

# STRATA

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# Strata: Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society

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## Review Article

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  
(CUSAS) 28

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This volume offers complete editions, translations, copies, and photographs of 103 cuneiform tablets that, for the first time, document in considerable detail the social and economic conditions that Judean, as well as other West Semitic exiles experienced in Babylonia after they had been forcibly resettled by Nebuchadnezzar's armies in the early sixth century BCE. As the authors rightly point out, the clay tablets contain 'transformative data' (p. viii) that promise to shed new light on a major episode of ancient Near Eastern history that remained poorly documented so far. biblical scholars, Assyriologists and ancient historians have eagerly awaited this volume for several years, and their patience has now been rewarded by a text edition that will define research on the Babylonian exile for years to come.

The tablets published in CUSAS 28 document several successive generations of Judean (and other) exiles in contexts that reflect their daily lives as closely as one could wish, considering the conventions of writing in Babylonia at the time. A significant portion of the texts was written in a village called 'Town of Judah' (Āl-Yāhūdu; or simply Yāhūdu, 'Judah'), after the place of origin of the exiles settled there. Nearly two decades ago, it came to light that private collectors of antiquities had acquired clay tablets produced in this Judean village in Babylonia.<sup>1</sup> The idea that these tablets might be the remains of an archive of Judean exiles elicited much excitement, but the texts remained largely

inaccessible to researchers. CUSAS 28 is the first substantial publication of this material. As to contents, the texts document transactions in silver and kind pertaining to the cultivation of land, the payment of taxes, the organization of military service, the purchase of cattle and slaves, the creation of business ventures, and – very occasionally – the financial issues that arose at marriage and death. While written in Babylonian cuneiform by Babylonian scribes, the texts mention hundreds of Judean individuals – many bearing Yahwistic names – as principals and witnesses to the transactions, often engaged with members of other ethnic minorities and with Babylonians of various social backgrounds. All these transactions can be dated to the day, offering us a unique opportunity to study evolving socio-economic conditions and changing cultural practices of a sizeable group of exiles over a long period of time (572–477 BCE).

Why are these texts so important? Until now, the fate and experiences of Judean exiles in Babylonia were poorly documented outside of the literary reflexes found in biblical texts. Most of the available documentary evidence was either sporadic in nature or late in date. For instance, the well-known ‘Weidner oil ration lists’ provided an invaluable snapshot of the life of Jehoiachin and other Judean royalty at (or near) the court of Nebuchadnezzar (Weidner 1939; Pedersén 2005: 111–27), but the historical value of these cuneiform records is restricted because they are highly bureaucratic and mono-topical in nature and they cover only a few months of what must have been a considerable stretch of time spent by these individuals in captivity. In comparison, the evidence from the Murašû archive about Judeans making a living in the countryside of Nippur is more dense, complex and stretched out over a longer period of time (Stolper 1985), but as these texts date from the late fifth century BCE they are mute about the experiences of earlier generations of exiles.

The texts in CUSAS 28 now help to fill some of the gaps. They do so, firstly, in a chronological sense: the oldest text in the volume is dated only fifteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem (572 BCE) and is followed by a more or less even stream of tablets until the ninth year of Xerxes (477 BCE; pp. 4–5). This means that, apart from the very first years of the Babylonian exile, the entire period traditionally thus labeled is covered in the corpus, including the moment(s) of possible return(s) in the reigns of Cyrus and his successors. The long coverage will enable students to trace more complex historical processes in a single exilic community, in the course of several successive generations and against the backdrop of the changing political conditions of the 6<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Secondly, the texts fill a gap in various social senses. Until now, information about Judean presence in 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE Babylonian society was constricted to the royal entourage in Babylon, as reflected in the Weidner texts, and to a small group of Judean merchants operating in the Sippar area, as

reflected in private contracts preserved in local archives.<sup>2</sup> The texts in CUSAS 28 pertain to Judeans settled in a rural village in south-central Babylonia. These exiles were subject to participating in the land-for-service sector; that is, they were forcibly made to cultivate lands for their own upkeep in exchange for part of the yield and the provision of military and fiscal services to the state.<sup>3</sup> It is very likely that these men and women experienced their exile very differently from those who lived in the metropolis of Babylon and those who operated in the cosmopolitan environment of Sippar's mercantile community.

Beyond their significance for shedding light on the Babylonian exile, these texts also offer valuable new insights in the Neo-Babylonian countryside as a place of expansion and multicultural encounters. In particular, the archive contains much information on the development of the land-for-service system, both in terms of its agricultural economy and its administration. Most Neo-Babylonian archives originate in urban centers (Jursa 2005), so the rural outlook provided by the texts in CUSAS 28 is a welcome change of perspective.

There can be no doubt that the new texts from Judah-town presented in CUSAS 28 will have a tremendous impact in all fields engaging in the study of the Babylonian exile. Readers should be aware, however, that the historical significance of these texts remains impossible to assess properly as long as the companion volume by Cornelia Wunsch and Laurie Pearce is outstanding (*Judeans by the Waters of Babylon: New Historical Evidence in Cuneiform Sources from Rural Babylonia*, announced 'forthcoming' as *Babylonische Archive* vol. 6 [BaAr 6] with ISLET in Dresden [p. vii]). The 103 clay tablets edited in CUSAS 28 represent no more than half of the total number of tablets that can be assigned to the textual unit associated with the 'Town of Judah'. Since the late 1990s, the existence of the Judah-town texts has gradually become known in scholarship, but access was and is still regulated by the various collectors who own the tablets. The collection published in CUSAS 28 belongs to David Sofer and is presently exhibited at the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem, where they are 'accessible to researchers and public alike' (p. viii; cf. Vukosavović 2015). At an unknown date in the future, Cornelia Wunsch (with the collaboration of Laurie Pearce) will publish a second significant group of 95 tablets, belonging to the Schøyen collection, in the aforementioned volume (BaAr 6). At least 11 more tablets in the Moussaieff collection – all of these published – have been identified as belonging to the same group (Joannès and Lemaire 1996 and 1999; Abraham 2005 and 2007; Lambert 2007). In the preface to their volume, Pearce and Wunsch indicate that there are 'other collections' that hold additional material (p. vii), without disclosing how many more tablets we should expect, or in which particular collections they are being held. This situation discourages serious engagement with the texts in print, as any student without privileged access to privately owned material faces the certainty that his or her observations will be

rendered incomplete, if not obsolete, by significant additions of new materials at an unknown point in the future.

What can readers of CUSAS 28 expect? As a critical edition of the 103 clay tablets, the volume seeks to establish a basis for further research and touches only briefly upon the ‘transformative’ data contained in the texts. The introduction offers a brief outline of the historical significance of the texts (pp. 3–7), a short reconstruction of their archival structure by Cornelia Wunsch (pp. 7–9), and a more in-depth discussion of the onomastic evidence by Laurie Pearce (pp. 10–29). This is followed by an extensive analysis of all personal names in the corpus by Pearce (pp. 33–93). The main part of the book consists of the text editions, indices to the texts, and photographs of the texts (pp. 98–322 and plates I–CV). The indices include references to texts that will appear in BaAr 6, which will eventually aid navigation between the two volumes.

The linguistic and cultural data contained in personal names enabled Pearce to identify the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the people mentioned in the texts (Judean, Babylonian, Iranian, Egyptian, etc.) and to highlight various trends of acculturation visible in the naming patterns (pp. 10–15). Naturally, her discussion focuses on the Judeans, who are mostly (but not exclusively) recognizable through the use of the Yahwistic element in their names, and who form the largest ethnically marked group in the corpus (pp. 16–29; see also Pearce 2015 on identifying Judeans in cuneiform sources). Many Judean names attested in the corpus are already known from biblical passages and epigraphic finds, including from Babylonia (e.g. the Murašû texts), while others are new. This evidence is likely to attract much attention from biblical scholars, whose interest in the cuneiform evidence for Judean exiles in Babylonia has traditionally been onomastic in nature (see Sidersky 1929 for an early example of this scholarship; more recently see a.o. Coogan 1973, 1976a, 1976b; Zadok 1979 and 2002; Pearce 2015). On pp. 33–93, Pearce offers a detailed linguistic and cultural analysis of every single name in the corpus (including the Schøyen texts), whether Hebrew, Aramaic, West Semitic, Akkadian, Arabian, Iranian, or Egyptian. The catalogue also provides a translation and a list of all attested (cuneiform) spellings of each name. In doing so, Pearce has developed a most useful and welcome research tool that will benefit not only students interested in the cultural processes affecting Judeans and other minorities in Babylonia, but also Assyriologists and historians of the ancient Near East working on cuneiform texts from this period.

The archival reconstruction proposed by Wunsch is based on grouping together texts that cluster around one of three villages (Āl-Yāhūdu [54 texts], Bīt-Našar [47 texts], and Bīt-Abī-rām [2 texts]). She associates each of these three groups with one particular individual or family who acts as main protagonist in the transactions recorded in the texts. Group 1 is thus associated with the Judean deportees Rapā-

Yāma and his wife Yapa-Yāhû, their son Ahīqam, and Ahīqam's five sons (Nīr-Yāma, Haggâ, Yāhû-azza, Yāhû-izrī, and Yāhûšu; cf. p. 8). Group 2 clusters around a certain Ahīqar, son of Rēmût, who may also have been a Judean deportee judging from the Yahwistic names of his grandfather (Samak-Yāma; no. 56 and p. 191; but see my comments below) and son (Nīr-Yāma; p. 9). Group 3 is associated with a royal official, Zababa-šarra-ušur, who managed large tracts of land and operated at 'an administrative top level' (p. 9), much higher than the protagonists of groups 1 and 2, who dealt more directly with the land. The three clusters thus delineated are, according to Wunsch, 'distinct archival groups' (p. 7), even if they 'appear to be loosely connected through a few faint links' and were stored together 'in an urban administrative center' (p. 9).

These qualifications are all problematic. Firstly, Wunsch does not explain how the 'distinct' nature of these archival groups should be understood in light of the fact that they were eventually stored together. How does labeling Ahīqam and Ahīqar as the 'archive holders' from Āl-Yāhudu and Bīt-Našar (p. 9a) combine with the statement that the 'texts most likely originate from the same locus' (p. 9b)? The preface to CUSAS 28 (p. vii) announces that Wunsch will 'extensively' discuss the interpretation of the archival structures in BaAr 6, the companion volume that is yet to appear, but for the time being we are left to wonder how the author views the tension between the distinct, yet at the same time apparently collective, status of these texts. There is no attempt to resolve that tension, or at least to flag it up as a problem. Wunsch's 2013 statement that 'the three distinct groups did not emerge in three different places at the same time, but, rather, in close proximity to each other, perhaps in an administrative centre of the region where they had been finally disposed off or set aside by their ancient owners' (Wunsch 2013: 251–2) does not really help, as this directly contradicts the presentation of Ahīqam as 'archive holder' in CUSAS 28 (p. 9) and of his 'archive' as having been shaped by events internal to the life cycle of this man's family (p. 8).

Secondly and on a related note, one would have liked to see a discussion of the identity or nature of the 'urban administrative center' where the texts were supposedly deposited. There is no information about the find spot of the texts as they are unprovenanced (below), so Wunsch's suggestion that they were kept in an 'urban administrative centre' cannot be based on external data. On which internal argumentation the suggestion is made, however, remains unexplained. Her description of the Zababa-šarra-ušur cluster (group 3), as showing 'the framework in which the actors from groups 1 and 2 operate' (p. 9), seems to suggest that she views this person or his bureau as the force that ultimately brought these files together, but this is merely extrapolated from her scattered remarks; no engaged discussion of the topic is provided. In order to understand the *raison-d'être* of any

archive, identifying the institution that was responsible for storing the texts should be the first priority.

Thirdly, the neat division in three archival groups is artificial: it blots over complexities, both within and between the groups. To start, some attributions based on geographical location are wrong or inconsistent. For instance, why should text no. 101 (written in Hazatu) be put in group 2 and text no. 102 (written in Bīt-Abī-rām) in group 3, when both mention the same creditor? Clearly, it would make more sense to sort no. 101 with the Bīt-Abī-rām texts, even if it was not written there, especially in view of the fact that no. 101 has *nothing* in common with any of the texts in group 2. Another example of the inconsistency of the system is the attribution of text no. 13 to group 1, even though it was drafted in Bīt-našar (the location of group 2). In this case, the attribution is sensible because the text deals with Ahīqam, ‘protagonist’ of group 1, but it shows that the two parameters of Wunsch’s classificatory system (geography + protagonist) do not always match up. In fact, and in my opinion significantly, text no. 13 has *more* than only its geography in common with group 2: it also shares its most prolific scribe, Arad-Gula. Why not take the scribe as classifying factor here? His presence establishes one of the few links between the Ahīqam and Ahīqar files. There are more indications that the figure of the scribe is structurally significant in this corpus of texts, as I will explain shortly.

The most serious flaw in the archival reconstruction proposed by Wunsch is that she assigns tablets to group 1 and group 2 that do not pertain to the individuals she singles out as the ‘protagonists’ of these groups. While some of these tablets belong to people who were clearly associated with Ahīqam and Ahīqar (e.g. in the case of Šidqī-Yāma, who belonged to the inner circle of Ahīqam’s father), such a close link is not always detectable. The small cluster of texts written in Āl-šarri (nos. 47, 48, 49, 50, 51) seems only marginally connected to the figure of Ahīqam, to whose archive it is assigned (pp. 176–183). While it is true that one of Ahīqam’s records was drafted in Āl-šarri (no. 41), that text has nothing but its locality in common with nos. 47–51 that display a remarkably strong internal cohesion based on the mention of a certain Iqbâ son of Nabû-šumu-ukīn and the scribe Bēl-lē’i. Another case in point is the little dossier made up of texts no. 64 and 65. These two texts were written in Bīt-našar – hence assigned to the Ahīqar file in CUSAS 28 – but instead of Ahīqar, they mention a certain Bēl-ahhē-iddin son of Nūr-Šamaš as protagonist. There is no apparent link between Bēl-ahhē-iddin and Ahīqar, so why does Wunsch include these texts in the latter’s archive? No explication or discussion of these matters is offered. As this only concerns two texts, one may object that this is just a small issue of little consequence. In my opinion, it is *exactly* in the places where the system of classification fails to capture the complexity of what is going on, that we have the best chance of uncovering

the structure that really underlies it. How can we explain the presence of texts no. 64 and 65 in the corpus? In my view, the answer to this question could lie again in the figure of the scribe (Arad-Gula): he functions as a connecting factor between Ahīqar and Bēl-ahhē-iddin because he wrote tablets for both men. But we should go a step further: it is not just that these men used the same scribe, these men used the same scribe and subsequently their tablets were deposited together. Would it not be sensible, then, to consider the possibility that scribal activity defined the structure of this corpus, at least in some of its layers?

Most Neo-Babylonian archives were collected and stored by the institutions and individuals who act as main protagonist in the transactions they record (e.g. Jursa 2005) and this is clearly the model that Wunsch followed when ordering the texts in CUSAS 28 in three groups centering on ‘protagonists’ (Ahīqam, Ahīqar and Zababa-šarra-ušur). But it seems that the processes of production behind the ‘Āl-Yāhūdu archival complex’ (or whatever we want to call this mixed bag) were much more diverse, more organic, and less determined by particular ‘protagonists’ as central points of focalization. For instance, while some parts of the archival complex may consist of ‘private’ texts of Ahīqam’s family, not all the texts from Āl-Yāhūdu that the authors associate with this man in ‘group 1’ are done justice by such a label. A striking example is the Āl-Yāhūdu marriage contract that was published years ago by Kathleen Abraham (2005) and that remains weirdly unconnected to the rest of the texts written in the village. The slave sale contract published as no. 52 in CUSAS 28 is similarly ‘odd’, in the sense that it disobeys the principles of archival reconstruction that the authors defined. In order to arrive at an understanding of this archival complex that is inclusive of *all* its tablets, a more open, less dogmatic, approach to its history of formation is required.

In some parts of the archival complex, scribal activity seems to provide such an alternative structuring presence. I have discussed texts no. 13, 64 and 65 above, but as a further illustration, we may now look at texts no. 19 and 20, both from Āl-Yāhūdu. These texts were written a day apart and record almost identical transactions but with partly different ‘protagonists’. In no. 19, 6 *kurru* of good dates are owed by Azrīqam son of Šamā-Yāma to Iddinā son of Šinqā, in payment of the harvest due on state lands cultivated by Judeans who fall under the authority of Uštānu, Governor of Across-the-River. In no. 20, 25 *kurru* of good dates are due from two other Judeans (Qīl-Yāma son of Šikin-Yāma and Šalamān son of Rapā-Yāma) to the same person for the same purpose. The scribe of both texts was Nidintu son of Bēlšunu of the Dābibī family. Both texts are sorted under the ‘Ahīqam’ file (group 1) on account of their provenance from Āl-Yāhūdu. While Šalamān may be a brother of Ahīqam, it is clear that neither of these texts (and especially not no. 19) belongs to the personal file of Ahīqam. Instead, these texts pertain to Judeans who operated on the same level of dependence and obligation

towards the same office or bureau as Ahīqam did. For Ahīqam too owed harvest grown on the very same state lands, cultivated by Judeans in the vicinity of Āl-Yāhūdu, to Iddinā. Texts no. 17 and 18 specify that he was a rent farmer (*ina sūti*, no. 17: 1) leasing the rights to collect harvest from these lands. Iddinā and his colleagues ran the bureau charged with the management of these affairs on behalf of the Governor of Across-the-River. They employed Babylonian scribes who drafted tablets with Judean middlemen, using the conventions of the Babylonian legal system and in the Babylonian language and cuneiform script. Nidintu (of no. 19, 20) was one scribe employed there. Šamaš-ēreš of the Mudammiq-Adad family, who wrote no. 17, 18 and several more tablets for Iddinā, was another. Also to be connected to this office is Iddin-Nabû of the Naggāru family, who wrote a text (no. 21) that again is structurally similar to nos. 19 and 20 and mentions yet another Judean middleman (Šama-Yāma son of Nahim-Yāma).

The presence of texts such as no. 19, 20, and 21 – pertaining to men who operated *besides* Ahīqam – suggests that the archival processes behind the texts in Wunsch’s ‘group 1’ cannot be properly understood as driven by Ahīqam’s personal activities. Though certain texts may rightfully be considered personal documents of Ahīqam’s family (such as the inheritance division; no. 45 and Abraham 2007), such a qualification does not do justice to the full range of represented texts. We see traces of a collateral process that affected multiple actors in the same way because they interacted with the state in the same way. In other words, the state (in its local manifestation of Iddinā’s office) should be identified as the archive-producing institution behind at least some layers of the corpus. How these layers relate to other sections of the ‘archival complex’ remains to be investigated. It is conceivable that we have to imagine a more complex organization with several parallel departments and evolving histories. The office dealing with state lands cultivated by the Judeans underwent some changes after the well-documented phase under Iddinā (e.g. no. 23 and 24), and it is possible that the connection with Zababa-šarra-ušur happened subsequently or through an affiliated bureau. These issues cannot be properly addressed unless a substantially greater portion of the texts is published. Most of the Zababa-šarra-ušur texts, for instance, are still outstanding (to appear in BaAr 6).

However, these preliminary observations lead to a more fundamental question about the role of Babylonian scribes in the Judean community. At no point during its documented history of almost a century did this community, or any of the other ethnic minorities living in its proximity, take up Babylonian writing. All scribes mentioned in the corpus bear Babylonian names, patronymics, and (often) family names. This means that generations of children grew up in the Judean community without being trained in Babylonian literacy, or, perhaps more accurately, without achieving positions that let

them apply their skills for archival documentation.<sup>4</sup> The Babylonian scribes thus enjoyed a monopoly of legal and administrative Babylonian literacy in this community, putting them in a remarkable position of control over it – a position enhanced by their use of the language of empire and a script that most, if not all, were unable to read. Although Pearce and Wunsch do not explicitly address the role of scribes and literacy in the archive, some scattered remarks suggest that they see the use of scribal services by Judean deportees in participatory and voluntary terms (e.g. p. 106). Earlier, Pearce described the use of Babylonian legal contracts by Judeans in Āl-Yāhūdu as a sign of their ‘adaptation’ to the Babylonian milieu (Pearce 2011: 274). Kathleen Abraham similarly remarked that there must have been ‘pragmatic’ reasons why Judean exiles thought it opportune to resort to the services of Babylonian scribes, e.g. in order to seek protection of the legal system should the need arise (Abraham 2015: 35). These interpretations share an optimistic outlook on the use of Babylonian literacy in the Judean community: it is a sign of their acculturation, emancipation, and ‘readiness’ to integrate. I would like to point out, however, that there are also less comfortable dimensions to these interactions. First, it bears repeating that practicing Babylonian literacy for writing legal contracts remained an exclusive prerogative of members of the Babylonian host society. Second, *at least some* of the scribes who wrote tablets for the Judeans were linked to a state bureau, which would have rendered their position of power over the involuntary immigrants even more critical. How closely these scribes were associated to the state can be seen very clearly in the career of Arad-Gula, the most prolific scribe of the entire corpus and the man who provides a rare link between Wunsch’s ‘group 1’ (associated mainly with Ahīqam) and ‘group 2’ (associated mainly with Ahīqar). During the turbulent years of 522–520 BCE, when Babylonia was torn between factions supporting Darius and factions seeking to restore ‘Babylonian’ autonomy (Beaulieu 2014), Arad-Gula was able to continue his activities as long as Bīt-Našar, the village where he worked, was under the control of Darius (nos. 87, 88, 73, 89, 90, 69). When its allegiance switched to Nebuchadnezzar IV, a different scribe took over his business (no. 86), only to make place for Arad-Gula again when the village returned to Darius’s zone of influence some months later (nos. 70, 92, etc.). This shows that Arad-Gula’s work as a scribe at Bīt-Našar had a political overtone. This was not a man who offered his services to paying customers on a voluntary basis.

Where do the tablets presented this corpus come from? The authors leave the question of when and where in Iraq the tablets were found unaddressed. The tablets are simply said to lack archaeological context like most of the Neo-Babylonian corpus, a situation which, in their opinion, poses no other challenges than the need

to apply the same ‘refine[d] methods’ of archival reconstruction that specialists already use in Neo-Babylonian studies (p. 9; a similar statement is made by Wunsch 2013: 249 n. 5). Purely from a scientific methodological point of view, this comparison may be valid, but it fails to acknowledge that the ethical and legal issues involved are of an entirely different magnitude if artifacts were excavated in recent years rather than 100 to 140 years ago. The authors treat the lack of provenance merely as a historical-archival problematic and tackle it by screening the tablets for internal clues about the *ancient* place where the *ancient* owners deposited the texts (p. 6–7). These internal clues – mostly consisting of the Babylonian place names mentioned in the tablets – lead to the conclusion that the tablets were deposited in the environs of Nippur (p. 6), ‘presumably in an urban administrative centre in the region’ (p. 9). This is no more than a reasonable guess: why should the centre be urban, for instance, and is it not true that we know of at least one Syrian exilic community who deposited its clay tablets in Syria, upon their return home from exile, hundreds of kilometers away from the villages where they had resided in Babylonia and where the tablets were originally composed?<sup>5</sup> Hence, purely on the basis of the state of the art, one might just as well ponder a provenance near or in the returnees’ hometown, i.e. Jerusalem. This surely is not a serious suggestion, but it remains owing to the feeling that the volume’s readers are not given all the information about the provenance of the tablets that must be available, if not to the authors then at least to the owner(s). At the time of the exhibit at the Bible Lands Museum, several press releases stated that the tablets had been around on the antiquities market since the early 1970s (e.g. R. Kopanz, ‘By the Rivers of Babylon’, *Ha’aretz*, 2 November 2014). What is the source of this statement? Pearce and Wunsch do not mention it in their volume. In fact, if we look at the history of publication of the archive, a later date seems to be suggested. In 1996, Joannès and Lemaire published the first seven tablets of the archive, belonging to the Moussaieff collection. In 1999, the same authors published another three from the same collection. The first discussion of the tablets in the Sofer collection in print dates to 2006, by Laurie Pearce, in the proceedings of a conference that was held a few years earlier in Heidelberg. The Schøyen tablets were mentioned in print later, but they were around at least already at the same time when the Sofer texts were first discussed (see the preface to CUSAS 28).

It should be clear that Pearce and Wunsch have worked under difficult circumstances to produce the present volume, and they are to be praised for their patient work. The text editions and photographs are of a high quality, and the layout of the volume is very user-friendly, allowing its readers to examine the hand-copy of the cuneiform text and read the transcription and translation without turning a page. The extensive indices are most helpful in combining the data from CUSAS 28 and the yet-to-appear volume BaAr 6. The texts are

often (though not always) provided with a narrative summary of the recorded transaction, which will ease the difficulty for non-specialists to interpret the often-terse language of the contracts. Readers should be aware, however, that some of these narrative summaries are colored by a certain interpretation of the historical conditions of the archive, e.g. the idea that the texts represent Murašû-like activities in their infancy (e.g. p. 6, p. 198), or that the (Judean) protagonists engaging in the Babylonian economy were driven by profit-seeking behavior and entrepreneurial motivations (e.g. p. 5, 8, 173).

A few remarks on smaller issues follow.

- xii: The explanation of abbreviation ‘J’ is wrong: numbers 1–7 (not 1–6) are from Joannès and Lemaire 1996; J8 and J9 are from Joannès and Lemaire 1999.
- 8: The family tree of Ahīqam is only partly depicted here. Strikingly, Ahīqam’s mother (Yapa-Yāhû, mentioned in no. 8; perhaps also in the break of no. 6: 4) is missing. Yāma-kīn son of Samak-Yāma of no. 5: 25 may have been an uncle of Ahīqam, and Šalāmān son of Rapā-Yāma may have been a brother of Ahīqam (p. 133). Pearce 2015: 31 presents a slightly different genealogical chart, suggesting that Ahīqam’s children had been born from two marriages. This issue is discussed in CUSAS 28 p. 172.
- 7–9: There are striking onomastic parallels between the genealogies of Ahīqam and Ahīqar, given the names of Ahīqar’s son (Nīr-Yāma) and grandfather (Samak-Yāma; identified as such on p. 191, but note that in no. 60 this would involve the father acting as creditor of the son, which is unusual), and the occurrence of a Rēmūt son of Samak-Yāma in the file of Ahīqar son of Rēmūt (see references on p. 289). It is unclear how the cluster of texts around Rēmūt son of Abi-ul-ide relates to these people; a discussion of Ahīqar’s family tree would have been helpful to dispel confusion due to homonymy and (possible cases of) double-naming.
- 9a.7, 11: ‘Ahīqam’ > ‘Ahīqar’.
- 14 n. 59: Add Stolper 2001 to publications of the Murašû archive.
- 98 (no. 1: 1): The damaged personal name probably reads Šumu-ukīn (‘mu-gi.na).
- 99.a.6: This is an incomplete list of Aramaic inscriptions in the corpus, add no. 10 and several of the texts published by Joannès and Lemaire 1996 & 1999. The markings on nos. 60, 68 and 39 may also represent Aramaic, but this requires collation of the original tablets.
- 100.a.5: ‘c. 587 BCE’ > ‘c. 562 BCE’.
- 100.a19: -tī (not -ti).
- 101.b: One of the occurrences of Šidqī-Yāma is left out of the discussion (no. 5,

where he appears as a depositor).

- 105 (no. 5: 29): It is unclear why the authors correct year 8; year 9 makes more sense, cf. l. 4. They comment on the problematic date (p. 106) but both month and year are reconstructed.
- 106.b.20: The wage that needs to be paid to the slave is not ‘relatively low’, cf. Jursa 2010: 674ff.
- 106: In the last paragraph of the comments, the renter and owner are mixed up.
- 114.b.6: The reference to Artaxerxes must be mistaken in view of the chronological overview on p. xlii.
- 130.a.8–9: It is text no. 16 that was recorded in Ālu-ša-Amurru-šarra-ušur, no. 17 that was recorded in Bīt-Na’innašu, and no. 18 that was recorded in Bīt-Šinqā.
- 140.b.1–5: *sūtu* (<sup>gis</sup>bán) is the common designation of the ‘rent’ due on a rent farm; it is not a capacity measure. Ahīqam’s role as a rent farmer is documented in other texts, e.g. no. 17: 1. On *sūtu* and the Neo-Babylonian rent farm system, see a.o. Jursa 1995: chapter 7 and Jursa 2010: chapter 3.2.3.-5.
- 148.a.10up: *ginnû* > *ginnu*.
- 149.a.8up, 220.b.3up and 221.a.10up: ‘Wunsch 2013’ does not appear in the bibliography. The reference is Cornelia Wunsch, ‘Glimpses on the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia.’ Pp. 247–260 in A. Berlejung and M. P. Streck (eds.), *Arameans, Chaldeans, and Arabs in Babylonia and Palestine in the First Millennium B.C.* Leipziger Altorientalistische Studien 3. Wiesbaden, 2013.
- 170 (no. 45: 25): The year date cannot be 16, but 17, 18, or 19.
- 172.b: Note that Ahīqam’s trade connections to Babylon are attested in no. 44; in that sense, it is not so surprising that no. 45 – which deals with the division of Ahīqam’s business shares among his sons – was drafted in Babylon.
- 176.b.3up: ‘two’ > ‘four’.
- 190.a.3up, 20up: The tablet was written on the 13<sup>th</sup> day (not on the 23<sup>rd</sup>).
- 190.b.8up: The comment to l. 18 seems to miss the point: ‘Hamat’ was a settlement comparable to ‘Yāhūdu’ – a colony of deportees from the homonymous Syrian town on the Orontes, which was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar in the last year of his father’s rule (ABC 5 99: 6).
- 228.a.up: In the commentary to l. 6, the signs SU and KU<sub>4</sub> are mixed up.
- 228 (no. 82: 16–17): Judging from the photograph these lines may read ú-ìl-tì.meš šá *hal-li-qa e-la-a*’ (‘the debt notes that were lost have turned up’) or something similar, rather than ú-ìl-tì.meš šá *ina en.líl<sup>ki</sup> e-ṭir’-*’ (‘the debt notes in Nippur are paid’). In any event, the only explicit mention of ‘Nippur’ in the

corpus is based on a very uncertain reading.

232.b.8up: ‘Ahīqam’ > ‘Ahīqar’.

244.a.14: The transcription of the personal name in no. 98: 8 should be *AD-du-ú-nu* if the name is to be read Abdūnu (244.a.13up).

245: Texts no. 98 and 99 are incorrectly described as ‘near duplicates’. These tablets record separate transactions between the same people on the same day. Two different scribes were used to indicate the separate status of each of these transactions. Note also that no. 99 has no *elat*-clause. No. 98, therefore, probably refers to 99 and another, now lost, tablet. This also means that the house was more valuable than indicated by Pearce and Wunsch (p. 245): at least 4 (and probably more) shekel of silver was paid; moreover, the owner of the house had already pledged a field to Ahīqar some years earlier (no. 71a-b), so the rent paid for the house might not represent its actual value.

246.b.7up: ‘Nergal-aplu-iddin’ > ‘Nergal-aplu-ibni’.

250.a.9: Line 2 of no. 102 reads UGU, not UGU-*hi*.

250.a.13: Line 4 of no. 102 reads TIL-*tī* (not -*tu*<sub>4</sub>).

250.a.26: Line 15 of no. 102 reads <sup>iii</sup>bāra (not ‘<sup>iii</sup>1’).

250.a.28: The Aramaic (*bl’dn*) in line 17 of no. 102 probably represents the debtor’s name (Bel-aha-iddin) rather than his patronymic (Bel-iddin).

250: The left hand edge of no. 102 displays the Aramaic number ‘4’.

251.a.4: Text no. 103 is a promissory note for dates, not barley.

290.a.16: According to p. 250, the duplicate of no. 102 is BaAr 6 no. 58, not no. 57 as listed here.

303.3: Arad-Gula is not the scribe of text no. 5.

304–305: Two of the ‘scribes’ listed here have names that might suggest a non-Babylonian origin (Iddin-Amurru son of Amurru-silim and Qatṭin son of Tābia). However, both entries are mistaken; these men do not appear as scribes in the relevant tablets, but as witnesses (no. 55 and 57).

VII: The photograph belongs to text no. 10, not no. 7.

Note that the texts published in CUSAS 28 have previously been cited by the authors using the siglum IMMP – referencing the original title of the volume (*Into the Midst of Many Peoples: Judeans and Other Exiles in Babylonian Texts*), e.g. in Pearce 2011 and Wunsch 2013 – and the siglum TAYN – ‘Texts from āl-Yāhūdu and Našar’, e.g. in Pearce 2006.

## Notes

- 1 The history of publication is more fully discussed below.
- 2 The evidence from Sippar is now extensively treated by Bloch 2014; previously it was cursorily discussed by Jursa 2007 and Waerzeggers 2014.
- 3 For the Babylonian system of agricultural development by forced migration, see van Driel 2002, Jursa 2010.
- 4 Recent studies suggest that the book of Ezekiel betrays its author's familiarity with Babylonian intellectual and literate traditions; cf. Vanderhooft 2014, Winitzer 2014, Pearce 2014, Stökl 2015a and 2015b.
- 5 See Tolini 2015 on the Neirab archive.

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