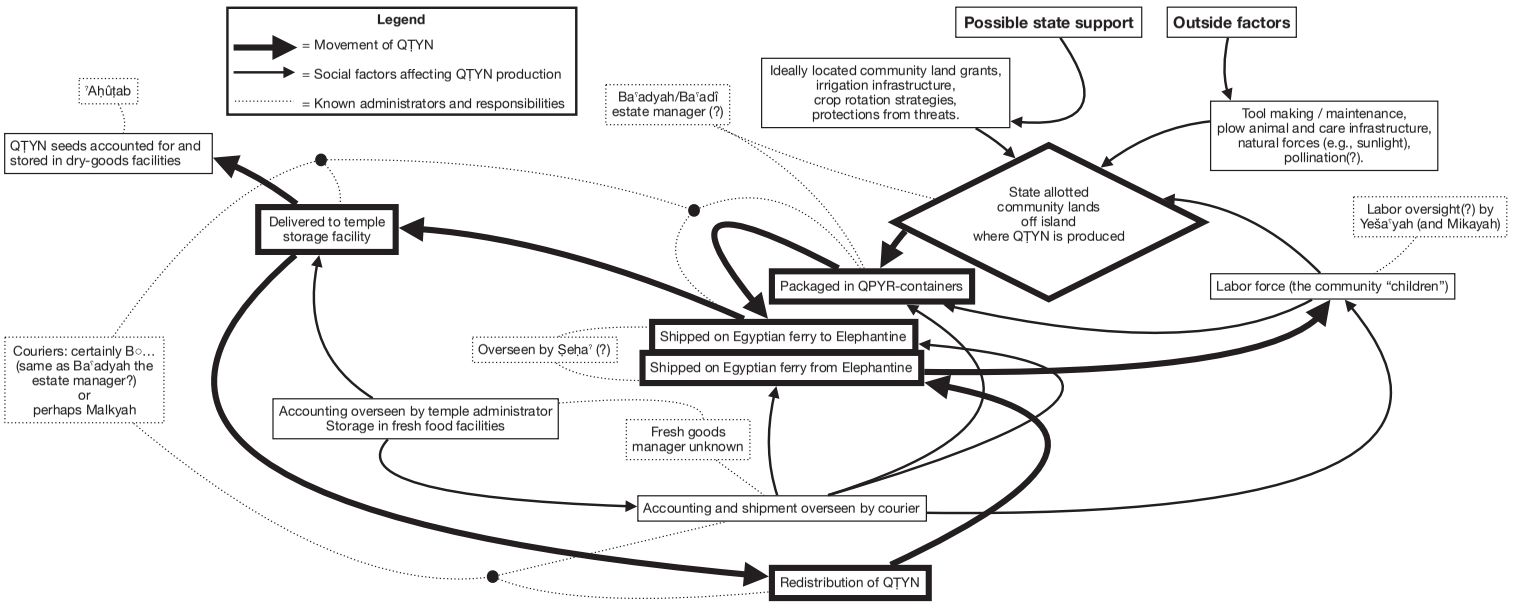



FIGURE 5. Chain of production and use of QṬYN–fresh produce.

perhaps juniper berries. Legumes were prominent in Egypt at the time, and some have translated the Aramaic term BQL as legumes.[7] But based on the vessels in which it was stored and its etymology, this commodity was likely not a form of fresh produce but rather a perishable malt (see beverages below).

A number of perishable animal goods meant for consumption are mentioned in the texts, such as cheese, milk, and sour milk. Cheese would have been shipped in containers (see QPYR and QPT below), while the others were shipped in vessels. Cheese is mentioned four times and so is "meat." Meat may have been fresh, barbecued/baked/boiled, or cured. In the first two cases, the shelf life was limited and the meat would have been shipped in vessels, but cured meat could have been functionally a dry good and stored for an extended time in sealed vessels alongside grain.

In terms of processing, meat poses a slightly different challenge than other farmed products. The meat managed by the Judean community was most likely ovine. The island of Elephantine is not large enough to maintain grazing herds, though one could conceivably keep a few goats around since they help dispose of trash and invasive plants, while possibly providing milk and easy access to a sacrificial animal when needed. In fact, the archaeological record indicates that ovine remains were found throughout the domestic quarter in every stratum.[8] That said, it must be remembered that the Judean administration was a temple administration. Like the neighboring Khnum temple, which maintained a small number of sacred goats in its complex,[9] the Yahô temple also served its community by offering animal sacrifices. It possibly also kept a small number of sheep and goat on site for this purpose. It is also conceivable that the occasional sheep or goat was shipped to the Yahô temple to be sacrificed and its meat returned to the offerer across the river. While the keeping of sheep and goats is evident throughout the domestic quarter, the ostraca indicate that temple administrators on island were responsible for the animals off island (*TAD* D7.8). Although the details of the religious life and practices of the Judeans remain little more than an object of speculation by modern scholars—despite the tomes written on the matter—it is clear that the temple offered sacrifice as a service.[10] A frustratingly fragmentary ostracon missive mentions "the sacrifice" in an otherwise mundane shipment order addressed to Natan (CG no. 17). The challenge of transporting animals is a problem that remains underinvestigated due to our

7. For the prominence of legumes in the western oasis, see Agut-Labordère and Newton, "L'économie végétale," 9–10, 42, 44–45.

8. Cornelius von Pilgrim, personal communication.

9. Delange et al., *Elephantine XXV*. See also the discussion of the Persian-period animal bones from a small domicile (Bauschicht 5, Haus AB) in Rohrmoser, *Götter, Tempel und Kult*, 94–97. It is not clear that this domicile, which yielded bovine bones, was a "Judean" domicile.

10. Moore, "Administering Cult," 313–14.

lack of knowledge concerning the exact types of ferries used to transport goods. Regardless, if the "meat" was ceremonial by some standard, the animals may have been slaughtered and the fresh meat either immediately returned or barbecued/baked/boiled as part of the ceremony and subsequently shipped within the next fourty-eight hours.

It is no surprise that the core team of administrators worked together on many shipments, even though their managerial domains had boundaries. For instance, CG no. 22 + 43 + 83 (= HL no. J2) explicitly states that cheese may be shipped inside the container of barley. In this scenario, one may speculate that Natan and his team of couriers (perhaps here ʾAḥnô [cc 2]) collected the items for the shipment from both ʾAḥûṭab and ʾÛryah, then packed and escorted the supplies to the sender.

### *Dry Foodstuffs*

In the previous chapter I concluded that for the time represented in the ostraca missives, ʾAḥûṭab was the manager of dry goods. Due to the formatting and preservation of the texts, it is safe to assume that not all commodities within her domain are known. Many can nonetheless be grouped into general categories, each of which required an administrative system of processing and use.[11]

### *Grains*

Grain crops were the main source of sustenance for ancient civilizations, and one finds six terms for grains in the Aramaic ostraca corpus (here including the ostraca lists): grain in general (5×), barley (44×, 5 of which are abbreviations), flour (13×), wheat (4–5×), emmer (4×), and grits/groats (3×).[12]

Countless publications have explored the process of farming, harvesting, and storage of grains in ancient Egypt, and this need not be reiterated in detail here. Grains were a staple of the ancient diet, and in Egypt many studies focus on the grain fields in the delta, which relied on water from a flood-based irrigation system. Unlike in the Nile Delta, however, the Nile at its first cataract near Elephantine probably required a canal and furrow system supported by shadoofs. One expects the fort troop to have monitored this system, and since the land of the colonial state dependents was ultimately secured by the empire, the fort

11. As for pulses, the term ṬLPḤ, "lentils," is found in the earliest dated contractual material, a loan of barley and lentils from 483 BCE (*TAD* B4.3 and B4.4), but is surprisingly absent in the ostraca. For the study of BQL, which is often translated as "legumes," see below.

12. Evidence of barley and emmer is known from earlier periods. See Malleson, "Preliminary Report on Archaeobotanical Studies on Elephantine," n.p.

troop was responsible for the upkeep of the irrigation system, admittedly using the taxes and labor from the locals and colonial settlers.[13]

The processes of plowing, seeding,[14] irrigating, harvesting, and separating chaff likely unfolded as expected. Apart from possible references to farm equipment in a papyrus letter (*NAP* no. 1.1.1), the textual evidence leaves one to rely on archaeological models to reconstruct the processing of grains. The documents indicate that grain was sometimes processed and delivered as flour or grits/groats, a half processed product, other times delivered as whole kernels. Flour is finely milled grain, and if the Aramaic term GRŠ means "grits," then it refers to coarsely ground grain.[15] While it is possible that the grain could have been processed on island, it is equally possible that this happened off island.[16] The account balance from Saqqara *TAD* C3.11, studied in chapter 5, refers to an account of a grinder belonging to a (female) miller (Aram. ṬḤNT). Thus, a miller was a state-recognized professional. The Aramaic root ṬḤN, meaning "to grind," appears in two broken contexts in the Elephantine ostraca corpus: CG no. 61 and *TAD* D7.37. It is possible that these refer to millers.[17]

13. No reference to the irrigation system survives in the corpus, but by comparison note the possible reference to a reservoir (*qanat*) in *ATNS* no. 55 from Saqqara and the *qanat* known from Ain Manawir.

14. From a request to ʾAḥûṭab for seed we can assume that it was stored in the same facilities as grain. The seeds in question (cucumber/melon and gourd) may have been used for planting rather than consumption (see perishable goods below). This raises the question: Were some requests for whole grain kernels also intended to be used for farming? At present this must remain an open line of inquiry.

15. The CAL only accounts for the later Aramaic term GRYS, which it translates as "spelt, groats" (n.m. "grys, grysʾ"). It seems unlikely to me that groats, that is, the whole grain with the husk removed, is meant here. *TAD* translates the term in D7.33 as groats, and similarly Lozachmeur, *La collection*, translates *sable* in CG no. 244. She misreads CG no. X7, which clearly has GRŠʾ on line cv 1. For her misreading of lines cv 3–4, see Lemaire, "Review," 183. It is noteworthy that CG no. X7 refers to both flour and GRŠ in the context of vessels.

16. One wonders whether the "wheels" mentioned in the ostraca refer to extra milling stones stored on island. As expected of the Persian-period domestic homes from the site, quern emplacements were found in most dwellings. See Krekeler, *Elephantine XXI*, pls. 6c, 7b, 9a, 9c, 10d; Krekeler in Kaiser et al., "15./16. Grabungsbericht," 173. I thank Cornelius von Pilgrim for the references.

17. CG no. 195 uses the term MŠṢBR, which is a participle from the root meaning "to spin," therefore "a spinner." The word is found in a broken context adjacent to "flour." Lozachmeur, *La collection*, translates "la farine, ayant été collecté(e)," deriving the word from the Aramaic root ṢBR. Presumably she reads this as a *šaʿfel* participle. The root ṢBR is not attested in the C-stem in Northwest Semitic, and the Š-stem is a sign of possible borrowing from Akkadian. To translate with a passive meaning as she has, however, seems unlikely. Instead read as a substantive from Akkadian Š-stem < *ṣabāru* meaning "spinner." In the context of flour, presumably this is a miller, who spins the round millstones, but since a known term for miller derives from ṬḤN, the line could refer to the flour ration assigned to a garment spinner (though see the use of fuller in CG no. X6). Note that "his flour" (CG no. 1 cv 3) or "my flour" (CG no. 140 cc 5) appear in reference to flour rations.

Once milled, the flour (or grits) was stored in vessels.[18] It seems reasonable to assume that the milling facility was near or within the off-island storage facility. Why some grain was ground but most was not remains unknown, especially since reason dictates that whole grain lasts longer than processed grain, which attracts vermin. Once the grain was placed in vessels, whether whole or milled, it was shipped to Elephantine under the care of Natan and his team. The surviving records indicate that the island became a storage facility for grains in addition to those held by the Judean community. The Persian report on a bribe, which the priests of Khnum paid to Vidranga, appears to refer to a royal granary on island (*TAD* A4.5). Aramaic YWDNʾ, "granary," is an Iranian loanword and may simply be the eastern Imperial Aramaic term for Aram. ʾṢR, "treasury."[19] It remains unclear if the Judean temple personnel, as trusted colonial staff, were (partly) responsible for the state's grain supplies.

Grain was measured in qab, which is 1/6 of a seʾah-measure and, therefore, approximately 2.5 liters. To put this in modern terms, a simple modern recipe for flatbread made from flour, yeast, water, salt, and olive oil uses about 0.07 liters of flour per six-inch serving of flatbread. Thus, one qab will produce approximately 30–35 loaves of flatbread. One qab works out to be a very meager monthly ration per person or an adequate portion for every two weeks, that is, every Sabbath in the Babylonian system.[20] Alternatively, one qab will feed for 1–2 days the small number of individuals found on many of the ostraca lists. Requests for flour at only qab-measurements could have been intended for short term consumption by groups or for individuals to last (half of) a month. The qab-measure was likely a standard-size vessel, though unfortunately, it has not been explicitly identified in the large corpus of surviving vessels.[21] That said, one wonders whether the Ṭ-vessel label, which is used for centuries throughout the Mediterranean and found at Elephantine, actually refers to milled ṬḤYN (Phoe. ṬḤWN) flour.

Natan and his team probably collected the grain vessels from the off-island storage facility, transported them by cart to the bank of the Nile, loaded them onto a state sponsored ferry—such as ʾEspemet's—then carted them to the island's storage facilities. As noted above, the ferries were always Egyptian-run, but perhaps so too were the land transporters. Natan and his team's job was simply to accompany and account for the product in transit. The frequency at

18. While there may be two references to "sacks" in the ostraca (*TAD* D7.26 and D7.43), it is not clear what was in them, or if they were used for long-term storage.

19. The report focuses on the royal granary (Aram. YWDNʾ ZY MLKʾ, *TAD* A4.5), water well, and new wall at "Fort Elephantine." While "Fort Elephantine" may be used interchangeably with mainland Syene, the mention of the wall, which is corroborated in Yedanyah's letter, suggests that the well and granary were also on island. The writer is clearly using eastern Imperial Aramaic diction, and is therefore an official inspector sent to assess the claims of the conspiracy against the Yahô temple.

20. For the different Sabbaths, see Moore, "Administering Cult," 327.

21. See Aston, *Elephantine XIX*.

which the shipments were made through state-approved channels suggests to me that the Egyptian transporters were probably not paid per trip but on a ration basis at consistent intervals. The ostraca refer to the inspection of shipments (CG nos. 109, 152), but it is unclear at which points during the shipment this occurred or if it was a regular process.

Once on island, dry goods like grain were probably stored in the same vessels they arrived in, which were placed in a facility, such as Haus G (= house *k*). There must have been a larger facility than Haus G, but no clear traces of it survive. There, ʾAḥûṭab would have taken charge of the items until orders from personnel off island were sent requesting their distribution. The distribution may have gone to specific individuals or small teams of laborers or alternatively to an industrial kitchen like that found in Syene Area 2.

### *Honey*

By the Persian period, apiculture was a well-established form of husbandry in ancient Egypt, and evidence from Tel Rehov demonstrates Northwest Semitic people in the Levant also engaged in beekeeping prior to the Persian period. It is no surprise, then, that honey is found as a commodity in the Aramaic documents from Elephantine. Two sources indicate that the Judean community kept stocks of honey, but the rarity of its attestation indicates that it was a specialty item. In CG no. 255 the foreman Mîkayah requests a "food ration of honey" from ʾAḥûṭab, and *TAD* A4.2 is clearly a papyrus business letter among the leaders of the community in which honey is mentioned in a broken context. It is unclear from where the Judeans sourced their honey. Salt is the only commodity for which there is evidence of Judeans buying stocks for the community. Could rarer attested commodities, such as honey, also have been acquired by trade, or was it sourced directly by the Judeans? To my knowledge, no beehives were excavated at Elephantine, and none have surfaced in the limited fort excavations at Syene. On a pragmatic level one would expect bee farming to occur in the farmlands.[22] If the apiary at Tel Rehov is any indication, however, then Northwest Semitic apiculture practices produced batteries of artificial hives near domestic buildings. These hives would have produced 3–5 kilograms of honey and 0.5–0.7 kilograms of wax per year per hive.[23] At Tel Rehov the batteries of hives produced honey and wax in surplus. In Egypt, a letter found at Elephantine dating to the twelfth century BCE indicates that the Elephantine priests (of Khnum) sent to Karnak bad honey, which appears to have solidified.[24]

22. Tel Rehov, with its beehives placed among the settlement, is an exception.

23. Mazar, "Iron Age Apiary," 44.

24. See Posener-Kriéger, "Letter to the Governor"; Vittmann, no. A4, in Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*.

Similarly, a Hieratic decree enshrined in stone and found at Elephantine explicitly refers to Khnum temple subjects who are practicing beekeepers.[25] From this evidence, it is clear that apiculture existed at Elephantine/Syene well before the Persian period, and there is no reason to assume it ceased. Whether the technology of beekeeping evolved between the Middle Kingdom and Persian periods at Elephantine remains unknown, but if a Saitic tomb depiction from Luxor is any indication, Egyptian beekeepers in central Egypt appear to have adopted the practice of using batteries of hives, much like those at Tel Rehov.[26] The question then is whether the Judeans produced their own honey in the Northwest Semitic tradition or acquired it from the Egyptians, who may have continued farming it into the Persian period.[27] While evidence for native commodity production, such as that of castor oil (see below), demonstrates that colonial communities did take over (part of) Egyptian-run industries, the data does not provide an answer for honey production. It can merely be stated that it was a rare commodity and likely rationed to only high-ranking personnel.[28]

### *Fats and Oils*

Fats and oils are also mentioned in the corpus, though it is unclear whether the storage facilities distinguish between edible and inedible fats and oils. Certainly some were both consumed and used. Tallow, for instance, is clearly attested in the context of the textile industry rather than in a context of edible food (CG no. 108). That said, animal items, liquids, and textile supplies do appear to be the domain of a single manager, ʾÛryah (*TAD* D7.8 [ewe and wool], D7.9 [libation], CG no. 17 [garment and animal sacrifice]). Given that both leather and wool are part of the garment industry, it makes sense that animal goods were grouped together by the administrators. But some animal products like wool or leather overlap with the shipments of dry goods that are associated with ʾAḥûṭab's domain.

Elephantine/Syene was known for its production of castor oil (Aram. TQM). It is found in orders in the Aramaic ostraca missives, the papyrus correspondences, even in later Demotic sources, such as ostracon CG no. 279. Additionally, a remarkable grave deposit of a small chest from Saqqara was inscribed in Aramaic and, therefore, comes from the Persian period. It states, "Belonging to

25. Griffith, "Abydos Decree of Seti I," 207–8.

26. Crane, *World History of Beekeeping*, 166–67, and fig. 20.4a.

27. Posener-Kriéger notes that much of the honey in the Ramesside period in the Delta derived from Palestine and Syria rather than local apiaries ("Letter to the Governor," 86).

28. Vittmann, no. A4 n. 6, in Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, notes that honey in the Ramesside period was for the king and officials.

Še?il, priest of Nabû, residing (in) the castor (groves) in Syene" (*TAD* D18.1).[29] It is clear from this evidence that a colonial community took over part of the native castor oil production, though it may not have been the Judean community. This may indicate the division of resources among the colonial communities, which were then perhaps pooled in a larger network of colonial economy. For this, however, no clear evidence otherwise survives because records would have been kept at the fort's bureau, which is lost.[30]

### *Beverages*

The Persian-period pottery assemblage from Elephantine along with the specific reports on DAI/SI Haus G (Rubensohn/Zucker house *k*) demonstrates that a large number of imported liquid-holding vessels were stored at Elephantine, but the textual evidence provides surprisingly little information about the beverages that Judeans consumed. David A. Aston published the assessment and typological study of the Persian-period pottery in 1999. It included a full spectrum of crockery and storage vessels. Although this is expected for an administrative site with domestic quarters, not much can be said about how these vessels were used, from an administrative point of view, with one notable exception. In his introduction Aston notes that the ceramic finds have corollaries mostly from Lower Egypt but also at sites of known Persian occupation, such as Ain Manawir.[31] As with other cultural aspects of daily life—such as clothing, new foods, or agricultural advancements—the pottery from Elephantine when considered in a larger perspective alludes to the cultural revolution the Persians brought to Egypt. This imperial program organized projects that homogenized the culture of Egypt. As for the pottery assemblage, it "is marked by a distinct break in the pottery repertoire."[32] It is only a robust administration that can standardize a provincial culture.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth excavation report on Elephantine, the German and Swiss teams describe the additional finds they excavated from Haus G (= house *k*). They found therein thirty-eight Egyptian vessel stoppers, all bearing the same stamp mark, some on Syria-Palestine–type vessels,[33] which are now thought to be Phoenician vessels.[34] Additional Phoenician-style vessels

29. See Agut-Labordère, "TQM 'Castor Oil.'"

30. One wonders whether the scribal exercise CG no. 277 indicates that Aramaic scribal training was offered by the Nabû temple to the Yahô administrators. Certainly, the finds from Syene indicate that scribal training did occur in Syene (Moore, *Semitica* 64).

31. Aston, *Elephantine XIX*, 213–14.

32. Aston, *Elephantine XIX*, 215.

33. Kaiser et al., "17./18. Grabungsbericht," 217. For a study on sealing practices according to only the ostraca attestations, see Lozachmeur, "La vie quotidienne."

34. Kuckertz and Nebe, *Elephantine XXII*, 192–93.

were found in the modern excavations, and as Joachim Krekeler speculates, Haus G1 was a storage facility for liquid goods from the eastern Mediterranean. He suggests wine was the primary import, though olive oil was probably also a major commodity.[35] It is possible that Phoenician vessels with Egyptian stoppers carried wine from Lower Egypt,[36] or foreign imported wine was redistributed into the Egyptian vessels when they arrived. As noted in chapter 2, Haus G1 produced the largest collection of published Phoenician texts from the Persian period. Certainly, the Ahiqar Palimpsest refers to the import of such wine, oil, and empty vessels aboard Phoenician ships. And I see no clear evidence in the archaeological or textual data that olive groves or vineyards were part of the Judean landholdings or monitored by the Yahô temple administrators.[37]

Matching the excavated vessels to the measurements in the texts remains difficult, despite the carefully recorded dimensions of the vessels.[38] This is due in part to the administrative language that does not always qualify the amount of a commodity and the fact that some of the vessels are Levantine and others Egyptian. According to a Ptolemaic-period Demotic text, wine could be stored in bek-vessels (Dem. *bꜣk*) (Pap. Phil. 30 I 6), which has been proposed to be the equivalent of five liters.[39] The same vessel holds beer in (Demotic) Pap. Ber. P. 15504 line 3. In both texts, the vessel is a specific term for a large-vessel ration allotment. In the former it holds wine for bricklayers, who receive approximately one liter of wine per day, in the latter they hold beer for the general ration recipient.[40] The Aramaic term BQ (CG nos. 121 and 125) appears to be a loanword for this vessel, and in context, it is not qualified or quantified; its standard size and purpose is assumed. The Aramaic term BQ is perhaps best understood as a "(drink-ration) vessel" in its Egyptian context.[41] In Egyptian, the term *bek* does not lend itself to a particular beverage.

35. In Kaiser et al., "17./18. Grabungsbericht," 217. Krekeler writes, "Es handelte sich demnach anscheinend um ein Lager von flüssigen Waren (Wein?) aus diesem Gebiet."

36. An observation made by Cornelius von Pilgrim, personal communication.

37. One possible reference to grapes (Aram. ʿNB[H]) is found in CG no. 42 cc 8, but it need not refer to locally sourced produce—especially since the context appears to refer to a sealed vessel—nor even to fresh grapes rather than dried raisins. Furthermore, the Aramaic term is expected to be grammatically feminine, but here it is grammatically masculine. CG no. 230 is very fragmentary but may refer to sour grapes (Aram. BSR); however, the context is too broken and the word is grammatically feminine when BSR is expected to be masculine. The Persians introduced olive cultivation in the Kharga Oasis, but no evidence for this has so far emerged at Elephantine/Syene (Newton, Terral, and Ivorra, "Egyptian Olive").

38. See Aston, *Elephantine XIX*, 213–46.

39. Published in Thissen and Zauzich, "Ein thebanisches Grab."

40. Although beer is somewhat infrequent in the Elephantine data, the Saqqara evidence presents it as a staple ration (e.g., *TAD* C3.11 and *ATNS* no. 42).

41. Depending on how the quote is read in CG no. 125, one may be inclined to understand the BQ as holding bread. When coordinating the Aramaic conjunctions, however, it is better to translate the relevant lines as, ". . . [sen]⌜t⌝ (word) to you (m.p.) saying, 'Do not send me bread lest

The archaeological data is difficult to reconcile with the textual data, which refers rarely to beverages. In only two possible references is wine found in the ostraca, one using the Aramaic term ḤMR (CG no. 265), the other the Phoenician term YN (HL no. J2).[42] The latter of these texts is a rather personal order that reflects on the sender's lack of necessities. The sender is short of a vessel for drinking water, of pitchers, cups from which to eat (cc 3–5), presumably pottage made from bread/grain. In addition, he lacks bread and wine. Here the sender is ordering not only a ration but also dishes. The rarity of wine in the ostraca missives indicates that it was not intended for the commoner working in the Judean community. In fact, the emotional appeal in the Letter of Yedanyah to the governor of Yehud claims that neither the priests nor their wives have wine for their mourning rituals—that is, the temple's administrators, not the common community member, partook in wine rations.

The passing remark in HL no. J2 about the lack of a vessel from which the sender could drink water, clues us into the main beverage of the Judeans: water. References to water are found on approximately seven ostraca, and the Persian-sponsored report about the Egyptian attack on the Yahô temple focuses on the infrastructure of the complex, noting that the Egyptians of the Khnum temple stopped up the well in the Yahô complex (*TAD* A4.5:6–8). The suggestion is clear: Judeans did not drink directly from the Nile. Instead, they consumed well and spring water, which was rationed.[43] Water was only occasionally ordered in the missives (e.g., *TAD* D7.24). This is probably because well water was locally sourced for those off island due to convenience.

When one thinks of state labor in Egypt, one often thinks of beer rations, which are well attested from the Old Kingdom onward. Even at Elephantine, from the Ptolemaic period, one finds a letter describing it as a center for large scale rations of bread, beer, meat, and fresh vegetables (Dem. Pap. Ber. P. 15504). The Hieratic texts from Elephantine use the phrase "bread and beer,"[44] but in the Persian-period Aramaic sources one finds instead "bread and water" (CG no. 44). Beer is mentioned in the ostraca missives, but like wine it was used in a temple setting or by high officials (*TAD* D7.9).[45]

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it is sealed. Indeed all the (drink-ration) vessels are impure. Even \those/ bread [you] sen[t] to me yesterday are ⌜im⌝[pure]" (cc 4—cv 5). CAL, n.m. "bwq, bwqʾ," connects the word to Greek βῦκος, which may in turn be a loanword from Demotic.

42. The Aramaic term ḤMR is a homonym for "donkey," and the ostracon's broken context does not indicate whether a donkey or wine is intended here. Additionally, the ostracon *TAD* D7.55 comes from Edfu, not Elephantine, though it is a missive order or receipt for a tunic, wine, and oil. It is not clear that this is a Judean community text, but it is from a Northwest Semitic community of state dependents in that region.

43. See also *ATNS* no. 62.

44. Vittmann in Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, nos. A5, A7.

45. *TAD* D7.20 translates the Aramaic term ŠKR as "hired," though the editio princeps did not exclude the meaning "beer" (Porten and Yardeni, "Three Unpublished Aramaic Ostraca," 215).

At this point a short excursus is warranted on the meaning of the Aramaic term BQL, which appears in approximately seven ostraca. *TAD* translates the term as "legumes," presumably based on later Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, in which it is twice attested and contextually means some type of bean sprout.[46] The term is found in Akkadian (*buqlu*), particularly in earlier periods, and referred to "green-malt" (CAD B 323–25).[47] In the Ugaritic language it is found twice qualifying the noun "flour" and is thus also a type of malt in those texts.[48] If we map modern notions of malting onto the ancient data, BQL would refer to grain kernels that were germinated by hydrating them. The BQL can then be used to brew beer, eaten as a gruel, or dried and ground into flour. Descriptions of the ancient techniques do not survive from Elephantine, though the twenty-third tablet of the *Ḫubullu* lexical series deals specifically with brewing terminology and was copied into Late Babylonian in Mesopotamia.[49] Furthermore, passing remarks in documentary or educational sources provide allusions to brewing practices in the Semitic world. Consider, for instance, W. G. Lambert's remarks on a broken line in the Babylonian Theodicy that refers to "the watchman of malt": "One learns from this passage that a man watched [malt], to drive away dogs and birds if it was in the sun, or to prevent it from being overheated in a kiln."[50] In an isolated bilingual Akkadian/Sumerian proverb preserved in the early half of the first millennium BCE one finds the following statement, which Lambert translates as: "For dried green-malt spreading does not come too late."[51] The proverb is a warning that if malt is not dried, it may spoil or attract pests. That is, BQL is not to be conceived of as dried, but as hydrated malt or (cold-)mash that could be dried. Another proverb implies that BQL is edible.[52] In the Akkadian sources, if *buqlu* was altered from its liquid malted

"Beer" is the better reading. Porten based his argument on Saqqara evidence, notably *ATNS* no. 20 and the remarks therein. Because beer was a standard "wage" for native Egyptians, the term is perhaps a calque at Saqqara. This explanation does not work for Judeans at Elephantine, given that water is their drink ration of choice, or perhaps BQL.

46. Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 230b. The archaeological evidence does include pulses in the botanical repertoire of Elephantine in earlier periods (Malleson, "Report on Archaeobotanical Studies," 10).

47. Hartman and Oppenheim, "On Beer and Brewing Techniques," 13–15.

48. KTU nos. 1.71:25; 1.85:32. See Olmo Lete et al., *Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language*, 1:235.

49. Hartman and Oppenheim, "On Beer and Brewing Techniques," is an edition of Met. Mus. 86–11–386 with an extended introduction to the state of knowledge of Mesopotamian brewing. For the most recent contribution, see Paulette, *In the Land of Ninkasi*.

50. *BWL*, p. 307.

51. *BWL*, p. 250. The line reads *buqli naʾpi mešṭû ūl uḫḫuršu* (p. 246).

52. *BWL*, pp. 270–71: *ištu lā buqli-ma līkula ištu lā buqli-ma lissappiḫa*, which Lambert translates without commentary as: "Since he has no green-malt, let him use up. Since he has no green-malt, let him squander." It think a more literal translation better conveys the meaning, "Afterward there is no *buqlu*, but let him eat. Afterward there is no *buqlu*, but let him scatter (iteratively)." The

state, it was referred to with a different name, *bappiru*.[53] While isolated ancient techniques of malting are known and discussed among scholars,[54] the exact physical state of BQL in fifth-century Elephantine, whether a liquid or a mash, remains unknown.[55] The point to be made, however, is that contextually it is difficult to understand the Aramaic term BQL as legumes.

In the Aramaic ostraca from Elephantine, three textual data support the idea that BQL was not a vegetable but rather a liquified or hydrated sprouting malt. The first is Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 39, which clearly reads, "(Send) also a vessel for the BQL" (cc 3–4). As discussed, fresh produce was shipped in packages such as QPT-containers or the larger QPYR, not in vessels. This likely also applied to fresh legumes. Particularly, when considering the possibly small ferries that frequently went to and from Elephantine, packaging mattered as well as its weight and distribution. The exception to produce packaged in containers would be brined produce, which would be stored in vessels; but brined legumes are not, to my knowledge, a (practical) commodity.[56] In a second order, to Yedanyah, the sender requests vessels, followed by possibly a reference to castor oil, which undoubtedly was shipped in a vessel; a reference to BQL follows, as though it were part of a different ordering process but still within a large vessel-shipment (CG no. 136). The third textual datum suggests that BQL was not brined vegetables because it explicitly claims that BQL can "be lost," that is, it can spoil (CG no. 152).[57] The evidence is mounting that BQL was not vegetables or legumes but rather liquified or at least hydrated malt, which would have been consumed as a food source but may also have been an ingredient for beer production among the Judeans. The BQL-malt may have been hydrated by the administrators at Elephantine using the island's stock of grain

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irony is that without *buqlu* the man can still do what would be done with *buqlu*, namely, eat and scatter. The first clause implies that *buqlu* was edible.

53. Hartman and Oppenheim, "On Beer and Brewing Techniques," 15.

54. For example, see the discussion of cold-malting at the Late Bronze Age site of Tell Bazi in Paulette, *In the Land of Ninkasi*, 119–21, which raises doubts about the cold-malting method. But see also Sallaberger, "Bierbrauen in Versen."

55. Compare Peter Damerow's comments regarding the better-attested textual corpus of Mesopotamia, "The decomposition of starch by means of enzymes produced in the process of malting grains and by later fermenting the resulting product by means of yeast bacteria—the variety of possible techniques to realize these reactions is too great to allow any reliable identification of the specific ancient procedures used and products attained" ("Sumerian Beer," §2.2). Hartman and Oppenheim's valuable study makes a number of implicit assumptions likely based on modern brewing ("On Beer and Brewing Techniques," 6–16).

56. Perhaps it should be noted that historically, malting began with vegetables (Hartman and Oppenheim, "On Beer and Brewing Techniques," 13).

57. See discussion in Porten, "Religion of the Jews," 116. Furthermore, the female addressee, Yislaḥ is likely mentioned alongside Natan in an ostracon addressed to ʾAḥûṭab (CG no. 157).

and well water. Any further processing that occurred would have been off island using the local water supply to quickly turn it into beer.[58]

### *Wood*

Second only to the mystery surrounding fresh-produce production is the question of where Egyptian settlements sourced their wood and how it was made available to the Judean dependents in Elephantine and Syene. In Aramaic, as in many languages, "wood" (Aram. ʿQ, pl. ʿQN) is a general term for the natural resource of a tree's trunk or branches after it has been felled, regardless of its stage of processing. Wood used in construction, that is, lumber which has been processed, is referred to in the Aramaic documentation by specialized terms, such as beams (Aram. GŠWR; *TAD* D7.13 and CG no. 261 [receipt]), or qualifications, such as "deck wood" (Aram. ʿQY ḤLʾ; *TAD* A6.2:12). Other qualifications for types of wood are found in sources outside Elephantine, such as ʾKRPK-wood, which may simply refer to wood from an unknown region rather than a tree species.[59] The tree species identified most often in the Aramaic sources is, cedar (Aram. ʾRZ), and it too appears in large quantities in the import tax records from the Nile Delta (*TAD* C3.7). The only textual indication for the source of lumber in the Aramaic data is the import industry. That said, local sycamore wood stores are known on Elephantine from the end of the second millennium BCE.[60] Furthermore, the Demotic Chronicle reports of stands of trees harvested for firewood somewhere in Upper Egypt.[61]

Both sycamore and cedarwood are identified as tree species by the Aramaic administrators. Sycamore trees produce figs, which were a known but uncommon commodity in the ostraca,[62] but the species is also attested as a building material. This may be due to the fact that acacia and sycamore were two native

58. It is enticing to see BQL-malt as cold mash, which was used in the two-stage process of Egyptian brewing. Tasha Marks, Susan Boil, and Michaela Charles have conducted experiments on Egyptian brewing techniques and reported their findings on the British Museum's blog (Marks, "Sip of History"). See also the tomb model BM EA55728 of Egyptians, including women, preparing food and straining beer, as well as the basic beer jar BM EA42108, both from the second millennium BCE. Apropos to the next section, one must consider the role of firewood in the production of malted beer; see by heuristic analogy Paulette, *In the Land of Ninkasi*, 120.

59. This item, which was imported in large numbers as indicated by the tax of 2,000 units, is only known from the import accounts on the Ahiqar Palimpsest. See CAL, n.m. "ʾkrpk"; Hoftijzer and Jongeling, *Dictionary of North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, 2:1237.

60. Vittmann in Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, A4.

61. Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, no. 4.14.

62. CG no. 123 and 246. In these sources, produce, not lumber, is in view. Thus, at Elephantine the same term used for the tree species was used for the fruit from those trees, Aramaic ŠQM. This differs from the common fig tree, the fruit of which is called in Aramaic T(ʾ)NH. Both trees were cultivated in ancient Egypt. See Gerges, "Common Figs."

sources for building lumber, with sycamore used most often.[63] Thus, unqualified terms for lumber, such as beams, may have referred to this wood.[64] The Aramaic ostraca from Elephantine refer only once to cedarwood and three times to beams, presumably sycamore beams.[65] It has been recognized that in Persian-period Egypt, techniques for boat construction—including the use of sycamore wood—were technologically advanced, as indicated by the notable case of the Matariya boat from the Delta. It should be remembered that Elephantine had a dry dock for boat repairs.[66]

The textual evidence from Elephantine, however, mentions the use of cedarwood as lumber for a boat and other construction projects. The petitioning and decree-issuing process accounts for most of the surviving references to building materials, mentioning in particular various grades of cedarwood. In the Aršama decree for the repair of a Carian boat at Elephantine (*TAD* A6.2) is found a detailed list of various grades and types of cedarwood that the state monitored and released for the project. Yedanyah's petition for political support for the repair of the Yahô temple (*TAD* A4.7 ‖ A4.8) lists building materials including wooden objects and specifically the complex's cedarwood roof. Cedarwood was imported, and since the Persians monitored the import trade, it stands to reason that they controlled and limited the use of the building materials. A fragmentary decree or reference to a decree known from Saqarra further indicates that the state monitored wood stocks there also (*ATNS* no. 14). Despite the paucity of trees in ancient Egypt, the Egyptians had long used wood as a building material, and because such examples of wooden objects and architecture survive, lumber has consumed much of the scholarly discussion, from its importing to the techniques used by builders and carpenters.[67] That said, the vast majority of references to wood in the ostraca refers to firewood rather than lumber.

As a shipped resource wood is second only to dry foodstuffs in the ostraca. The frequency of the references to a basic wood unit, without further specifications of size or type, indicates that the "wood" shipped in the ostraca referred to

63. For discussion of the native sources of wood see, Gale et al., "Wood."

64. I state this with some reservation because it presumes that administrators understood the differences between sycamore and acacia. Those administrators at the lumber storage facilities and in charge of the immediate labor teams working with wood would have known the differences, but it cannot be assumed that other administrators did.

65. CG no. 261 (2×); Moore, *MDAIK*, unpublished (DAIK/SI O 5021, Fund-Nr. 45200); and *TAD* D7.13.

66. Vinson, "Remarks on Herodotus's Description," 254–58; Haldane, "Ancient Egyptian Hull Construction," 240–49. Presumably the boat was constructed in Egypt. While I marshal this as evidence, note that the later *baris*-type ships from Thonis-Heracleion appear to have been made out of local acacia, which coincides with Herodotus's depiction (see Belov, "Note on the Navigation Space," esp. 98–104).

67. For example, Gale et al., "Wood."

fuel, that is, a bundle of firewood.[68] Firewood was the primary fuel for cooking. While charcoal was used in applications that required high heat, such as the production of faience or smelting, there is no indication that the laborious and time-intensive process of charcoal making was used for basic cooking, though a few specimens of charcoal may naturally be produced in a hardwood fire.[69]

The Egyptians long used wood in state-sponsored cooking enterprises, and wood was undoubtedly used in the industrial kitchen of Syene in the Persian period.[70] Both Egyptian ovens and braziers required wood. In an experimental archaeological study on alternative fuel sources for cooking in second-millennium BCE Egypt, a team of German scholars led by Julia Budka has succinctly collected research on wood used as a cooking fuel and conducted experiments on the possible use of animal dung to supplement wood fuel.[71] It is very likely that animal dung was a known fuel supplement in the Persian period as indicated by a vulgar expression used as a threat in CG no. 199.[72] The fragmentary text refers to sending bread followed by borrowing some item or taking out a loan for perhaps grain.[73] A statement of warning follows this instruction to borrow or make a loan. As with most statements of warning the line conveys a tone of passion. It reads, "Beware! ⌜You⌝ must not [. . .] shit on/in the fire."[74] Despite the vulgarity, the cultural image is clear: dung was a known fuel source. The work of Budka's team is important as it demonstrates that dung was supplemental and wood remained a primary fuel source in ancient Egypt.

68. Note that *TAD* D3.26 is one of the few lists of items, in this case wooden beams.

69. Charcoal is produced by starving heated wood of oxygen, as happens, for example, when baking it in a kiln. Its production was likely industry specific. The Aramaic term GMWR, "charcoal," does not appear in the Imperial Aramaic corpus. Furthermore, its later attestations refer to the natural production of charcoal in, normally the center of, a hardwood burning fire, in which it refers to the coals before they turn to ash.

70. Hamed, "Cooking and Cooker Scenes." Even cooking boats with braziers were known from the turn of the second millennium BCE (e.g., object MFA 21.494 in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, https://collections.mfa.org/objects/143769).

71. Budka et al., "Question of Fuel for Cooking." Herodotus 2.36.3 mentions the collection of dung, presumably for fuel, in his short list of stereotypical Egyptian idiosyncrasies.

72. Descriptions of the techniques used by specialists and tradesmen are not found in the Aramaic documents. More often only allusions to practices are found in idiomatic expressions that signify something other than their literal meaning.

73. Line cv 1 begins, "But if not so" followed by a broken word beginning with ʿ. The Aramaic term ʿBWR, "grain," would fit the context.

74. The well-attested Northwest Semitic word ḤR$^{2}$ refers specifically to excrement and is here used as a vulgar alternative for dung. Only in later Aramaic does one find ZBL, "manure," and BʿWR, "dried dung," (CAL, n.m. "zbl, zbl$^{2}$" and "bʿwr, bʿwr$^{2}$"). For a similar and more explicit turn of phrase from a nearly contemporary Hebrew setting, see Ezek 4:15.

Although I argued elsewhere that the occurrence of a similarly spelled word in CG no. 60 may refer to a type of landholding (*NAP*, p. 37), I now suggest it is possible to interpret the Aramaic statement TRDH ḤR$^{2}$ (if the reading is not ḤD$^{2}$) as a similar type of vulgarity: "(Now give to Natan. [If not . . .] and you will shovel shit!" (cv 1–2).

This evidence combined with the many occurrences of wood-unit shipments in the ostraca provides strong evidence that one of the responsibilities of the Yahô temple was to store, monitor, and distribute firewood, and CG no. 228 makes it clear that ʾAḥûṭab the dry-goods storage manager was in charge of firewood supplies.[75]

The size of the wood shipments was standardized and therefore so too was the size of split wood. Unfortunately, these dimensions are mostly unknown, though there is some indication of the number of wood-units that could be shipped in a boat load. An ostracon missive formatted as a receipt indicates that eighty units of wood were shipped to the addressee in three separate loads. The text reads:

*TAD* D7.16 (Elephantine)
cc 1. I/you/she sent in the hand of
cc 2. Peṯḥnum in the ḤNT[76]
cc 3. 3 loads
cc 4. in them wood,
cc 5. 80 (units).[77]

The text suggests that shipments of 26–27 units of wood could fit on a ferry; here Peṯḥnum commands three ferries at once. I presume that the wood was not dragged in the water since it was firewood intended for fuel, and waterlogging the wood would render it temporarily unusable. The size of one unit of wood is unclear, but the unit appears to have been a standardized length and volume. CG no. 215 is difficult to understand but may be interpreted to mean that reed-measures for wood length were standardized and given to three administrators: Gemaryah son of Šillem, ʾAḥnû, and Malkyah son of Neferpasʿi. The first is unknown, the second is a courier affiliated with the core team (CG no. 233; see chapter 7), while Malkyah may be the arbitrator (see chapter 7). If this interpretation is correct, then the sender of CG no. 215 instructs presumably ʾAḥûṭab, based on the grammatical gender of the imperative verbs, to dispense to Mešullam three measuring reeds for wood, which he in turn will give to three

75. The storage facility for firewood may have been identified as a government facility. CG no. 156 refers to "1 QPYR" followed by two broken statements about the ʾNṢR, which could be the royal treasury (normally spelled ʾṢR, but nasilaztion of Ṣ may have occurred). Furthermore see CG no. 280, in which it seems that "the treasurers" (lit. "sons of the treasury") receive a QPYR of wood.

76. This could mean "gift" and by extension a tax collection.

77. The final character was read in the editio princeps as the numeral 1 (Maraqten, "Neue aramäische Ostraka," no. 3, in Kaplony-Heckel, "Zum demotischen Baugruben-Graffito") and by the *TAD* as 1 or 10. Although the surviving strokes of the final character are effaced, I am certain one can read 20; thus the total number is 80.

administrators.[78] The implication is that the temple administrator meticulously measured the shipments of the wood to ensure that they are standardized. Thus, a ferry boat could carry 26–27 units of wood cut at a standard length, which was monitored by the temple's administrators.

As for the volume of the wood unit, this measure remains unknown, though there is an indication as to which standardized packaging wood was shipped in. One reference possibly mentions a bundle (Aram. MʾSR) of wood, if the reconstruction is correct (HL no. J3).[79] The term MʾSR though seems to refer to a general rather than standardized package.[80] CG no. 280, however, states, "I sent the full QPYR with wood. Moreover, the QPT in it is 20" (cv 1–2). From this line one may surmise that wood was shipped in (perhaps wicker) baskets or crates called QPYR, and approximately 20 smaller modular QPT-containers could fit in a QPYR. One wonders whether a QPT-container is the standard wood bundle and a ferry can hold just over one QPYR, if it is piled high. This would make sense as CG no. 215 indicates that it is possible to send 26–27 units per ferry load. Interestingly, unless a missive emphasizes the frequency of shipments (e.g., *TAD* D7.9), only once is found the unqualified term "*the* QPYR."[81] This indicates that it was a known standard measure. Furthermore, we have in two texts the reference to 13 units sent in QPT-containers, one of cucumbers/melons (CG no. 115), the other of a lost commodity (CG no. 21). In each case other items are sent, but suspiciously, 13 QPT-containers make up nearly half a ferry load according to CG no. 215. Thus, one boat held one QPYR, and a QPYR held approximately 20–26 QPT.

The archaeological and textual evidence limits what one can say about the administrative processing and use of wood in the Judean community. While the royal estates and fort system controlled building materials, it remains unclear how the Yahô temple administrators interacted with these institutions

78. If I were to hazard a guess, I would assume that the three men in CG no. 215 were leading or monitoring labor teams, who were processing lumber and firewood shipments for the community or state. Note that in CG no. 233 Natan is told to do an action based on the verb ʿQQ, the meaning of which remains obscure. It could derive from the noun ʿQ(Q), "wood," and would be a D-stem, as is the expected stem for denominative verbs. Thus, it would mean "to prepare wood" in some way, either felling the trees, preparing bundles, or instructing others to do so. (The latter attestation meaning in Syriac "to collar" [CAL, vb. "ʿqq"] may derive from the act of bundling wood.)

79. A reference on CG no. 149 + X3 (= HL no. J6) could be read as a reference to Juniper berries or wood in a package: HWŠR MʾSRH I Z[Y {ʾNB| ʿQ}] ʿRʿR, "(in the hand of Wantî) I sent 1 package of the {berries| wood} of Juniper" (cc 4–6). Lozachmeur, *La collection*, translates, "j'ai envoyé un lien 1, q[ue / q[ue . . .] un réclamation ? . . . [. . .]" (p. 445). It should be noted that Juniper is not native to Egypt, though it is known and harvested in the Levant and greater Mediterranean (Serpico, "Resins, Amber and Bitumen," 432–33).

80. See CG nos. 109, 112, 157; *TAD* D7.28.

81. Only in CG no. 156 does a numeral follow QPYR. The document is an exchange, "send to me 1 QPYR, [. . . I will] send to you(.) the ʾNṢR (cc 1–2).

on a pragmatic level. Furthermore, the age-old question of how firewood was sourced in ancient Egypt remains an enigma that stymies progress on our understanding of the rationing of firewood.

## Textiles, Clothing, Footwear, and the Persian Cultural Revolution

The recognized state communities were vehicles for a Persian cultural revolution in ancient Egypt. In the Egyptian province with its great distance from Susa and Persepolis, *the Aramaic language was the Persian language*. Traces in the archaeological and textual evidence point to a Persian transformation in diet and agriculture in Egypt.[82] As discussed above, new techniques in ship making (Matariya boat) and distinguishable pottery are clear indications of the Persian occupation. Language and food are clear expressions of culture, but so too are fashion and style.[83] In stark contrast to the Aramaic data from the royal estate of Saqqara, which focuses on the technical features of taxation and governance, the recognized Judean and other Northwest Semitic communities were consumed with fashion. The study of ancient fashion is often associated with art history, which in turn generally works with nontextual objects. Textual scholars rarely have data to venture into the details of discussion on fashion, which interest the art historian. Due to the typically inquisitive observational style of writing that muses on the "other," classical Greek sources note many features of Persian royal fashion.[84] The Aramaic sources from Egypt use technical textile terminology that is not fully understood, and fabric or clothing are the subject of official contract agreements—notably marriage contracts[85]—papyrus business letters, ostraca missives, and one administrative inventory (*TAD* D3.16)—remember there are few inventory lists. In chapter 7 I identified two figures associated with garments, Giddel/Gaddul and ʾÛryah. The former appears to have been a tailor requesting the status of Mîkayah's garment and whether it needed inspection or mending. ʾÛryah, who is associated with managing animal husbandry, is also associated with garment

82. Agut-Labordère and Newton, "L'économie végétale," 9; Moore, "Farm to Table Approach."

83. Instructive is Colburn, *Archaeology of Empire*, chapter 4, which examines the visual depictions of style, such as gesture (136–40) and garments (140–43), in the formation of statuary depictions. His evidence focuses on a few "elite" individual case studies from Egypt, such as Udjahorresnet (179–87), but comes to a similar conclusion as that found here: "The impact of Achaemenid imperialism on Egypt had as much to do with the proclivities of the individuals involved as it did with a systematic change imposed from without" (188). As will be shown, it was through the Persians' adept use of sociological planning that groups such as the Judeans were strategic vehicles of imperialization in an Egyptian context.

84. Llewellyn-Jones, *King and Court*.

85. A court record from Saqqara of the transfer of a slave to those with possession status also includes a reference to a wool garment in that dispute (*TAD* B8.2).

storage. Fabric, materials (wool and linen), and surplus garments appear to have been stored on island under the management of either ʾÛryah and/or ʾAḥûṭab.

### *Clothing, Fabrics, and Accessories: Hallmarks of a Persian Cultural Revolution*

Garments (Aram. LBŠ) appear at least six times in the ostraca missives. Five are too fragmentary to understand (CG nos. 17, 61, 114, 117, X6), but the context seems to refer to orders or receipts. It appears that the island's storage facilities held garments. Certainly, *TAD* D7.18 explicitly refers to a tunic stored in the temple for the sender. One wonders whether basic garments were sometimes issued as a laborer's ration. The papyrus business letter *TAD* A3.3 from Judeans in Migdol to a fellow Judean community member who is likely serving his *ilku* service under the oversight of the Yahô temple at Elephantine is concerned about the serviceman's salary having not been delivered in Migdol by the authorities. The letter then turns to the addressee's requested tunic and garment, an indication that the two are separate articles of clothing. The sender claims to have fulfilled the order by making the requested garment, but he did not bring it to Memphis, implying that the royal estate could ship the clothing through the postal system to Elephantine for the serviceman. This indicates how the interconnected network of provincial communities supplied for the needs of their members during state labor missions. The business letter to the Bethel temple at Syene, *TAD* A2.1, provides similar evidence for that community. Accounts from the royal estates corroborate the fact that garments and goods were monitored and transported through the royal estate's postal system (*ATNS* no. 50 r 10).[86]

Garments or fabric feature in four Judean papyrus business letters. The first, *TAD* A3.3, presented in chapter 6, was sent to the personnel of the Yahô temple. The second, *TAD* A3.8, discusses the transference of an inventory of different garments received from one named Bêthʾeltadan; a fragmentary papyrus refers to him, sandals, and linen (*TAD* A3.2). His name calls to mind the temple of Bethel on Syene. In fact two Hermopolis papyri, one addressed to the temple of Bethel and the Queen of Heaven and another to the temple of Banit, both at Syene, also feature garments (*TAD* A2.1, A2.2), while a third, also sent to the temple of Banit, refers to leather garment production (A2.4). The details of the administration of the garment industry and the possible interactions between the Yahô administrators and other Northwest Semitic temples in the region remain unknown, though as with the production of castor oil, there may have been a shared colonial economy in the textile industry. Much like the administrative activity that produced the Yahô Temple Collection List, which collected taxes from other recognized

86. Admittedly, I struggle to confirm the reading *ATNS* suggests from the published photographs.

communities off island, the evidence of the textile industry, albeit sparse, also attests to possible cooperation between recognized state communities.

The contracts provide a clue as to the value of garments. Their mention in the marriage contracts (*TAD* B2.6, B3.3, and B3.8) and in a withdrawal (*TAD* B2.9) attest to their worth. This was not only a feature of communities at Elephantine/Syene, as shown by a court record from Saqqara that refers to the reclamation of a wool garment (*TAD* B8.2). In fact, Saqqara further attests to a requirement of paying for the clothing of those in prison (*ATNS* no. 44) and to some type of list indicating recipients or donors of garments (*ATNS* no. 146).

The Elephantine ostraca present a more nuanced picture of administrative interaction with textiles and garments, including intimate portraits of Judean experiences. CG no. 108 preserves the most detailed description of the Persian-period dress in the corpus. It reads:

CG no. 108
cc 1. Send me a wrap/covering
cc 2. and my tunic. Tie on
cc 3. my girdle and my (decorative ?) belt.
cc 4. The tunic which
cc 5. is on me, I shall send it
cc 6. to you (m.p.). Moreover,
cc 7–8. Send
cv 1. me a little tallow.

The sender requests a complete outfit replacement, from outer garments to undergarments, including a belt. It is unclear what materials the garments were made of, but the request for tallow suggests that part of the wardrobe was made of leather, or the sender's remaining accessories or footwear needed to be "shined." Animal fat was used for either fat tawing in the process of tanning or for fat liquoring, which polishes and protects leather.[87]

As the ostraca CG nos. 17 and 70 imply, clothes were made off island. Additionally, CG no. 218 is presumably addressed to ʾAḥûṭab, based on the grammatical gender of the verbs, and may refer to weaving off island. The message refers to exchanging warp wool for weft wool. It is not clear if this is a literal statement or an idiom that explains the ostracon's opening lines, "Now, I went to Wantî and he said, 'I shall give.' I do not know if he (really) will give to me" (CG no. 218 cv 1–3).[88] If the exchanging of warp for weft is to be taken as

87. Van Driel-Murray, "Leatherwork and Skin Products," 303.

88. It must be noted that this is a rare exception of an ostracon written cv to cc. The justification for reading it this way is that it appears to be a complete ostracon, the initial formal "Now" begins

a literal statement, the sender may be a weaver in need of a particular type of thread to form a pattern on fabric—the only available thread can be bought from the Egyptian Wantî. The writer would need ʾAḥûṭab's approval to purchase the thread. *TAD* D7.14 and CG no. 241 seem to confirm that thread for tunic mending/making was stored in the temple's facilities on island. If the statement, however, is to be understood as an idiom, the item the sender is trying to acquire is unstated and assumed. The idiom of exchanging warp for weft would refer to the sender's doubt that Wantî will follow through on his promise. I lean toward interpreting the document literally.

A forthcoming ostracon from Elephantine is an order of QLʿS, something identified as "not written on," followed by the statement, "Also if that one, Qawîlyah (f.), shall come (with) a tunic from the fuller. She shall send it to me."[89] The order is reminiscent of a missive to Yedanyah (CG no. X6) in which the subjects of the missive are scribal supplies and a garment. What is definitive in the unpublished text is that Qawîlyah is coming to the island with a tunic directly from the fuller (Aram. QṢR), who must be at an off-island facility.

Tunics appear to be stored in the temple for the managerial team (*TAD* D7.18), and outfits can be exchanged as needed (e.g., CG no. 108).[90] Either ʾAḥûṭab (CG no. 16) or ʾÛryah were responsible for the wardrobe storage as well as the fabric, which notably is wool. Wool was the primary fabric to which the Judeans had access because they farmed sheep. The word for tunic (Aram. KTWN), however, is related to linen (Aram. KTN), the material made from flax, which is well known to have been produced in ancient Egypt. Both Röllig, *SDAIK* 36, no. 39, and CG no. 75 include orders for linen (and surprisingly both mention Maʿûzyah). While it is clear from the ostraca that the Judean community maintained herds off island, it does not seem that they farmed flax. Elephantine had long housed facilities for textile production, with remains of flax, wool, and items associated with the textile industry found somewhat frequently,[91] but no specimens of flax textiles from the Persian period have been identified, as far as I understand.[92] Flax seeds or oil are mentioned only once

on the cv side, while the cc side begins in the middle of a clause, and only by reading cv to cc does the message make sense.

89. Moore, *MDAIK*, unpublished DAIK/SI O 4993, Fund-Nr. 44200.

90. CG no. 42 refers to a RQʿ-garment, which appears to be related to the meaning "rags" (CAL, n.f. "rwqʿh, rwqʿt?" and n.m. "rqʿ, rqʿ?").

91. Early strata from the site have yielded "spindle whorls, and wooden objects such as spindles and needles, as well as small fragments of spun thread and textile" (Malleson, "Preliminary Report on Archaeobotanical Studies on Elephantine," n.p.). Sigl, "The Project 'Realities of Life,'" 39, summarizes the finds between 2013 and 2020.

92. Kuckertz and Nebe, *Elephantine XXII*, 80–81, simply note remains of fabric, though the Hellenistic and later remains include flax. On textiles, see also Cortopassi, "Première campagne." For reservations of dating textiles based on strata, including the Elephantine data, see Wild,

in the ostraca (CG no. 189). The linen, then, must have been sourced, acquired, and stored by the temple personnel.[93]

The actual services of the temple's textile facility are unclear beyond the statements of inspection/hemming found in CG no. 70. That said, contemporary laundry contracts from Mesopotamia provide a glimpse into the expensive and laborious process of cleaning garments.[94] Those contracts are made between a washerman (Akk. *ašlāku*) and private individuals. Caroline Waerzeggers understands the washerman to also be a "private" party though recognizes that records indicate that the resources for such activities are known from temple records. Furthermore, the position could be held by another "artisan" in the textile industry, such as a tailor.[95] Given that the resources for the service are known from the temple, one wonders whether these "private" individuals were using their access to temple resources to venture into a private business on the side, as Cornelia Wunsch has proposed of other temple's personnel.[96] While the complexities of the Mesopotamian systems cannot be mapped onto the Elephantine temple, they do provide a heuristic basis for understanding why a garment exchange system appears in the Aramaic data. It seems reasonable to conclude that the Yahô temple included a laundry and small-scale mending service for at least the administrators. *TAD* D7.8 explicitly refers to the washing of wool in preparation for its processing, and this could be extended to a service of laundering garments.

The archaeological data is tantalizing but sparse. Fabric scraps survived in Building DA, and there are tools used in textile production or mending.[97] Haus Q, especially Room Q2, seems a good candidate for a small temple-run tailor's shop, perhaps working in conjunction with the Building DA, where small-scale

"Archaeology and the Dating of Textiles," esp. 21. In Syene, surprisingly, the industrial kitchen from the Persian period excavated in Area 2 appears by the Roman period to have been replaced by a textile workshop (von Pilgrim et al., "Report on the 18th Season," 36).

93. Worth further investigation is the possible trade value of Egyptian linen within the Judean colonial temple communities throughout the empire. Linen is the only commodity held by the Judean temple, other than taxable silver(ware), that would be of interest to the state and other provinces. Note, in particular the discussion in Zilberg, "At the Gate," 219: "The rise in goods imported from Egypt can be seen also in Babylonian temples who imported Egyptian Alum, gold, vessels, ducks and precious linen from Egypt. These precious commodities were used by the Babylonian temples, as adornments for the statues and ceremonial objects of gods. In this respect, one should mention the legal inquiry CT 2 2 . . . [with] mention of a vendor of Egyptian origins . . . It is clear that Egyptian commodities were in demand in Achaemenid Babylonia and some Egyptians were able to profit from the commercial demand."

94. Collected and edited in Waerzeggers, "Neo-Babylonian Laundry."

95. Waerzeggers, "Neo-Babylonian Laundry," 93–94.

96. Wunsch, "Temple Economy," 989–90, with references.

97. Kuckertz and Nebe, *Elephantine XXII*, 80–81, 265–66.

leather work and garment storage occurred.[98] If these are Yahô temple facilities, they indicate the type of structure the temple operated: a diffused administrative model that, unlike the Khnum temple, extended beyond its precinct into small "domestic"-style buildings on the island. This would match the Mesopotamian model in which temples owned land and buildings beyond their complexes.

The style of tunics and their quality are unknown. Tunics and garments were no doubt very expensive. Whether the garments were composed in a "traditional" Egyptian, Semitic, or Persian style cannot be ascertained. It is likely that cultural mixing produced new fashion trends in the colony. What is certain is that some accessories were a direct result of Persian cultural influence on the fashion of the fort. The Aramaic order missive CG no. 138 appears to belong to a non-Judean dossier of texts, but as discussed in chapter 7, the Judeans worked closely with the transportation of goods even to and from the Khnum temple. This ostracon is an order from one with the Egyptian name Teṭepsakmaḥi, who requests 2 QSBR to be sent on the boat of Pmhn. The boatman Pmhn transports goods for the Judeans as well (*TAD* D7.24). The term QSBR is a loanword from Iranian into both Aramaic and Demotic and refers to Persian earrings.[99] This is the only clearly identified accessory in the documents, and it demonstrates a fashion trend influenced by the Persian colonial settlement. This fashion trend is explicitly referred to also in a marriage contract that mentions leather "Persian sandals" (*TAD* B3.8).

### *Leather*

Absent in most of the literature on the history of Persian-period Elephantine is a discussion of the many leather goods found in the archaeological excavations, specifically sandals and shoes.[100] These are made of cow's hide,[101] and according to André Veldmeijer, the Persian-period sandal technology and style stand out as a "foreign" technique that uses sinew and flax to stitch the leather items.[102] It was once thought that Elephantine may have housed a leather workshop that produced Persian footwear, but Veldmeijer rejects the notion that a workshop once existed on island because the finds lack extensive evidence for offcuts and waste.[103] In view of the textual evidence, the archaeological

98. See Kuckertz and Nebe, *Elephantine XXII*, 80–81, 263–71; Krekeler, *Elephantine XXI*, 107–9, 112–14; and Veldmeijer, *Leatherwork from Elephantine*, 12.

99. *NAP*, p. 68n40. I must thank Damien Agut-Labordère for originally pointing me to the answer in that publication.

100. Kuckertz, "Schuhe aus der persischen Militärkolonie."

101. Veldmeijer, *Leatherwork from Elephantine*, 17–18.

102. Veldmeijer, *Leatherwork from Elephantine*, 19.

103. Veldmeijer, *Leatherwork from Elephantine*, 32.

evidence is unsurprising. Elephantine was a storage facility, but the Yahô temple's economy included investment in the textile industry, which was based in an administrative building off island.

The documents refer extensively to leather and sandals—even explicitly to Persian sandals. The wifehood contract of ʿAnanî son of Ḥaggay for Yahôyišmaʿ daughter of Zakkûr son of Mešullam includes among the items that Yahôyišmaʿ will bring into the marriage "a pair of Persian leather (sandals)" (ŠNN ZY ṢL PRSYN, *TAD* B3.8:20).[104] In other texts it is unclear whether the writer refers to sandals or to leather straps/strapping (e.g., CG nos. 49, 73, 112, 115) because the ostraca missives prefer the spelling Š²N while the formal contracts use ŠNN.[105] Leather (Aram. ṢL) appears also in two missives (CG no. 36 cv 2 and perhaps *TAD* D7.47 cc 1). A more general term for hide, MŠK, is found in texts referring to commodity shipments. In the papyrus business letter *TAD* A4.2 is found the phrase MŠKY ṢL, "hides of leather," in a list with honey, castor oil, string, rope, and boards(?, Aram. ŠPN). Of these items, hides, honey, and castor oil are clearly attested among the missives associated with Judean shipments (e.g., CG no. 255 cc 4 and CG no. 136 cv 1), but as discussed above, they are sourced from a colonial economy network and native Egyptian industries. The other words are rare. *NAP* no. 1.1.1, which like *TAD* A4.2 references a hide garment, may be a report or business letter on the inventory of a farm or craftsman workshop located off island. In HL no. J3 cv 7 hide is paired with the general term for "grain" in a missive to Natan discussing a variety of products and money. Additionally, hide is found in the fragmentary missive CG no. 65 cv 1 and perhaps even HL no. J5 cc 6. In a Hermopolis letter sent from Makkibanit to his superior Psamî, courtesy of the Temple of Banit in Syene, the writer requests enough hide be sent to him to make a garment (*TAD* A2.4:7–8). Like the temple of Banit in Syene, the Yahô administrators also stored hide and leather at Elephantine.

The enigmatic letter fragments *NAP* no. 1.1.1 refer to both a leather garment and a "striped fabric" (Aram. ḤṬBT); both items are otherwise only known from the Hermopolis letter sent from Makkibanit to the temple of Banit at Syene (*TAD* A2.4). In his letter, Makkibanit requests enough leather for a garment and claims to have purchased striped fabric in Lower Egypt, where he writes from. It is not clear whether this striped fabric is the same as the "wool garment striped with dye," which was owned by women and found in three wifehood contracts (*TAD* B2.6, B3.8, B6.1).[106] Leather garments are highly

104. Additionally, sandals are found in *TAD* D3.16:10, B3.3:5, and B2.6:16.

105. It is possible that Aramaic ŠNN is a remnant of a grammatical dual and refers specifically to a single pair of sandals, whereas the plural Š²NY(²) refers to a shipment of many sandals or leather straps.

106. Similarly, the new linen šnṭ²-garment in B3.9 is enigmatic.

impractical in Egypt, where the annual rainfall is low and the annual temperatures are high. Leather garments are most likely to be found in the Egyptian context of smithing. There is no evidence in the Judean ostraca that the temple of Yahô was actively involved in smithing, though temple personnel interacted with blacksmiths (CG no. 73). Moreover, with the Persian conquest of Egypt came a significant rise in iron production.[107] The temples of Yahô and Banit, as an extension of the textile trade, could have supplied the smiths with the leatherwork they needed, though they did not produce the leather.

In one of the letters from the Aršama leather correspondences, GLD is an item, like other forms of leather, that can be delivered, but here it is mentioned in close relation to a tunic and can be dyed (*TAD* A6.16:3). It is unclear whether the statement refers to the dying of leather or the dying of hair on a hide.[108] It is notable that on the leather items found at Elephantine, no "paint, dye or pigment" was used.[109] In a letter to the storehouse manager ʾAḥûṭab, the writer Mîkayah asks her to be on the lookout for GLD (CG no. 228 cv 3). While there are many references in the corpus to sheep and wool, there are only two to bovines, one in a theoretical discussion of animals that could be sacrificed on the Yahô temple's exterior altar (*TAD* A4.10:10),[110] and another that consists of a single word on a small papyrus fragment (*NAP* no. 2.5.13). Lack of references to bovines in the Aramaic material poses an interesting problem because most surviving leather items, particularly the sandals, were made of bovine leather. It seems that bovine farming was associated with the Egyptian temple economy at Elephantine but not the Judean or other colonial economies. As early as the Old Kingdom, magical papyri from Elephantine refer to bulls and cow tallow (Pap. Strasbourg, Institut d'Égyptologie Ba = ERC 311059; Brooklyn Museum 47.218.75 + 86 = ERC 311127). In the Ramesside period, one finds the *wab*-priest of the Khnum temple misusing the sacred cow and offspring as farm animals, which was a criminal offense.[111] A Hieratic magical papyrus from Elephantine (Pap. New York, Brooklyn Museum 47.218.47), which is considered to date to the Saitic period (mid-seventh to late sixth century BCE),[112] refers to fresh bovine meat. In the sixth century is found a letter regarding the sale of a plowing cow (Pap. Berlin P. 13571), and from the early Ptolemaic period survive Demotic business letters focusing on cows as commodities (Pap. Ber. P. 15615;

107. Kuckertz and Nebe, *Elephantine XXII*, 239.

108. Of the unclassified leather finds are Veldmeijer, *Leatherwork from Elephantine*, nos. 87 and 113, which date to the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties respectively; they retain their natural hair.

109. Veldmeijer, *Leatherwork from Elephantine*, 18.

110. For discussion, see Moore, "Administering Cult," 306–12.

111. Vittmann in Porten et al., *Elephantine Papyri in English*, no. A5.

112. See ERC 311124 reference (Quack, "Zauber ohne Grenzen," 181n16; Pommerening, "Die *šsꜣw*-Lehrtexte," 12).

P. 15616; P. 23670). The Demotic Chronicle reports that Cambyses during his reign ordered that the temple economies continue to maintain their cattle industries.[113] But no comparable references can be found in the larger Aramaic corpus. The implication is that Judeans acquired leather from the Egyptians, who farmed bovine, and the remark by the Judean foreman to the storehouse manager in CG no. 228 to "seek leather" from the Khnum temple's administrative liaison supports this view.

## Conclusion

The last two chapters have attempted to present glimpses into the process of managing labor teams for the state and supplying the community or those teams with resources collected and stored by the temple administrators. On occasion, one witnesses the humanness of these administrators, who exploit their positions or express their feelings. CG no. 108, for instance, is an order request for a complete outfit of a single person. Elsewhere, in his complaint expressing fear of censure by the fort authorities, Mîkayah insists the temple administrators still issue him food rations with honey, a valuable resource (CG no. 255). In CG no. 152 one finds a passing remark of distrust between colleagues. The ostraca exhibit numerous examples of vulgarity. Imperative warnings to "beware!" are used to express tones of gravity or urgency in the missives. Surprisingly this culture of administration continues into the Ptolemaic period as indicated by the Demotic letter from the temple administrator Teos the prophet of Wadjet to one Petosiris, in which a large order of rations is made followed by warnings to Petosiris that his life depends on completing the task and to "beware." To be sure, the administrators exploited their positions for their own gain and also contributed to a stressful work environment.

The surviving data illustrates how the Yahô temple personnel formed an administrative support system for Judean state labor and perhaps connected this system to other colonial and native industries. The texts also indicate that a major function of the temple's larger economy was the textile industry. The archaeological records demonstrate a marked cultural revolution, which included Persian attempts to introduce fashion trends in the Egyptian province. The state-sponsored temple economy of the Judeans was a vehicle for this cultural revolution. This, no doubt, played a major role in the tensions between the Yahô and Khnum temple personnel, which surfaced during waves of Egyptian populism, a factor that so far has been underappreciated in scholarship.

113. Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 1:125.

CHAPTER 9

# Taxation and the Judean Community's Place in the Imperial Program

IN MY MODEL, THE STATE-RECOGNIZED COMMUNITIES of colonial settlers (institutional level 3) directly supported the fort system (institutional level 2), and while individuals in the fort system who held permanent posts were likely taxed by the royal estate system (institutional level 1), the fort system was not a unified taxable entity like the colonial settlements. In fact, if my proposal is correct, the fort system was the beneficiary of labor and commodity taxation and was formed by the collection of labor teams and supplies from various colonial settlements and the native Egyptian temple economies, when conscripted Egyptians could be trusted. Since the fort troops were extensions of the royal estate's network of administration, the forts were the faces of bureaucracy to the native and colonial communities. They funneled taxes into the royal system and managed labor for the province. Thus, the taxation of "troops," when it appears in the documentation, does not refer to the "fort troop," like the Syeneans, but rather to the recognized state communities, like "the Judean community."

There are no surviving charters or explicit references to the farm shares of the Judeans. The taxation on "Judeans" discussed in chapters 5 and 8 provides internal evidence of granted lands and implies that the lands were originally acquired by the state, surveyed, then chartered to communities of dependents. Most of the surviving Aramaic corpus from Elephantine and Syene, however, represents the community dossiers and not the archives of the fort system of Syene. Their contents would have been different, owing to their purposes and place in the administrative program. The Judeans at Elephantine/Syene were concerned about the pragmatics of daily life as dependents within an imperial system that required them to maintain labor teams and secure facilities for product production, storage, and dissemination. It is no surprise, then, that nearly no references to the imperial taxation system and its bureaucratic terminology appear in the corpus of community documents from Elephantine/Syene. By contrast, nearly all the documents from Saqqara, the seat of the royal administration, focus on the administration and taxation of forts, communities, and import/export data. The Saqqara evidence uses technical taxation

terminology different from the Judean evidence from Elephantine. The Saqqara documents also include business matters of royal-estate personnel. The result, at first glance, is that the two corpora are wholly unrelated. In reality, however, the data, as it stands, is the product of a complex and hierarchical bureaucratic system. This chapter will explore the program of imperial taxation in the Egyptian province and the place of the Judean colonial settlement within that system.

## Insights from Non-Egyptian Provinces

The Persian imperial taxation system is a nebulous network of interconnected domains that constantly changed; it is overwhelming to try to define it. This situation is owed in part to the nature of a functioning state in which administrative needs change with social and economic factors. It is further complicated by the economic matrix of what we call "taxation." The Aramaic data from Egypt provides an incomplete glimpse into the taxation of that province, forcing one to turn to comparative data. As Tuplin has shown by "postulating a broad parallel between Egyptian and Babylonian" evidence, as well as the taxation system at Persepolis, the Egyptian system comes into better focus.[1]

In recent years a number of studies have been devoted to the aspects of taxation throughout the Persian Empire.[2] The work of Assyriologists on the Neo-Babylonian and Persian-period sources from Mesopotamia has resulted in a thorough representation of the complexity of the taxation system as it survives in the cuneiform sources from that province. Since the Persians adopted Babylonian Aramaic administrative culture for their imperial model, this cuneiform evidence is particularly telling with regard to possible imperial features of the Egyptian taxation system. Because the dataset is limited, a complete explanation of imperial taxation in the Achaemenid period is impossible, even for a single site or province. The biggest complication of describing the taxation system lies in judging the value of comparative data while highlighting the uniqueness of the Egyptian system. For example, in Raymond Descat's study of the imperial taxation system in Caria, he mentions the various types of taxes known from the Greek sources, and general counterparts to each could be found in other locations.[3] One of the types of taxes is a "tithe" (*dekatē*). Tithes are known in Aramaic, Demotic, and Akkadian sources from the period as well. The fact that all four languages and multiple regions attest to a tithe, however,

1. Tuplin, "Fiscality in the World of Aršāma," 319.

2. See, in particular, various studies in Jacobs, Henkelman, and Stolper, *Die Verwaltung im Achämenidenreich*, and Jacobs and Rollinger, *Der Achämenidenhof*.

3. Descat, "Taxation in the Achaemenid Empire," 395.

is not a marker of imperial power. The tithe can be historically traced in each cultural region and language to a period before the Persians, so in lieu of evidence of a genetic relationship, one must assume that assigning a collection of the "tenth" was a simple administrative device for both administrators and those taxed—a device that developed naturally and independently in each administrative environment. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that similar types of taxes were the result of or maintained by the imperial administration across the provinces.

Similarly, the need to collect taxes will produce analogous administrative structures crossculturally. For example, Descat discusses how an administrative mid-level official of possibly Carian origin named Kondalos was in charge of levying taxes in Caria.[4] Kondalos calls to mind the Judean *dēkû* in al-Yahudu that served a similar function (C83). These men appear to be community "insiders" while serving as representatives of the state in their communities, much like the priest Yedanyah at Elephantine. The system demanded similar structures across the empire, though these structures do not appear to have been standardized, at least not the terminology used to identify the roles of the individuals who mediated between communities and the state. Although taxation manifests as a complex site-specific system, at its core, it remains the simple collection of compulsory payments of labor or resources levied by the government on individuals, groups, and entities.

## Land and Goods

The taxation of the Judean community lands by the Syenean fort must be inferred, and evidence for this inference comes from Saqqara's economic documentation among which one text reads:

*ATNS* no. 31 (Saqqara)
1. they are the fields of the troop [. . .]
2. that are in year 9 of Dariu[s . . .]
3. to make to the house of the King[. . .]
4. of these fields [. . .]
5. brought to the hou[se of the King . . .]

The name of the troop in this text is not mentioned or does not survive, but the document clearly refers to "fields" (Aram. ḤLQ) from which the troop was "to make to the house of the king." This is an idiomatic expression of royal

4. Descat, "Taxation in the Achaemenid Empire," 398.

taxation that is found on the Ahiqar Palimpsest and other sources.[5] This statement of royal taxation confirms that the fields of troops were monitored. *TAD* C3.22 (Saqqara) provides surveys of fields, which appear to be explicitly called taxable prebends using a Babylonian loanword.[6] The prebendary system of Babylonia is well documented, and the prebend was acquired by an initial fee, which began as a local rather than imperial tax, but imperial taxation on the prebendary holdings were levied by Aramaic scribes beginning in the reign of Darius.[7] It has been observed that while Egyptological scholarship does not use the same terminology, Egyptian temples of the period operated on an analogous system.[8] If the community troops were organized around temple economies, as they seem to have been, then the prebendary system of allotted lands taxed by the state nicely models the evidence.

The community fields were a type of state-monitored "share" (Aram. MNH), though other types of shares are attested. For instance, *TAD* B2.11 (Elephantine) refers to a slave as a share who will be divided among two brothers at the point of inheritance. In theory, the labor of the slave, which is an essential taxable unit, is inferred. *TAD* A3.10 (Elephantine) refers to a boat as a share, presumably one recognized by the state. *TAD* B3.5 names a house as a share.

It is difficult to determine at the moment whether the Judean community lands overseen by the temple of Yahô were delegated by the state to specific individual possession-status holders (Aram. MHḤSN) or whether the temple retained direct control of the lands, delegating them to individuals. In reality there may have been a blend of both models. Possession-status holders, who were granted land could contract it out to tenants, who worked the fields to gain a profit while also paying into the temple coffers. The temple would then channel this collection to the state. At the same time, temple oblates may have directly overseen the business of some plots. We simply lack the textual evidence to describe the situation on the ground in the farmlands. Both models are found in the Babylonian province, and it seems best to assume a complex economy in the Egyptian province that used both models. The enigmatic notion of the Aramaic HYR-system in the Elephantine papyri was monitored by the Yahô temple's LḤN-servitor and is associated with the "surplus" of commodities (*NAP*, pp. 36–37; and see chapter 4). It is enticing to see this HYR-system as part of a tenant-farming system that the Yahô temple operated in its own agricultural landholdings, and thus as a marker of a prebendary system.

5. See discussion in Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," 48–49.
6. *ATNS* interprets the term ʿŠQ as Akkadian *isqu* (p. 21).
7. Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 81.
8. Ossendrijver, "Scholars, Priests, and Temples," 6.

In the above model, possession-status holders are allocated land directly by the state, likely through the fort system. I assume that the fort system had personnel to audit and tax this land directly without intervention from the community. That said, since it appears that community administrative leaders also served their tax-service obligations to the state, as shown by Haggay son of Šemaʿyah in chapter 5, it could be the same administrator serving in two roles. It nonetheless is clear that the state ultimately controlled the allocation of possession status, even if it was such a ubiquitous practice that smaller-scale allocations were managed through state-trusted officials within the community troops.[9] Remarkably, in the Saqqara ledgers is found a list of individuals who were not assigned partitions of royal lands or whose assignments had been revoked or not renewed (*TAD* C3.6). This document is the clearest indirect evidence that the state chartered shares to individuals in addition to communities.

## The Egyptian Context

It behooves this study to discuss the Egyptian context of the Persian colony at Elephantine when it comes to taxation. Because relatively few Demotic texts from the Persian period survive, it becomes difficult to discuss taxation from the Egyptian point of view. That said, there are Demotic references to taxation in and just after the Persian period. Damien Agut-Labordère has collected them and argues that early fourth-century BCE taxation in the form of a regional collection and a harvest tax on villages are vestiges of taxation that occurred during the Persian period.[10] He also makes reference to the taxation of the transference of a priestly office according to an Elephantine Demotic source in addition to a 10 percent tax (tithe), which, as in Caria and elsewhere, is attested in Egypt prior to the Persians.[11] During the reign of Darius I, this tithe tax was partially diverted to the state.

These taxes are attested in Demotic with no immediate indication that they were the product of Persian occupation. Nonetheless, as Agut-Labordère points out, the co-opting of a local tax tradition, the tithe, by the Persian administration is a significant datum.[12] It is simply more evidence that the Persians did not immediately disrupt administration in Egypt but gradually began to control it and funnel economic resources to provincial and imperial

9. See the discussion of *TAD* A6.11 in Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," 41–43.
10. Agut-Labordère, "Royal Taxes."
11. Vleeming, "Tithes of the Scribe."
12. Agut-Labordère, "Royal Taxes," 255–57; Agut-Labordère, "TQM 'Castor Oil.'"

institutional levels. It appears that the imperial administration homed in on the largest temple economies in the provinces and installed administrative tax officers to oversee the economies or at least to ensure that the temples paid taxes to the state. Evidence for this is known in Mesopotamia from the reign of Cambyses, during which Cambyses installed Aramaic royal officials in the Eanna temple in Uruk. In this context, the additional state oversight executed by installing an Aramaic state accountant in the temple economy is a bold statement of Persian consolidation of economic power and the unique and increased interest by the state in the large Eanna temple. As Kristin Kleber points out, in Babylonia, every large-city temple had "a *qīpu*, a royal official, [who] represented the interests of the king";[13] the installation of the Aramaic official represents the hand of empire touching the local economy. In this vein, one may see a consistent imperial bureaucratization of installing state accountants in large temple economies. Even the Xanthos Inscription of the late fourth century BCE recognized that state-granted land to a temple economy was to be taxed internally by the priests but was also subject to imperial oversight. The Persian oversight of the Khnum temple during Darius I's reign is consistent with this program. Darius, via his representative Farandata, approved the *lesonis*-priest at Elephantine. This makes the *lesonis*-priests functionally analogous to the *qīpu*s of the large Babylonian temples, though they kept their native title.[14] Likewise, the evidence from Pap. Louvre E 7128 indicates that a similar administrative procedure was in place at the large temple of Amun in central Egypt. It is clear from the Aramaic sources that the Nile delta (Saqqara/Memphis) was a location of significant tax collection, though it is unclear if a temple economy in the region was subject to significant taxation and imperial oversight since the imperial bureau resided there.

In sum, the Persians also injected themselves into preexisting Egyptian regional taxes on individuals by means of the village and harvest taxes. The fact that these two taxes resemble civil taxation systems already known for Mesopotamia should not be misconstrued as a genetic connection; rather, it demonstrates that the goals of taxation regardless of region manifest themselves in similar ways crossculturally. That said, the Persians appear to have homed in on the large and *local* temple economic infrastructures in the provinces and partially standardized that preexisting structure.

13. Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 45. For further discussion of the Eanna *qīpu* in the Neo-Babylonian period, see Sack, "Some Remarks," and Levavi, "Sacred Bureaucracy," esp. 21.

14. See Agut-Labordère and Gorre, "De l'autonomie à l'intégration," which concludes that the state gradually took control of the Egyptian temples in this period.

## The Taxation and Auditing Event of Darius II in 419 BCE

Aramaic documents present many enigmas. One of them is the confounding problem: Why was the Syene Ration List, which looks like a fort-institutional-level document, found on island?[15] The document has been studied in the previous two parts of this book for its administrative purposes and implications, and now I turn to the question of its provenance. The answer lies in three other related documents found at Elephantine: the Ḥananyah Letter (*TAD* A4.1), the Yahô Temple Collection List, and the Account of Egyptian Family Units. The Syene Ration List shares a common historical setting with the Yahô Temple Collection List as indicated by the Ration List's surviving storehouse audit summations, which refer to the inventory in district storehouses from "year 4." Such an audit logically must have occurred in "year 5." This dating coincides with that found on the Collection List; the temple collection occurred or was completed in "Phamenoth, year 5." Since the original publication of the sources, scholars had agreed that year 5 refers to the fifth year of Darius II, which would have been 419 BCE. Porten, however, argued that the Collection List, in particular, should rather be dated to the fifth year of Amytraeus, that is, 400 BCE. His reasoning was, first, that the paleography of the document suggests a date later than 419 BCE and, second, that the onomasticon does not comport with that known from the other documents. With regard to his first point, as I have argued elsewhere, the paleography of the fifth century has never been systematically studied, and while the intuition of scholars to sense patterns in paleographic formation is important, it is by no means a scientific or objective criterion. Second, as was shown in chapter 5, the Collection List contains very few possible correspondences in the known administrative material, but that material is extremely narrow in scope due to the preservations of the various textual objects and in some cases administrative practices; the result is that only a few first names and patronymics survive in the corpus to make definitive claims about the nature of the onomasticon. In fact, many simple and reasonable explanations could be proposed. The list likely represents taxable individuals who in turn may represent partial or full family units, and this suggests to me that the list accounts for a collection made among people who did not live on island. A last difficulty with Porten's theory is that dating the Collection List to 400 BCE requires a historical explanation for its purpose. If it dates to 419, then one can easily assume that a taxation measure was in view under the Persian administration, but a date of 400 BCE is problematic because this would put the event during Egyptian rule. Why would the temple repairs have been made after the ascension of Amytreus? To solve

15. The 419 BCE taxation event was first proposed in Moore, "Administering Cult," 308–13.

this problem, Porten speculates that the temple collection was made in preparation for the Feast of Weeks. This is a reasonable explanation, if we had clear evidence that the Judean community celebrated that festival and that donations were part of the festival, but there is no evidence for this. Some have argued that the Ḥananyah Letter refers to the Feast of Weeks, but this is typical of Elephantine scholarship that is stained by attempts to press sources into a religious interpretation and biblical paradigm despite a lack of evidence or even when there is evidence to the contrary. Furthermore, as Porten seems to have intuited, the Syene Ration List and the Collection List appear to refer to the same year and should be dated together. This produces a historical problem that is left unanswered. Why would a Syene Ration List of Persian dependents exist in the fifth and final year of Amytreus? These difficulties lead me to accept the view of the majority of scholars that the two accounts refer to the fifth year of Darius II. Corroborated by evidence from the Ḥananyah Letter and the Account of Egyptian Family Units, I have argued elsewhere that these documents refer to an imperial taxation event that effected the Judean community at Elephantine.[16] The documents were likely stored together because they refer to the same event. Like the few other fort/district-level administrative documents that made their way into an otherwise mostly Judean collection, such as the Aršama decree *TAD* A6.2, they were stored in the secondary context of Houses *m* and *n* with the mostly Judean archive. The remaining mystery of these four documents from the taxation collection event of 419 BCE is: Do these documents represent an annual event or an exceptional event? This question cannot be answered given the data. A larger study of the taxation system of the Egyptian province leads me to tentatively propose that the taxation event in 419 BCE was a collection of the *mandattu*-tax payment, which was scheduled to occur annually but, depending on circumstances in the depths of the Egyptian province, may have occurred off-schedule.

## Imperial Taxation in the Egyptian Province

The imperial program operated under the general concepts of taxation on income and labor. In practice, the Egyptian province recognized two major tax types: the *mandattu*-tax payment, which was assessed on state-allocated property, and the *ilku*-labor tax obligations, which were owed by all taxable individuals, such as those identified as NŠN, YWR, and GBR and studied in previous chapters. This two-part taxation model was the foundation of the

16. Moore, "Administering Cult," 308–13.

Aramaic administrative system in Egypt.[17] Understanding this model allows one to situate the Judean community at Elephantine within it.

**mandattu-*Tax Payment***

The Aramaic administration adopted the term MNDH from the Akkadian *mandattu*-payment. In Late-Babylonian studies, it has been argued that a *mandattu*-payment was a "quitrent" that those of lower status paid to their masters as a marginal fee/tax for permission and/or access to the master's resources, when used for the lower-status individual's own business venture.[18] In the Late-Babylonian sources this was paid mostly in kind, and the overwhelming evidence is for grain payments. In the Aramaic sources from the Persian province of Egypt it becomes a general term for "rent" or "tax," but it may more precisely be defined—like its Babylonian counterpart—as a termed fee that is intended to compensate a master for the loss ensued by a subject's venture that uses the master's resources.[19] In the landholdings system of the Egyptian province, when the master is the state, the *mandattu*-payment is conceived of as the tax owed for the use of the land. In the province of Babylonia, where more detailed documents survive, the *mandattu*-payment extends to trade/craftsmen work. For instance, blacksmithing was a family profession taught in an apprenticeship model and under the general auspices of the temple economies. During the reign of Nabonidus, an administrative tablet, BM 60944, was produced in the temple at Sippar for its own internal records on the *mandattu*-payment of a family that used the temple's foundry and resources. In his study on that tablet, Stefan Zawadski shows that a blacksmith who is a temple oblate (*širku*) pays a *mandattu*-payment on top of his temple service for work completed privately using the temple's resources.[20] In the Aramaic sources, a similar principle appears to be implied in *TAD* B3.6:7, where one finds a clause against imposing a *mandattu*-payment on an emancipated slave.[21] That said, in Babylonia the concept comes to simply mean annual rent when concerning land, especially

17. For ʿŠQ, see above and note 6. Additionally, Aramaic TŠY is a loanword from Egyptian and refers to an export tax. It is found on the palimpsest of the Ahiqar Manuscript where it refers to a tax on the transportation system. This does not affect Elephantine, according to the surviving data.

18. Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History*, 682–83.

19. I suspect it was adopted into Aramaic prior to the Persian period because the term MNDH has been fully grammaticalized into Aramaic and therefore lacks the typical signs of being a loanword.

20. Zawadzki, "Babylonian Miscellanea 3."

21. The text reads, "Then said Mešullam . . . to (the) lady named Tapemet his female-servant, . . . Neither a son of mine or a daughter, . . . has right to you or to Yahyišmaʿ your daughter, whom you bore (sic) me—(none) have right to you!, to brand you or to cheapen you (with) a mandattu-payment of silver" (*TAD* B3.6:2–7).

state land issued to a family or group, who then sublets the land for a fixed term and price on a *mandattu*-payment basis.[22]

Most occurrences in the Aramaic sources refer to a type of rent that is eventually collected by the state.[23] The distinction between business-venture collections and state collection has led Tuplin to settle on the meaning "revenue,"[24] but perhaps a shift in paradigm is more appropriate here.[25] Instead of vaguely translating the term, it is better to see the apparent variation through a sociolinguistic lens and conclude that the administrative understanding of the *mandattu*-payment existed in a complex system of state land, some of which was given out as allotments to "tenants," that is, state dependents. The state would collect a *mandattu*-payment much like a contractor, but it was not conceived of as revenue; rather, it was considered compensation for the state's loss of revenue it could have otherwise earned had the land not been used for the dependent's own needs.[26] This "rent" to the state was paid by a community and known by the royal-estate administrators as the "*mandattu*-payment of the troop." The phrase appears twice in the Saqqara taxation accounts. One occurrence indicates that the *mandattu*-payment was for a termed period, "[from the mo]nth of Thoth until ⌜the month of⌝ . . ." (*ATNS* no. 24 r 5). In another text, the collection for the unidentified district of Msṭy, the "priests in the temples" appear to have collected the communities' *mandattu*-payments to the state (*TAD* C3.5:11). In both sources, as well as in the *mandattu*-payment levied as an import tax on Mediterranean goods (*TAD* C3.7), the *mandattu* is paid in currency, when applicable, otherwise in kind. This notion continues a century later in Bactria where a "mandattu-payment of the king" is mentioned in the context of a community working a field (*ADAB* no. A8.2). That text indicates that the *mandattu*-payment was funneled into the fort system (line 3). In that far eastern province, even holdings directly allotted to fort- or royal-estate-level employees were responsible for the payment. The Aršama leather decree *TAD* A6.13, indicates that the *mandattu*-payment owed on estate granted domains (Aram. BG) was paid, or at least assessed, in product.

22. Popova, "Taxation in Neo-Babylonian Ur," 239, deduced of the Gallābu family and citing Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History*, 682, 699.

23. Briant and Descat, "Un registre douanier," 85–86. This includes a type of rental fee paid by merchants to access business markets on the Nile, according to the Ahiqar Palimpsest.

24. Tuplin, "Fiscality in the World of Aršāma," 307.

25. Note Silverman, "Taxes of God and King?," 357, suggests that "perhaps it needs to be translated differently based on context." This is true, but I am suggesting there might be a technical principle at play through which the word can be conceptualized regardless of context.

26. In the Babylonian province this could mean loss of labor, as in the case of a slave, loss of production, as in the case of fields, or loss of service, as in the case of using a craftsman's space (see Zawadzki, "Babylonian Misc. 3," 76).

Outside of the minds of the royal administrators who thought in terms of *mandattu*-payments, those in the Egyptian province more simply conceived tax collections as gifts to institutions, such as in the Yahô Temple Collection List or the Phoenician vessel labels that indicate a gift-tax deposit.[27] The more business-savvy writers still refer to shares of wages of a state-sponsored investment, such as that found in *TAD* A3.10:3, rather than thinking in terms of income and taxation. It is very likely that the complexities of the taxation system were beyond the comprehension of most of those living in communities and were only expressed as bureaucratized diction in the fort and royal-estate systems' documentation. The Judean community documents only once refer to the *mandattu*-payment, when a Judean notary refers to it in a contract (*TAD* B3.6). The community's existence fits into the *mandattu*-payment model, and its activities reflect it, even though the community's documents do not regularly use the term.

### *HLK/*ilku-*Labor Tax Obligation*

The relationship between the *mandattu*-payment to the *ilku*-labor tax (Aram. HLK) in the Egyptian province is difficult to describe. On a fundamental level, the *mandattu*-payment to the state refers to the tax levied on a product or land or on the access to a business market, while the *ilku*-labor tax was levied on the human as a recognized servant of the empire, specifically on those individuals who held possession status of state-allotted resources (Aram. MHḤSN) or were state-recognized communities (Aram. ḤYL). The Aršama leather decree *TAD* A6.11 describes how an Egyptian named Petosiri, who was loyal to the Persians, had petitioned the bureau claiming he should take over the possession status of a state-allocated plot of arable land that his father had held. His father was killed in a populist uprising against the Persians. The bureau grants his request and adds to it a state-tax subsidy on the *ilku* obligation of his state allotment, by "crushing it" and effectively pushing the tax from the individual to the individual's responsible taxable unit, whether the community or the fort system. The tax assessment of the plot, which is stated to have been 30 ardabs of grain, appears to have remained on the land; it can be surmised this is the *mandattu*-payment. The subsidy allowed him to relinquish his *ilku*-labor tax's service obligation, while still maintaining the land as the official possession-status holder.[28] He was directly employed by the state, so in this case, it seems probable that his fort detachment or the royal estate directly absorbed the

27. Compare the Babylonian evidence (Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 129–30).

28. See discussion in Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine." For a possible "gift" tax on firewood, see chapter 8, note 76.

service tax. Had he been a member of a recognized community, one might suppose the community would have become responsible for the tax.

While the *mandattu*-payment was a monetary tax and the *ilku*-labor tax was a service labor obligation, the difficulty in distinguishing them is owed to the fact that those owing the *ilku*-labor tax in Babylonia were able to convert their service to a monetary payment (e.g., C12, C41; J9). Since both the *mandattu*-payment and the *ilku*-labor tax were functionally land taxes that could be paid rather than served, it is not so clear that a given ancient administrator always correctly distinguished them. In the Egyptian province, however, they do seem to follow the distinction between a monetary collection and a tax on service. Had more data survived, the situation could very well have appeared as difficult as the Babylonian evidence. By comparison, for example, among the Aramaic Bactrian sources is found a decree concerning royal camel keepers who have been improperly taxed, and the term used there is Aramaic HLK, that is, the *ilku*-labor tax. It appears from this text that the governor Bagavant had extracted product—namely, animals—which may better be understood as a *mandattu*-payment.[29]

A direct reference to the *ilku*-labor tax is not known in the surviving Elephantine material,[30] though a possible idiomatic expression referring to those serving the HLK can be found on CG no. 146.[31] Furthermore, the legal terminology of relinquishing legal (tax) responsibility (Aram. ḤŠL, lit. "to crush") is known from the ostraca.[32] That said, the large collection of labor lists discussed in chapter 5 suggests that the service performance of labor teams, whether at the community (*iškaru*) or imperial (HLK/*ilku*) level was a frequent feature

29. The confusion of the terminology in this source may be owed to the fact that Bagavant appears to have also required excessive labor from the group of royal camel keepers. He imprisoned some camel keepers, but the decree orders to release them and "to let them do their own work." Because of this statement, it is unclear if their "imprisonment" was solely a detention or also a type of forced labor.

30. In Akkadian, the idiom "to go to Elam" means to serve one's *ilku*-labor tax's obligation (Moore, *Literary Depictions*, 6n15, and references), and while there may be a service obligation implied in the idiom "to go to the king," it clearly does not refer to taxation since it refers to Aršama. The idiom is known in the official report of the Egyptian rebellion found at Elephantine (*TAD* A4.5:3). Yedanyah uses the same idiom in his letter to the governor of Judah (*TAD* A4.7:5 ‖ A4.8:4).

31. CG no. 146 clearly mentions Aram. HLKY$^{?}$ in a broken context. The verbal root HLK/HWK means "to go," but HLKY$^{?}$ is either a noun "the *ilku*-labor taxes" (pl.) or a G-stem participle. The difficulty of interpreting the word as a noun is that in Akkadian the plural of *ilku* is a feminine form, *ilkūtu*. The difficulty of interpreting the word as a participle is that the irregular root otherwise always uses the D-stem participle, which should here be MHLKY$^{?}$*. If this is a G-stem participle, it may be an idiomatic expression referring specifically to those serving the HLK/*ilku*-labor tax. See perhaps another occurrence in *NAP* no. 1.3.29.

32. See CG no. 200 and discussion in Moore, "Judeans in Elephantine," 50–51. The root also appears in CG no. 156 in a broken context.

of the Judean community, though they never explicitly frame it as such in the surviving internal community documents.

**miks(u) *Duty Tax***

In addition to the general terms for taxation one finds at Saqqara the *miksu*-tax (*TAD* C3.11), which is known from Akkadian sources as a duty on transported products.[33] Since the Ahiqar Palimpsest prefers the term *mandattu*-payment for conceptually the same thing, the occurrence of Aramaic MKS at Saqqara may simply be explained as a well-trained administrator using a technical term, *miksu*-tax, where a more general term, *mandattu*-payment, would have sufficed.

**iškar*(u)*/iškarê**

CG no. 62 uses the term ʾŠKRY in a broken context. Hélène Lozachmeur translated this as *rémunéré/caché* but glossed the term as *champ* in her index. This is rather surprising, as the word is well attested in Persepolis where it means (normally annual) "tribute," following the Akkadian from which it is borrowed.[34] The term is now known from Idumean documents and in all contexts implies a payment accounted to an individual.[35] Persian-period Babylonian evidence from Borsippa indicates that it was a form of a labor tax that was not the *ilku*-labor tax.[36] Instead, it was a group tax levied on a group performing a particular trade service. It appears in the Idumean evidence (e.g., *TAOI* 2 A14.13, 3 A94.2, 3 A300.5.6) and in Idumea was paid in products.[37] These few Idumean texts may refer to individuals paying for others to perform their *iškaru*-service or to individuals supplying a project from the product of their trade. The latter seems to reflect the notion of the *iškaru* found on the Persepolis mortars for which the object itself seems to be the result of the labor tax, here given in tribute.[38] This may be similar to the *iškaru* from the prebendary system of Borsippa, which was framed as a brick tax, and presumably bricks were the result of the labor.[39]

The fact that the term is known from Elephantine is relatively unsurprising, though it should be emphasized that in the broken ostracon an Egyptian context

33. Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 77, 113–14; Tuplin, "Fiscality in the World of Aršāma," 318. Note also the later manuscript *TAD* C3.28 mentioned by Tuplin.

34. As part of his idiosyncratic study, Bowman reinterpreted the term as "intoxicant," which is dubious (Bowman, *Aramaic Ritual Texts*, 54). For discussion, see Naveh and Shaked, "Ritual Texts," 452; Schütze, "Aramaic Texts from Arachosia," 407, 418–19.

35. *TAOI*, pp. 2:48; 3:177, 604; 4:102. See also Lemaire, "Achaemenid Taxation," 304.

36. Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 102.

37. Mitchka Shahryari is preparing a study on the matter.

38. See King, "Taxing Achaemenid Arachosia," esp. 196–99.

39. Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 102.

is implied, not a Judean one. Nonetheless, this is a rare example of technical taxation jargon used on island by someone in seemingly a lower-level administrative capacity, thereby showing a basic understanding of taxation jargon.

### upiyātu *Food Provisions and ʾŠRN Supplies*

Unlike most of the taxation terminology that comes from the established Babylonian Aramaic scribal tradition, terms for supplies frequently derive from Iranian loanwords. Some of these, such as PTP, "food ration," and PRS, "salary," have Semitic equivalents, in this case MʾKL and MNH/KSP (depending on context), respectively. Others, however, appear to be new concepts introduced into the Aramaic administrative world. Of them, ʾPYT, "*upiyātu* food provisions," and ʾŠRN, "supplies," are loanwords from Iranian into Aramaic; the former is also known in Akkadian.[40] Due to the etymological evidence, Kleber understands *upiyātu* in its Babylonian context as a type of food delivery but separates it from the typical food rations allocated for those serving the *ilku*-labor tax.[41] This observation generally agrees with R. T. Hallock's proposed meaning of "food supplies" for the term where it appears in the Elamite evidence from Persepolis.[42]

The term *upiyātu* is found three times in the Aramaic evidence from Elephantine, twice in ostraca missives (CG nos. 18 and 226) and once on the Aršama decree for the repairs of a Carian-owned state-sponsored boat (A6.2). It is also attested three times in the Bacrian documents (*ADAB* no. A2, B5, C4). On the one hand, it is surprising that it is so far absent in the Saqqara evidence, but on the other, its highly localized function means that it is more likely to appear in community- and fort/district-level documents than among those from the royal estates. Scholars of Aramaic have simply translated the term, given its Iranian etymological meaning, as "needs" (*ADAB* no. A2:3) or these things "which are necessary" (*TAD* A6.2).[43] The Aramaic ostraca are too fragmentary to infer precise meanings, but the Aršama decree provides a well-detailed description of administrative supplies and protocols involved in the state-sponsored repair of a Carian boat. The administrative syntax in which the term appears in the Elephantine decree is complicated, but the Bactrian attestations are clearer, especially *ADAB* no. A2. That decree refers to a distinctive project in which wayfarers are under special conscription to remove sand or deliver vinegar. (The precise actions and commodities involved are unclear.) Here the *upiyātu* of

40. See etymological discussion in *ADAB*, p. 83.

41. Kleber, "Taxation and Fiscal Administration," 126–27.

42. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, 19 (concerning PFA 388–96). See further discussion in Henkelman, "Imperial Signature," 126n117.

43. *TAD* indicates that "necessary" is uncertain.

the wayfarers (line 3) is repeated using another Iranian loanword, DWŠḤWRʾ, which is technical administrative jargon meaning "provisions for the road" (*ADAB*, p. 55). The document discusses the hired wayfarers working alongside troops. The broken context of *ADAB* no. B5 is similar. From these texts the meaning of the word becomes clearer: the *upiyātu* refers to provisions approved by the state for public works projects in which the state contracts local labor in place of or in addition to teams of state laborers performing their *ilku*-labor obligation. Those performing the *ilku*-labor obligation receive their rations or wages (Aram. PTP/PRS), while those under special conscription receive the *upiyātu*. Functionally they are the same thing, though they differ administratively, perhaps coming from separate accounts in the end. In fact, in *ADAB* no. C4 lines 41–46 the *upiyātu* is assessed just as the PTP-food ration. In sum, the state laborer received a PTP-food ration while the state contractor received the *upiyātu*.

This meaning of *upiyātu* as a provision in the form of a ration or salary for contracted workers on special public projects nicely fits the administrative circumstances documented in the Elephantine decree (*TAD* A6.2), but the exact phrase in which *upiyātu* appears leads one to doubt whether the Aramaic scribe understood the term. I think he did, and this becomes clearer when the manuscript is interpreted through the lens of administrative scribal culture. In that source, a boat was approved for repair under state order, and both storehouse accountants (Aram. HMRKR) and a labor foreman (Aram. SGN) are consulted for estimated supplies necessary to complete the project. The relevant passage reads in Aramaic: ʿDN HWH ʾWPŠRH LMʿBD ZNH ʾŠRNʾ ZY ʾPYTY ʾWPŠRH LMʿBD (*TAD* A6.2:9–10). This is immediately followed by a serial list of the material supplies needed for the project. A few interpretive notes are necessary here. First, while the decree provides the materials in a serial list, this is highly impractical for the structure of an actual estimate, which one would expect to have been written as a tabular list. Thus, the administrative format of the decree has altered the administrative formatting of the original estimate it cites. Second, the meaning of the key term ʾWPŠRH remains obscure. Walther Hinz was the first to suggest the meaning *Sachbedarf*, which hardly helps one understand the context.[44] Third, the syntax is administrative and somewhat rudimentary. The use of the absolute ʿDN is unexpected, particularly alongside the suffixing conjugation of HWH. The literal meaning "time was" does not match the context, which demands "the time is (now)" (Aram. ʿDNʾ ZNH/HW*). So too, the use of the infinitive, rather than a conjugated verbal form, is informal or suggests an unfamiliarity with Aramaic diction.

44. Hinz, *Altiranisches Sprachgut*, 242–43. Similarly, Tavernier, *Iranica in the Achaemenid Period*, 440–41, glosses the term with "needs, means to accomplish something."

The evidence lends itself to the interpretation that the decree's writer may have directly cited administrative documents from the accountants and foremen, who were not native Aramaic speakers.

In this citation ʾPYTY also appears with ʾŠRNʾ, another Iranian loanword that has been vaguely translated to mean "supplies."[45] The term is always attested in the singular. In *ATNS* no. 26 it accompanies food-ration provisions (Aram. MʾKL) for Ionians and Carians who were known for operating state-sponsored ships there as well. In the Bactrian evidence, however, the term ʾŠRN is found in the context of food, and the editors struggle to explain why (*ADAB* no. C1:20 and p. 182–83). In fact, one expects MʾKL, PTP, or *upiyātu* in the context where ʾŠRN is found in *ADAB* no. C1. So while it may simply mean "materials" and could include food provisions in the mind of some administrators, such as those at Bactria, the emphasis should be placed on the supplier of the materials, which in all attested cases is the state. Thus, in its Aramaic administrative contexts it should be rendered as "(state) supplies."[46]

The men who wrote the estimates for *TAD* A6.2 would have learned the jargon necessary to acquire the contract, though they may not have fully understood the terms or Aramaic language needed to express them. Thus, one could understand the statement in lines 9–10 as follows:

ʿDN HWH
ʾWPŠRH LMʿBD
ZNH ʾŠRNʾ ZY ʾPYTY
ʾWPŠRH LMʿBD

(Now) is (the) time.
Its requirements (are) to (be) made.
This (also requires state) supplies of *upiyātu* (for the labor teams).
Its requirements (are) to (be) made. (List of materials from the accountants)

While lexically minded critics may argue that this interpretation stretches the Aramaic, it makes sense of the multilingual and multilayered administrative social setting of the document. It was in the best interest of the well-trained ʿAnanî, scribe of the decree, to simply copy the infelicitous Aramaic, so to avoid bearing culpability should a problem arise with the estimate at a later date.

45. Compare Tavernier, *Iranica in the Achaemenid Period*, 437, which glosses the term with "furniture, equipment."

46. It is the subject of a memorandum entry, which likely paraphrased an actual ʾŠRN-list (*TAD* D3.21).

## Conclusions

As with any system with technical jargon, only a few understood and appropriately used the Aramaic taxation terms in the Egyptian province. Those working at the community level understood in general terms that monetary and labor taxation existed, and the bulk of their documents exhibits the daily activities necessary to maintain the taxation system without directly referring to it. The communities were culpable for group tax payments that were collected and recorded by their leaders. The individuals in the communities did not directly encounter the bureaucracy of the state, though they felt its effects on their finances and freedoms.

At the higher administrative level of the fort and royal-estate systems, the imperial accountants used technical jargon that would have been lost on most people in the communities. The jargon derives mostly from the Babylonian sphere and presumably was well understood in the Babylonian Aramaic that the Persians adopted as the imperial language. These taxes were mostly framed in the *mandattu*-payment / *ilku*-labor tax's obligation paradigm, while more technical references to *miksu*-duty tax appear at Saqqara. That said, some state administrators preferred to use the general term *mandattu*-payment, even where *miksu*-duty payment is expected.

Some at Elephantine knew technical taxation jargon as indicated by the occurrence of the *iškar(u)* group labor tax on CG no. 62 or the *mandattu*-payment found on *TAD* B3.6. It is also possible that the HLK (*ilku*) service obligation was occasionally used by the administrators writing the ostraca. Unsurprisingly, the Elephantine administrators also used specialized Iranian loanwords for state payments and supplies (PTP, PRS, ʾPYT, ʾŠRN). The presence of taxation terminology in the Elephantine documents combined with the evidence from Saqqara, and even the wider native setting of Ain Manawir in the Kharga Oasis, indicates that Egypt in general and the Judeans in particular fit squarely within a larger imperial taxation system. The Elephantine documents do not indicate that Judeans conducted "private" business nor were their landholdings hereditary. They were, instead, part of a larger imperial program of state dependency, in which their daily needs for land were sponsored by the crown and taxed through a Judean community structure centered around the economy of their temple.

# Conclusions

A THREAD RUNNING THROUGH this study is the idea that the Persians brought cultural revolution to the Egyptian province. This has been previously recognized, but the insight is underdeveloped in the world of Egyptological literary studies. The Demotic literary tradition of the second half of the first millennium exhibits interaction with Aramaic idioms, administrative forms, and literary ideas (e.g., P.Ryl 9). This is most evident in the acceptance of the Story of Ahiqar, which existed in various Aramaic recensions in Egypt in the fifth century, influenced Egyptian literary sources, was translated into Demotic, and afterward copied for approximately half a millennium.[1] Thus, the Persians drastically altered Egyptian culture, society, and history: firstly, by means of introducing new food and commodities, public works technologies, fashion, administrative structures and documentary forms, and educational entertainment in the form of literature and secondly, by facilitating the formation of a legal tradition that appeared local but was wholly Aramaic.

Elephantine and Syene in the fifth century BCE constituted a dynamic imperial fort. The Persian investment at the site produced a relatively stable society. The evidence for imperial investment has long been acknowledged by those reading the Aramaic documents from Elephantine, but the details by which the empire's multilayered administration controlled the site have remained elusive. This study has attempted to articulate the complexities and reach of the imperial system by focusing on aspects of Judean life at the site. It has been argued that the Judean community is best interpreted as a Persian loyalist colonial venture that sought to maintain a pro-Persian presence in southern Egypt. They were not a simple community of private family enterprises as is often assumed, nor were they an independent group of mercenaries whom the Persians co-opted.

1. Quack, "Die demotischen Fragmente." Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 13–21, claims, "The author of the Demotic Instructions of Ankhsheshonqy was familiar with the Aramaic Wisdom of Ahiqar in a version (or versions) which stood much closer to the Syriac and other translations than to the fifth century BCE text from Elephantine" (21). Bledsoe, *Wisdom*, also sees Ahiqar as a type of cultural document used to promote Persian loyalty at Elephantine.

Instead, their community constituted a recognized institutional structure within the larger imperial program in the Egyptian province.

This study began with the thesis—perhaps better, hypothesis—that the Judean community represented the highest level of civil occupation in the provincial sociology of Persian-period Elephantine/Syene. The temple of Yahô was a state-sponsored imperial investment led by Judean priestly administrators who answered to the fort's institutional administration. The fort (Aram. BYRH) represents the lowest organized level of imperial bureaucracy in the Egyptian province. It was the seat of the district (Aram. MDYNH) and answered to the provincial capital at Saqqara, which was a royal estate and the bureau of the prince. That capital and its satellite properties in the districts were the seats of imperial power in the Egyptian province. The bureaus throughout the province each operated an elaborate administration that oversaw the population by controlling products and labor and by overseeing justice. This was all made possible through a sophisticated and standardized system of documentation. Unlocking the meaning of these documents and writing the history of Achaemenid Egypt, and Elephantine in particular, requires sensitivity to the Aramaic administrative scribal culture that produced the documents.

As a recognized colonial community, the Judeans and their temple existed socially above the native Egyptian population, which was also administratively organized by a temple. In the case of the Egyptians of Elephantine and Syene, the ancient complex of Khnum and his consort Sati was the native cultural center. It managed the economic matters of the Egyptian population for the Persians. Due to the constant threat of Egyptian uprising, however, the Persian's fort system, and by extension the royal estates, closely monitored the Khnum temple. At times, as it has been shown in this study, the Persians would even allocate resources to the Egyptians via the Judeans, who might oversee them in administrative capacities.

The only unifying factor that explains the existence of the Aramaic textual record is a need to record matters that were important to the administration—namely, the collection and allocation of goods, tracking people and their works, community business, the transference of property of state dependents, and the change in an individual's status. Community disputes and conflicts appear to have been handled internally, and little record survives that provides insight into these internal customs or practices.

I have argued that to understand these documents historically, one must understand the Aramaic administrative scribal cultural and its conventions. When the philologist and social historian views the sources through this lens, conventional interpretations of key documents in the scholarly narrative of the Judean community at Elephantine are challenged. This study has provided new interpretations of the data and in so doing attempted to disprove the mercenary

theory and replace it with a more historically accurate theory of state dependency. Close reexamination of the contracts from this perspective provides a solution to the vexing problem of the interchanging ethnonyms Judean and Aramean by showing that the notaries writing the documents held views on the parties involved. These Judean notaries attempted to elevate their loyalty status in the state-led proceedings by identifying their members as Aramean when it was politically advantageous to do so.

Viewing the dynamics of administration as a real practice has shown that the understudied administrative lists, which constitute a large number of the surviving texts, demonstrate a complex taxation system of native, colonial, and fort communities. Further investigation of these documents reveals that the Yahô temple administrators must have monitored taxable persons, men and women (or their replacements) who were organized in state dependency groups and living off island. The conclusion that a large portion of the Judean community must have resided off island leads to the most likely deduction that they owned land grants that required them to be taxed. Such observations provide a fresh line of inquiry into the question of religious diversity that previous commentators have disproportionately focused on: deities represented state-recognized communities and were ethnic symbols of taxable groups. Any culturally religious diversity this may or may not have implied is not explicitly addressed by the surviving data. Thus, studies that overemphasize religious aspects are highly speculative.

Investigation into the communities' business letters from an administrative perspective has yielded new findings about how these recognized taxable communities internally viewed their social structures. The Judean administrators of Elephantine and other Northwest Semitic temple administrators in Syene mapped familial social terms onto their administrative roles.

After having attempted to apply a new paradigm to the documentation and having proposed new findings about the sociology of the site, this study turned to the economic experiences of the Judean administrators based on the large corpus of administrative ostraca missives known from Elephantine. The first task was to map the social network of administrators. This led to the identification of a core team and its extended network, which included the Khnum temple's administration. It was argued that the Khnum administration operated a parallel administrative structure. No doubt these structures were in part, if not wholly, due to the result of Persian intervention. Further investigation into the production and use of commodities handled by the administration fleshed out the features of a basic community ration that was issued to the labor teams. The Yahô temple was responsible for salaries (Aram. PRS) and food rations (Aram. M$^{?}$KL) issued to its members, who were serving their state-service obligations. While by default these may have been *ilku*-labor tax terms, they may have also been *iškaru*-service obligations; the data is not explicit. I have argued that the

temple, in addition to its primary function of accounting for foodstuffs and basic storage operations, was active in the textile industry. Both the repairing and laundering of garments is attested in the data, and presumably the temple also produced new garments. The temple's facilities for these activities appear to have been off island. The implication is that the temple extended into a network of facilities alluded to in the surviving documentation about which, however, we can only speculate based on reasonable inference and comparative study.

In light of this research, a more complex picture of Elephantine-Syene is coming into view. The island and its temples were the fort's strategic network of storage facilities. Even state treasuries are mentioned to be on island, and it seems possible that the Yahô temple personnel may have had (partial access) to these facilities. The temple's reach extended to a network of facilities off island that may have included more storage and accounting taxation posts and certainly a full-service textile facility. The Hermopolis papyri demonstrate that the temple of Nabu based at Syene also provided garment services to its community. One is inclined to postulate a relationship between the Northwest Semitic temple communities and suggest that the Yahô temple's textile facilities were the Nabu temple. There is no data to support this, however, and no reason to assume that only one institution was involved in the garment trade.

Likewise, the Yahô temple's many shipments of foodstuff off island indicate an industrial kitchen complex in which the Judean food supplies were prepared for the Judean labor teams. One is drawn specifically to statements like those found on *TAD* D7.8 in which the sender emphasizes that only one ardab of flour remains for the evening, a supply that would produce over 500 six-inch loaves of flatbread for one night's meal.[2] Coincidentally, the Swiss Institute's excavations at Syene have unearthed an industrial kitchen in the Persian strata, in the southwest corner of the fortified wall (Area 2). It is enticing to consider whether the Judeans had their own industrial kitchen complex or whether Area 2 was used in shifts by the various communities. Alternatively, Area 2 may have been staffed by permanent cooks who worked under the direction of the leaders of the various labor teams. The textual finds from Area 2 exhibit a multicultural interaction between Egyptian and Northwest Semitic peoples, but currently no Judean-specific texts survive from the site.

While the Judean community's personnel interacted with the fort system, the average community members had little direct contact with the imperial system. The shadow of that system loomed over every individual. Although the state's terms for service and tax obligations are rarely used in the community

2. Based on Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 71. 1 ardab = 3 griv/seah (71) and 1 qab = 1/6 a seah. If one qab ≈ 2.5 liters, then 1 ardab ≈ 45 liters. At the rate described in chapter 9, this would, conservatively estimated, produce 540 loaves of six-inch flatbread.

documents, the activities of the community fit within the Persians' model of taxation. The technicalities of the system were complex and beyond the average person's comprehension, as is frequently the case with taxation jargon, ancient and modern. For this reason, the jargon was simplified: taxes were seen as "gifts" and payments to be "given."

Given the complexity of the data, this study did not set out to be comprehensive; rather, it intended to provide a new paradigm through which long-contemplated, difficult questions about the experiences of Judeans at Elephantine could be asked, as well as a framework for answering those questions. Beyond this, new lines of inquiry are now opening.

For instance, in other ancient Near Eastern Semitic sources, temples also acted as health-care centers, where some priests served as health-care providers. The data from Elephantine provides some insights into the psychological treatment that the temple offered its members through the vow and sacrificial system, as well as into the practice of pardoning community members for disputes and crimes.[3] Culturally religious activity was not absent from the site, as indicated by one case in which a female dream interpreter is called upon to alleviate the distress of night sweats (*TAD* D7.17). But physiological treatments like those found in the vast Mesopotamian corpus of the *ašipu*-priest, the magical-medical priestly treatments found in the Hebrew Bible (see Lev 12–15), or the divinatory relief practices in neighboring Idumea are absent at Elephantine. Perhaps future research on the Yahô temple at Elephantine can make better headway in such a line of inquiry when considering the economy of temple enterprise.

Furthermore, comparing evidence from the Babylonian province with that in the Egyptian province has been fruitful, but future comparative work on the corpora may solve a striking problem in the surviving data—one that made comparative analysis difficult throughout this study: the colonial communities of Achaemenid Egypt appear to have been planted as temple communities, but the Judean community in Babylonia, with its roots in a Neo-Babylonian deportation policy, currently lacks evidence of a Judean temple. Tertiary evidence, such as the Xanthos Inscription, indicates that even in Anatolia the Persian program for annexing regions involved the state recognition of a temple economy, the granting of its lands, and therefore the creation of a community of ethnically identifiable state dependents. This begs the question: Was there a Judean temple community administrating the *kalakku*-storehouses at al-Yahudu? We know virtually nothing of the Aramaic personnel in the *kalakku*-storehouses. The *kalakku*-storehouses are reminiscent of the off-island storage facilities that must have existed according to the Elephantine data. The fact that the Babylonian

3. Discussed in Moore, "Administering Cult," 316–18.

scribes who wrote the Judean documents in the environs of Nippur do not refer to a Yaḫu/Yama temple is no surprise, given the surviving evidence is written in cuneiform contractual language by Babylonian scribes. To be sure, even in the contractual language of Elephantine, the Yahô temple only appears as a geographical marker in land deeds or in reference to the title of the temple's LḪN-servitor when he serves as a contractual party. Going forward, comparative studies of the Babylonian and Egyptian Judean communities would be another fruitful line of inquiry, so long as the documents are considered from the administrative scribal perspectives that produced them.

This study has attempted to show that questioning scholarly presuppositions and shifting perspectives can provide nuanced, if not better, answers to long-held questions about the Judean community at Elephantine. I have supplied answers that accord with the data more accurately than previous studies because the model of society proposed here was deduced from the data and not imposed from a literary source, such as Herodotus or the Hebrew Bible. It is hoped that future studies will continue to shift the discourse away from interpolative approaches that use biblical or Greek historiographic sources to establish a model of Persian society in Egypt. The five-tiered institutional system of landholdings proposed in this study is admittedly theoretical, but it better reflects a complex society than the all-too-prevalent assumption of a basic divide between empire and private life. In fact, I have argued that there was no divide. From Egypt's Persian-period textual and archaeological evidence we glimpse a model—perhaps the first model—of an imperial administration that directly touches the lives of every individual throughout its vast landholdings.

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