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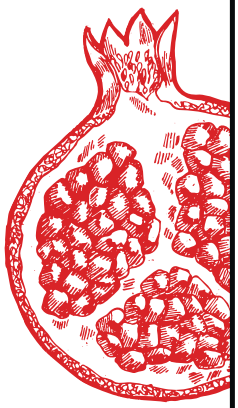

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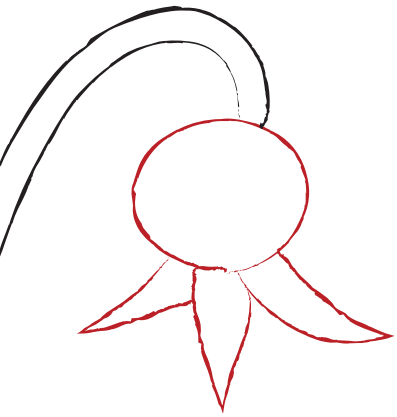

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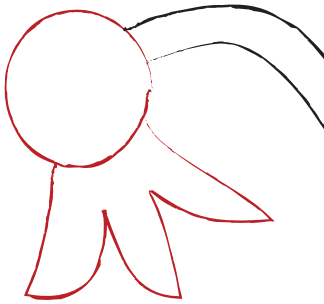

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IMPERIALISM, IDENTITY, AND LANGUAGE CHOICE IN PERSIAN YEHUD: TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE ACHAEMENID EMPIRE

Jason M. Silverman

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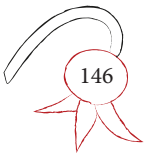
Abstract

Scholars have long connected the Achaemenid Empire and its use of Imperial Aramaic – spanning the empire's space and duration – with processes of social identity formation. Yet the details and mechanisms of this supposed link for the elites within the empire remains hazily theorized at best. Taking the famous complaint about language loss in Nehemiah as a starting point, this study explores the various social and status implications involved in the local use of scripts and languages. Using sociolinguistic literature around "code-mixing" and "code-switching," Communication Accommodation Theory, and diglossia, this article tries to map some early ways the social implications of languages choices within Persian period marginal regions could be understood, with a specific focus on Yehud. These tools indicate a wider array of variables are relevant than have sometimes been entertained and suggest that language choice in Yehud related more to inter-elite rivalries than reaction to the Persians.



Les chercheurs et chercheuses ont depuis longtemps rapproché l'emploi de l'araméen impérial par l'empire achéménide – recouvrant tout l'espace et la durée de l'empire – avec des processus de formation d'identité sociale. Cependant, les détails et les mécanismes de ce lien supposé pour les élites au sein de l'empire ne sont au mieux théorisés que de manière nébuleuse. À partir de la célèbre complainte concernant la perte du langage dans Néhémie, cette contribution s'intéresse aux diverses implications sociales et ayant trait au statut liées à l'usage local de scripts et de langages. En s'appuyant sur la littérature sociolinguistique autour du « code-mixing » et du « code-switching », sur la théorie de l'accommodation des communications, et sur la diglossie, cette contribution cartographie certaines des façons anciennes dont les implications sociales des choix de langue dans les régions marginales de la période perse peuvent être comprises, en particulier pour Yehud. Ces outils signalent qu'un ensemble plus large de variables est à prendre en compte que ce qui est parfois suggéré, et proposent que le choix de langage à Yehud est d'avantage lié à des rivalités intra-élites qu'à une réaction aux Perses.

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Jason M. Silverman

Introduction

The (Achaemenid) Persian Empire was a decidedly multilingual entity. Obviously, neither the imperial overlords nor the average subject were conversant in all or even many of the living languages within the empire. Nevertheless, multilingualism of several kinds was rather common if not the rule, and this is very important for understanding the texts created within this context.[1] The ways various individuals

* This paper was written in the context of the Centre of Excellence in Changes in Sacred Texts and Traditions, P. I. Martti Nissinen. The final stages occurred in the Centre of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires, P. I. Saana Svärd. A preliminary version of this paper was first presented in April 2017 in Helsinki at a workshop on the use of the Social Sciences. Extended and revised versions were subsequently presented at the EABS in Berlin in August 2017 and the ASPS in Tbilisi in March 2018.

[1] See Briant 2002, 507–10; recently, Jonker (2021) has drawn attention to the Achaemenid use of trilingual inscriptions, calling this an ideology of multilingualism

and populations negotiated this complex communicative situation must inform modern reconstruction of *social* history and texts.[2] This is true for the imperial overlords, their administrations, and subject populations – and thus for the Judaean communities, too. This article seeks to understand some of the social reasons for and ramifications of language choice within the Persian Empire, with a focus on Yehud as a provincial example.

When any given group has multiple languages to which it may make recourse, a choice must be made. This choice has pragmatic, social, and/or political implications. For the purposes of this essay, there are three distinct but related contexts around the question of language choice:

1. the Persian Empire itself, with its interface of elite, administrative, and local languages;
2. the Judaean communities, with their interfaces between heritage languages, dialects, *lingua franca*, and intergroup interactions; and
3. the Hebrew Bible, with its mix of languages and dialects.

For the first one, the empire, Old Persian/Old Iranian was the language of the Great King and the Persian elite;[3] Old Persian, Achaemenid Elamite, Babylonian (and sometimes Egyptian) the monumental

(2021, 185, 202). To this it should be noted that later the empire appears to have shifted to a quadrilingual policy that incorporated Egyptian, at least for the royal titles on some objects (see Wasmuth 2015, 218–24). Sigla for inscriptions follows standard usage (king, location, number). DB = Darius I Behistun; DSf = Darius I Susa f.

[2] The present study is primarily concerned with social, rather than purely linguistic, implications.

[3] It has been suggested that the written version was an archaizing version of the vernacular (Schmitt 2008, 76; Tavernier 2011, 243), as the language shows signs of change not much later (cf. Schmitt 2008, 77; Skjærvø 2009, 47); it is perhaps an exaggeration to call it "invented" à la Jonker 2021, 198. The existence of Old Iranian calques in Achaemenid Elamite shows as much – Henkelman has even called Achaemenid Elamite a "pidgin" (Henkelman 2008, 49). For a number of Persian loans in Elamite, see Tavernier 2007.

inscriptional languages; Imperial Aramaic (and at least for a while in some areas, Achaemenid Elamite) the administrative language; and a wide array of local languages in simultaneous use.[4] For the second, the Judaeans, we have to reckon with (most likely) dialects of Hebrew, Aramaic, and other local languages (such as Akkadian and Egyptian). For the third, the Hebrew Bible, the text is preserved in Aramaic and two forms of Hebrew (typically called Classical/Standard and Late Biblical Hebrew).

This article begins with the most explicit mention of language choice in Judaean literature of the period, in Neh 13. After pointing out the numerous questions that this brief passage raises, consideration turns towards better understanding the communicative, social, and political ramifications of language choices in the three contexts mentioned above – the Persian Empire, the Judaean communities, and the Hebrew Bible. This engages some discussion within sociolinguistics and sociology concerning minority language use. In particular, the essay addresses the concepts of code-switching and code-mixing, a related theory called Communication Accommodation Theory (from now on called CAT), and the work of Fishman on diglossia. Discussion then returns to the socio-linguistic situation of Yehud within its wider historical context. These theories highlight the need for more nuance in considering the social contexts of language change, point to a wider array of relevant social variables, and lead to a suggestion that inter- or intra-elite rivalries may have been more significant than reaction against the empire *per se*.

Nehemiah 13

The most famous and explicit mention of language choice in Persian period Judaean texts, is, of course, Nehemiah's language complaint in Neh 13:23–24.[5]

[4] See Tavernier 2008, 2017, 2018, 2020; Wiesehöfer 2016.

[5] For a look at the use of this text in debates over the death of vernacular Hebrew, see Thon 2009.

גם בימים ההם ראיתי את־היהודים השיבו נשים אשדודיות עמוניות מואביות
ובניהם חצי מדבר אשדודית ואינם מכירים לדבר יהודית וכלשון עם ועם

> Also in those days I saw Judeans who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, (and) Moab; and half[6] of their sons spoke Ashdodite, and they could not speak Yehudite but like tongues of people and people.

Within the context of a complaint about intermarriage between Judaeans and women from surrounding areas, three languages are mentioned, Ashdodite, Yehudite, and the "tongues of people and people." This is notable for several reasons. The first is a lack of clarity for us what exact languages these three terms intend to denote. Ashdod was a former Philistine city that in the Persian Empire was under the control of the Phoenician city of Sidon (later Tyre), yet housed a building typically interpreted as belonging to a Persian governor.[7] Was the language called Ashdodite then a form of Phoenician, Aramaic, or another local dialect?

Scholars have suggested Ashdodite might be Philistine,[8] a local Canaanite dialect,[9] Phoenician,[10] Nabatean,[11] or Aramaic.[12] Neither Blenkinsopp (1988, 363), Southwood (2011, 14–15), nor Becking

[6] Some have preferred to understand "half" as an adjective of sons and some as an adverb for speaking, though it is not overly relevant for the present argument. E.g., Batten 1913, 299; Lemaire 1995, 154–55; Thon 2009, 569.

[7] On coast and Ashdod, see Briant 2002, 490, 952; Tal 2005: 80–81, 88–89; Lemaire 2015, 17–22. On the poor remains of Persian-era Ashdod, see Kogan-Zehavi 2005; two fortresses north of Tel Ashdod from the Persian period have been excavated; see Porath 1974 (Hebrew), discussed in Stern 1982, 54; Alexandre 2006. An Ashdodite coin, from the fourth century, has two Aramaic letters (IAA 153937; Farhi 2016, 22, 37, 45), but as Schniedewind has rightly commented, coins are not necessarily indicative of vernacular (Schniedewind 2007: 146). See now the overview of Hagemeyer 2021, esp. 100–102.

[8] Williamson (1985, 398), following Ullendorff (1968), who argued it was a non-Semitic language. Myers (1965: 216) suggests it is either Philistine or Aramaic, but also thinks the language was similar to Judah's in the fifth century.

[9] Schmitz 1992, 206.

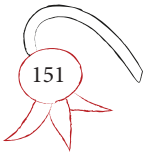
[10] Lemaire 1995, 163, followed by Fried 2021, 388–89.

[11] Batten 1913, 299*.

[12] Kottsieper 2007, 100–101; Hogue 2018, 60.

(2018, 328) decides what the language is; the former offers all the previous suggestions, and Southwood suggests it could either be a pidgin language (half-Ashdodite) or just not Hebrew (already, Lemaire 1995, 154–55). Berlejung (2016, 18, 22) and Hagemeyer (2021, 108) have recently thought the reference was to a multilingual situation rather than a specific dialect. The difficulty in determining what would constitute an "Ashdodite" language has prompted several scholars to see it as a literary conceit aimed at Yehudian identity construction.[13]

Yehudite is itself an unclear term in this context. The usage for a language is quite rare; it only appears here and in three parallel versions of one event, in which it contrasts with Aramaic.[14] The general consensus among commentators is that Yehudite means "Hebrew,"[15] on the basis of this repeated story.[16] Yet, being derived from the term for the province of Yehud, it must indicate whatever the *vernacular* was associated with Yehud at the time of Neh 13 (and we are now speaking, at the earliest Artaxerxes I, possibly rather later, so from the mid-to-late fifth century BCE onwards). Was this a dialect of Hebrew or Aramaic,[17] and is there a contrast meant with the surrounding North Semitic dialects generally or some specific vernacular (in the passage said to be Ashdodite, but perhaps the Samarian vernacular)? Or, with Thon, is the problem an evolution of the Hebrew vernacular away from Biblical Hebrew (Thon 2009, 574)?



A similar problem attends the last item in the list, which may or may not refer to languages spoken in Ammon and Moab, which had had their own languages related to Hebrew in the pre-exilic periods,

[13] Thon 2009, 574; Frevel and Conczorowski 2011, 23–24; cf. Berlejung 2016.

[14] 2 Kgs 18:26, 28 || Isa 36:11, 13 || 2 Chr 32:18; Neh 13:23.

[15] Batten 1913, 300; Williamson 1985, 397; Myers 1965, 217; Grabbe 1998, 66; Southwood 2011, 16 n. 58; Blenkinsopp 1988, 361; *DCH* 4:122; Thon 2009, 568.

[16] In this context it is worth noting that the Tanak never uses "Hebrew" [עברית] for the language; the earliest usages I can find for it are in Greek texts: the prologue to the Greek of *Sirach*, *4 Maccabees*, and the Gospel of John. Ullendorff 1968, 128.

[17] Though the parallel story contrasts Yehudite with Aramaic, this does not *necessarily* mean that the vernacular of Yehud at the time Neh 13 was written was the same as whenever the Neo-Assyrian story in 2 Kgs || Isaiah was written.

but for which evidence in the Persian era is limited and uncertain.[18] Perhaps relevant to this is the fact that Nehemiah had called Tobiah an "Ammonite," even though he has a Yahwistic name and seems to be interested in Yahwistic temple worship – and whose speech was presumably comprehensible to the Yehud elite – implying that residents of Yehud and Ammon shared at least one language at the time Nehemiah was written.[19] Was this merely because of a shared *lingua franca* or shared vernaculars?

Beyond the specific exegesis of this passage, one needs some sort of understanding of the language situation of Palestine in the Persian period. This is a matter of some uncertainty and much debate. There are three different issues interconnected in this, which should nonetheless be kept separate: medium (vernacular versus written usage), languages (including dialects), and writing technology (script). There is no doubt that Imperial Aramaic was the language of administration in Palestine; all extant inscriptions from this time period of which I am aware are in Aramaic, and mostly in Aramaic script (though some coins use paleo-Hebrew). It is uncertain what language(s) functioned as the vernacular(s), however. Schwartz sees Hebrew remain as a vernacular until 300 BCE (1995, 3; 2005, 54–55), with Aramaic co-existing as a vernacular (1995, 19, 44). Wilson-Wright (2015) also thinks Hebrew survived as a vernacular until the third century BCE. Polak (2006) argues that Hebrew remained as a vernacular throughout the Persian period, largely based on some features of the language in

[18] See Aufrecht 2019, 10. Fitzpatrick-McKinley (2015, 135–36, 204–207) favors continuity; Lemaire (2017, 304) favors replacement by Aramaic. Schwartz (2005, 58) thought all Levantine languages were mutually intelligible dialects, but this of course says nothing about their perception in terms of code-switching; indeed, the classic study of Blom and Gumberz was between two dialects (see below). Even pronunciation differences have the potential for significance (cf. Judg 12:5–6). A number of scholars see the mention of Ammon and Moab as secondary additions.

[19] Knoppers has also noted that the narrative implies Nehemiah, Sanballat, and Tobiah all share a language (2007, 329). The historical identity or existence of Tobiah or of a province of Ammon is beyond current scope, beyond the question of dialect or language. For a discussion of Tobiah, see, e.g., Fitzpatrick-McKinley 2015, 204–207; Kessler 2016, 137–43.

Ezra-Nehemiah. Schniedewind (2007; 2013, 142), Kottsieper (2007), and Gzella (2017) all argue that Hebrew died and was replaced by Aramaic as a vernacular, but with Hebrew remaining as a religious language. For both of these languages one must also reckon with several dialects or versions: Imperial, eastern, and western Aramaic, and at least Classical and Late Hebrew. The difficulty with assessing the vernacular is that by definition it is the spoken language, and thus written evidence is not particularly pertinent, especially since the majority of individuals were still wholly oral. One can note, however, that it is likely that a large percentage of the users of *written* Hebrew had been deported from Judah by the Babylonians, and that the form of Aramaic used in Yehud was introduced in the sixth century,[20] meaning it was functioning as a written language already before the Achaemenid period. The question is whether the local Judahite dialect had continued as the vernacular until the period of Neh 13 or not, along with the written usage of Aramaic. The same question is pertinent for the Judaeans in Babylonia and the Yahwists in Samerina.

This article cannot answer these questions, but instead it seeks clarification concerning the types of language choices that could have had social and political implications in the Persian Empire. With some sociolinguistic tools, what are the implications of a switch from Yehudite to Ashdodite? What are the implications of this complaint from a man one would presume knows and largely administratively functions in Imperial Aramaic? Are there identity issues, administrative issues, power issues, communicative issues? How does this relate to the linguistic situation of the various Judaean and Yahwistic communities and the empire at large at this time and earlier? A very basic question remains why the Tanak was written in three types of language (two dialects of Hebrew and Aramaic), most probably by scribes who were primarily trained in imperial Aramaic, as anyone who received education in literacy probably did so primarily for imperial service.[21]

[20] Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2011, 73; Schniedewind 2013, 140.

[21] Cf. Silverman forthcoming. Leuchter 2017, 254, also thinks Aramaic was the language in which scribes were primarily trained, though in the context of arguing for the import of the script.

To find some tools for these questions, the present study will describe some aspects of Code-switching, CAT, and studies of diglossia. First, however, one can note several recent studies which have directly addressed the language situation of Persian Yehud.

Persian Yehud and Language Choices

Ehud Ben Zvi (2009) addressed the issue of language choice for the Hebrew collection. He does not make reference to sociolinguistics, but he claims that the choice to use Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) for the "core" texts and Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) for more "peripheral" ones reflects "canonical" concerns for "authority" (Ben Zvi 2009, 282–83). Ben Zvi might be right to question chronological correlates with these two forms of Hebrew, but the assertion of deliberate canonical concerns or authorial intent to be "authoritative" rely on "canon" and "scriptural authority" already having been theological concepts at the time of the texts' writing.[22] The concern with explaining two dialects of Hebrew, however, is a helpful reminder that we are dealing with a more complex situation than just Hebrew-Aramaic for the biblical text. Similarly, Young (2009) has argued that SBH and LBH are simply different literary styles of Hebrew, perhaps reflecting regional preferences more than anything else.[23]

In a study of the social history of Hebrew, Schniedewind explicitly claims that during the Persian period Aramaic replaced Hebrew as a spoken language, though it still lingered on in "limited demographic continuity" (2013, 160). The result was Hebrew taking on a "new political and religious identity" (2013, 158). In his reading, language change in Yehud was thus very closely tied to imperialism and ethnic identity (2013, 139). This view of language change in Yehud is quite widespread and will be assessed below after the theoretical discussion.

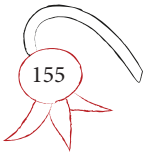
In an article from 2016, Diana Edelman appealed to the concept of code-switching for understanding the mix of Aramaic and Hebrew

[22] One might consider other sociological factors behind these choices.

[23] The question of diachronic change in Hebrew is hotly debated, and beyond the scope of the present study or this author's competence. For two sides of the debate compare Rezetko and Young 2014 with Notarius 2013, especially 265–79; Sanders 2020.

in the canonical texts. She only discusses the textual collection, and does not consider the mix of languages more broadly, whether in the Judaean communities or in the empire. In this article, Edelman largely uses Code-switching with reference to identity, with Hebrew functioning as a "we" code. She interprets the use of Aramaic in Ezra as presenting an imperial frame of reference and in Daniel as creating an "imperial other." These are issues worth returning to later.

Recently, Mark Leuchter (2017) has pointed to shared scribal training in Imperial Aramaic, and he argues that the key datum is the switch to Aramaic *script* rather than a change in language. For him, later Rabbinic stories concerning the difference between the Jewish and Samaritan writing traditions are evocative of Persian-era dynamics (2017, 254–55). He finds that this explains the collation of not-quite-coherent materials in the Pentateuch and book of the Twelve. However, this is based on a rather adventurous interpretation of the meaning of the last paragraph of column four of the Behistun inscription (Old Persian version, DB §70), taking Darius's boast of writing in *Aryan* and disseminating it on tablets and manuscripts to mean that the making of "written Aramaic copies was part of the imperial myth" (2017, 257).[24]

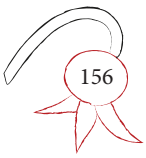


[24] Leuchter links the Aramaic version of DB at Elephantine to DB paragraph 70, where Darius boasts of writing the inscription in "Aryan" as well as on tablets and manuscript (*taya adam akunavam patišam ariyā utā pavastāyā utā carmā grftam āha*; *not* Aramaic). Schaeder (1930, 210–12) already anticipated Leuchter in wondering if this related to the use of Aramaic as a medium, but ultimately rejected it. I am not aware of any evidence for Old Persian (OP) being written in Aramaic script (except for later Pahlavi uses of Aramaic ideograms for Middle Persian, and this is a different and later phenomenon). The standard understanding is that OP primarily functioned orally, and that it was translated into Aramaic by the scribes, and disseminated more widely in that form. See Tavernier 2008, 2017, 2018; cf. Samuel 2019. Leuchter is certainly correct that imperial ideology was disseminated in Aramaic, but that does not make Aramaic itself or its script imply imperial ideology necessarily (see the discussion below). His other piece of evidence is Esther (1:11; 3:12; 8:9), but Esther is both later and primarily dependent on Greek characterizations of Persia for its depiction, so not reliable for actual Persian administrative practice. As a minor point, it is worth noting that the exact find spot of Aramaic DB is uncertain, though it was likely in Jedaniah's house rather than directly in the Yaho temple (Lemaire 2014, 304–305; *contra* Leuchter 2017, 261).

The issue of script change does deserve serious social investigation.[25] Nevertheless, script change is a separate albeit related issue from the vernacular, including why it may have been considered in need of saving. We will return to these four studies below, after a survey of some relevant socio-linguistic theory.

Sketch of Elements of Theory

The above scholars pointed to the variables of authority, identity, and imperialism as factors for language choice in Persian Yehud. All of these are key topics for the period, but we can adduce further relevant considerations through exploration of the socio-linguistic theories around code-switching, CAT, and diglossia.



Code-Switching. Strictly speaking, the concept of code-switching is narrower than the subject the present study investigates. Nguyen (2015, 1) defines code-switching as "the alternative use of two languages within the same conversation," thus only a subset of the question of language choice in a given social and political context. While some Hebrew Bible texts do indeed switch language within the same narrative, of interest is why a particular language is chosen at all for communication, whether or not there is a switch between them during the course of the communication, or indeed, whether it happens in speech or written text. This more macro perspective also finds some interest in the sociolinguistic literature.[26]

[25] See the special journal issue (Unseth 2008b) dealing with script change. It may be instructive that the contributions nearly all deal with situations with competing larger nation-states and deliberate, top-down state policies.

[26] Mahootian 2006 defines Code-switching as "the systematic use of two or more languages or varieties of the same language during oral or written discourse" (p. 511). Although this is often done subconsciously, the current linguistic consensus is that it is nevertheless rule-bound behavior (p. 512). It can also be intentional. There are three kinds within the literature: use of second language tags, such as "you know" in the context of a first language, called "tag switches"; switches at sentence or clause boundaries, called "intersentential"; and switches within clauses, called "intrasentential" (Mahootian 2006: 512; Nguyen 2015: 15). The latter is sometimes also called code mixing. For a discussion in the context

There are several functions for code-switching discussed by sociolinguists. These include "referential switching," due to vocabulary gaps in one language (common with people educated in a separate language from mother tongue, Mahootian 2006, 515) and "expressive switching," essentially as a function of identity (2006, 516). Blom and Gumperz introduced the terminology of transactional/situational and metaphorical/non-situational switching (Gross 2006, 508; Mahootian 2006, 516). The former is motivated by topic or speaker, the latter due to an extra-linguistic effect desired by the speaker. Several researchers have added a number of functions underneath the umbrella of metaphorical use: quotation, addressee specification, interjections, reiteration, message qualification, personalization/objectification, marking group identity or solidarity, exclusion, status raising, or authority (Mahootian 2006, 516). While interesting as such, attempts to use it have tended to focus on nation-state polities (e.g., Gal 1988). Further, there remains a question as to the applicability of conversational linguistic research to literature; special care must be taken in considering the latter as evidence.[27]

The landmark study that is frequently referenced is the 1972 study of Blom and Gumperz in Hemnesberget, Norway, in which they studied the use of two dialects of Norwegian, a local variety and a standard variety. In their study, the standard variety was used in official settings, and local variety in local, relational activities. They later termed these to be "we" and "they" codes. This is the sort of distinction which Edelman took up in the article mentioned previously. The rather mono-causal appeal to group identity, however, is too simplistic. Indeed, Gardner-Chloros notes that different languages can function as a "we-code" for multiple reasons, and sometimes multilingualism itself can serve an

of first-century CE Palestine, see Ong 2015, 342–43. Loanwords are a tricky case, and there is discussion on whether or not it is a separate phenomenon or whether they can always be distinguished clearly (Mahootian 2006: 512–14), but that is not a major issue for the present question. For some recent discussion of loanwords in Yehud, compare Wilson-Wright 2015 and Samuel 2019.

[27] See, e.g., Gardner-Chloros and Weston 2015; Weston and Gardner-Chloros 2015; Mullen 2015.

identity function (2009, 57). Another way of seeing this sort of arrangement is also what some scholars call diglossia, which is a situation in which two or more languages have continuing functions within one society (more below) – sometimes one language is a "high" language and the other a "low" language (Meierkord 2006, 165) – not quite mapping onto a we–them dichotomy. We will return to the distinction below.

Several publications make appeal to a theory called the Marked Model, which focuses on speaker intentions,[28] in something like a communicative version of the rational choice paradigm in economics: as described by Gross, "The central premise of the markedness model is that speakers are rational actors who make code selections in such a way as to minimize costs and maximize rewards; that is, speakers are concerned with optimizing the outcomes of an interaction in their own favor" (Gross 2006, 510). This model no doubt deserves deeper scrutiny, but it might bracket out the social and political layers too much to be overly helpful for the questions the present article asks (cf. Weston and Gardner-Chloros 2015, 205).

Another strain of study around Code-switching uses the theory of CAT,[29] to which the discussion will now turn.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). The theory developed from a social psychological theory around motivations in dyad conversations into a more comprehensive theory that integrates elements of Social Identity Approach. According to Gallois et al., CAT is based on three assumptions, as they phrase them:

> 1) communicative interactions are embedded in a sociohistorical context;… 2) communication is about both exchanges of referential meaning and negotiation of personal and social identities;… 3) interactants achieve the informational and relational functions of communication by accommodating their communicative behavior through linguistic, paralinguistic, discursive, and nonlinguistic moves, to their interlocutor's perceived individual and group characteristics. (Gallois et al. 2005, 136–37)

[28] Banks 1988; Gross 2006; Nguyen 2015.

[29] Gross 2006, 509; Mahootian 2006, 515; Nguyen 2015, 35–37.

As one can see, the theory is itself built on Social Identity Approach, but it integrates identity as only one potentially salient factor amongst others. Or, as they phrase it, the theory posits "psychological accommodation" on the basis of a "dialectic" between comprehension and identity maintenance. The use of a *lingua franca* is probably often merely a case of facilitating comprehension (see also Meierkord 2006) – at least from an individual's point of view. Of course, from a sociological perspective, the language that most facilitates comprehension reflects structures of power (cf. Bourdieu 1991).

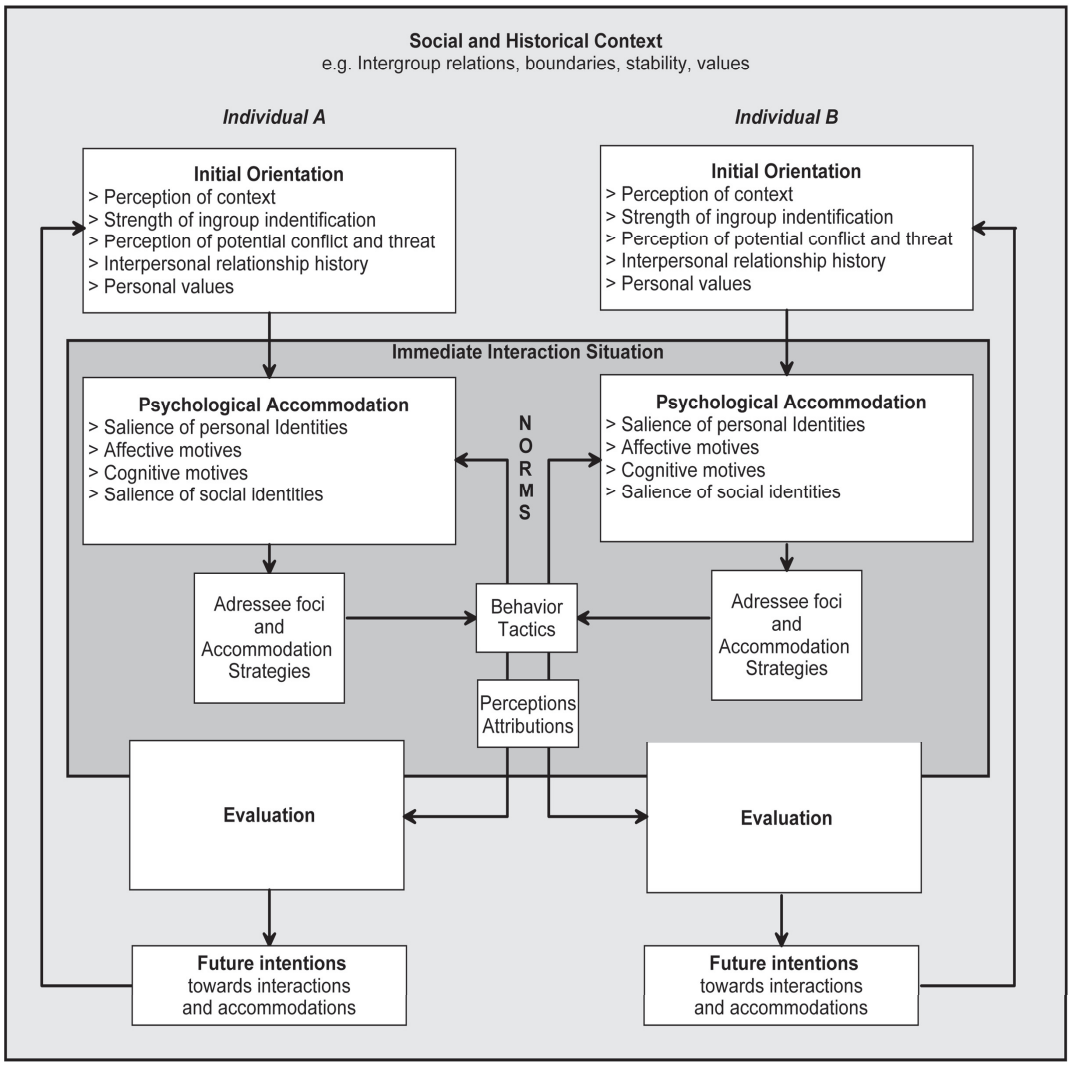


Figure 1. Model of Communication Accommodation Theory (adapted after Gallois et al. 2005, 133)

In CAT, "accommodation" refers to the degree to which a communicator adapts to the relevant audience. The terms used for this are

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convergence: the strategy of adapting behavior to the audience; *divergence*: the strategy of accentuating differences from the audience; *maintenance*: maintaining one's original style regardless of the audience (Gallois et al. 2005, 123). These concepts derive from one-to-one, face-to-face speech, but the theory applies to other media as well. For the purposes of the present study, accommodation includes strategies such as language choice, whether that be for using a particular language or dialect in the first instance, or for code-switching or –mixing during the course of the interaction. Moreover, the developed form of the theory is not restricted just to verbal communication, but includes nonverbal communications such as gestures and even potentially choice of media. Gallois et al. emphasize that the theory understands accommodation in terms of perception by the participants, rather than just what might be objectively considered to be accommodation: in other words, what the speakers think is or is not the way the other speaker actually speaks. The example they give for clarifying this is a situation when someone "over-accommodates" by speaking more slowly than is necessary, based on a stereotype of the other person's language ability. The intention was to accommodate, though the result was inappropriate.[30]

As Figure 1 (adapted from Gallois et al. 2005, 133) shows, CAT analyzes the behaviors of convergence, divergence, and maintenance within a broader context, and it is only within this broader context that their significance can be evaluated. They emphasize that the communicators enter the communication with a predisposition towards the other person or group based on previous experience and the saliency or not of group identities. These are also bound-up in predetermined factors such as role, status, and security (2005, 138).

The communicative event itself, termed in the diagram "immediate interaction situation," can then involve "psychological accommodation,"

[30] In a later review, Gallois et al. (2016, 193) state: "CAT has long moved between a description of what people actually do – that is, how their speech, paralanguage, and nonverbal behavior change toward or away from their interlocutors' – and what they are trying to do – that is, their psychological motives and intentions – as well as related perceptions of their communication."

or whether or not each speaker accommodates to the other one, and to what degree. CAT theorizes this process in terms of two types of motives: cognitive motives, essentially the need to communicate comprehensible information successfully, and affective motives, or the relevant saliency of personal and group identities for the particular interaction. All of these are bound by social norms. Gallois et al. emphasize that CAT can only function for a given instance of communication on the basis of a "well-developed theory of social norms or rules" (2005, 138). They also emphasize that behavior that fits the expected norm is likely to be evaluated relatively positively regardless of whether it is convergent or divergent (2005, 142), and that in a situation in which status is important, accommodation to the dominant system is likely (2005, 140). Overall, the theory stresses that, "all things being equal, accommodative behavior is attributed internally, evaluated positively, and results in positive future intentions toward interactions with the other person" (2005, 141). Further, CAT takes into account the fact that communication is reciprocal, in the sense that strategies of accommodation can be altered in the course of a situation, on the basis of the other person's interactions.

Finally, CAT also posits that the experience of an interaction and its accommodations will affect subsequent interactions. This is labelled "evaluation" in Figure 1.

Though not focused on just the issue of language choice, CAT is potentially useful for the question, by treating language choice as a form of accommodation within a set of societal rules. The theory raises a number of key questions for the present study:

1. How do we know when and what sorts of identities became salient for a communicative interaction in the Persian Empire?
2. Can we know or develop a theory of social rules or norms around language use within the Persian Empire and/or the various Judaean communities, and if so, how?
3. How directly do issues around dyad communication relate to the production of written texts in general, and how might they differ between different textual genres, such as administrative texts and literary texts (cf. Gardner-Chloros and Weston 2015)?

The present study will return to these questions after an overview of another stream of scholarship on minority language use, Fishman's study of diglossia.

Fishman and Minority Language

The sociolinguist Joshua Fishman spent a career studying the interrelations between ethnic minorities and language maintenance, primarily in the context of twentieth-century United States. For present purposes, his description of "diglossia" and the social prerequisites for it, as well as the general correlates of language loss, are useful, macro-social additions to the more individual-focused CAT for our query concerning language use in the Persian Empire.[31]

Fishman defines diglossia as an "enduring societal arrangement, extending at least beyond a three-generation period, such that two "languages" each have their secure, phenomenologically legitimate and widely implemented functions" (Fishman 1989, 181).[32] He emphasizes that such a situation can only remain stable beyond three generations if each language fulfils separate social functions, otherwise one of the

[31] Rendsburg (2013) argues for a more restricted use of the term diglossia, whereas Bar-Asher Siegal (2013) has defended Fishman's approach. Since the present study was first presented, Hogue 2018 has also appealed to Fishman. Schwartz (1995, 16) rejects the usefulness of the concept of diglossia since he sees most societies use it. Even if this were true, I fail to see how it would invalidate the usefulness of the concept any more than the fact all societies use language makes discussing the latter useless. Fraade (2012, 5*) rejects diglossia for ancient societies, since it derives from modern societies – but that alone is not proof the phenomenon is also modern. The concept is still used by sociolinguists (e.g., Weston and Gardner-Chloros 2015, 203) and Hasselbach-Andee (2020, 459) argues that multilingualism was probably as pervasive in the past as it is today. Her concern is with the dearth of evidence rather than the concept (idem). For its relevance for first-century CE Palestine, see Ong (2015, 339–40, 343). For more sociolinguistic research in a similar vein as Fishman, see, e.g., Coulmas 2018.

[32] Earlier, "a society that recognized two or more languages for intra-societal communication," though the concept also applies to dialects or registers as well (Fishman 1972, 135, 140).

languages will completely replace the other. He describes two basic sorts of diglossia which he considers likely to be stable:

1. diglossia combined with bilingualism (he cites Swiss German cantons). The most common form of this situation is a "high" and "low" language (Fishman 1972, 136).
2. diglossia without widespread bilingualism, which is a situation with separate groups, one of which has relatively impassable group boundaries. He cites the relations between pre-WWI European aristocracies–peasants as an example (Fishman 1972, 141). He sees this as typical in situations which are economically underdeveloped, have immobile populations, and socially distinct groups (Fishman 1972, 143). This can also create pidgins.

Fishman further argues that wide-spread bilingualism without diglossia can only be a transitional phase, with either pidginization or language death resulting (Fishman 1972, 145, 149).

As mentioned, Fishman claims that language use within a stable multilingual situation will assign particular domains of use for each language (Fishman 1972, 248; 1989, 202–23, 233–63). This aspect of existing domains is a pre-requisite for the "metaphorical code-switching" that Blom and Gumperz saw in Norway (Fishman 1972, 260).[33]

Relevant for a wide-spread empire is Fishman's discussion of post-colonial states and their use of "Languages of Wider Communication" (LWC; 1972, 191–223, see Fig. 2). He develops a typology on the basis of the number of local "Great Traditions," with LWC functioning as compromises. In his view, ancient empires are like his Type C, multiple competing traditions, in which an LWC is used as a compromise language (1972, 204). Later, he compares these empires – including Persia – to his previous category of diglossia without bilingualism

[33] Similarly, he thinks compartmentalization and institutional support is necessary for ethnic maintenance (which he calls di-ethnia, Fishman 1989, 190–93, 224–32). Just like with language, he thinks separate ethnic identities will not last beyond three generations without clear divisions in social functions.

(1989, 186). He further argues that LWC tend to *displace* rather than *replace* local languages among local elites (1989, 248–49), or in other words, that LWCs will take over certain domains from the local language, but leave other domains untouched.

Factors	**Type A**	**Type B**	**Type C**
Perceived integration	No integrating "Great Tradition"	One "Great Tradition"	Several "Great Traditions"
"National" Language selection	Consideration of political integration: nationism	Consideration of authenticity: nationalism	Compromise between integration and authenticity
Adoption of LWC	as national symbol	Transitionally for "modern functions"	As "working language"
Language learning	"exonormative" standardization of LWC	"Modernization" of traditional language	"Modernization" of several languages
Bilingualism Goals	Local, regional, transitional towards LWC	National, transitional towards indigenous monolingual	Regional and national bilingual
Biculturism goals	Transitional towards integration	Traditional plus modern	Traditional plus modern
Type	A-modal	Uni-modal	Multi-modal

Figure. 2. Fishman's Typology of "Languages of Wider Communication" in Post-colonial societies (after 1972, 192 [1969])

Also pertinent is Fishman's typology of "high" and "low" languages, which he defines as "superposed" learned language and mother tongue: 1) classical and related vernacular; 2) classical, unrelated vernacular; 3) written and formal and unrelated vernacular; 4) written/formal, related vernacular. Moreover, he notes there are cases of multiple high languages co-existing (Fishman 1989, 182–83). Interestingly, he sees success in maintaining vernaculars tied to the success in maintaining a high version of it (Fishman 1989, 229, but in the context of a generally literate society like the US).

Fishman's work and categorizations provide a wider lens for addressing the questions posed by CAT above. One particularly important point is a distinction between language *displacement* and language *replacement*, one that depends on the language *domain* or *function*. Language domains are the wider social context in which one can seek the social rules for language use that CAT insisted on in the previous section. We can now return to the question of language choice in the specific context of Achaemenid Yehud.

Language choice by Judaeans in the Achaemenid context

Using some of Fishman's categories, one can describe the Persian Empire thus: Imperial Aramaic served as the *lingua franca* and administrative language, and thus as an LWC.[34] Imperial Aramaic as a *lingua franca* would be expected to dominate in the domains of administration, trade, and international interactions, and the documentation we have in that language largely conforms to such domains.[35] As a *lingua franca* or LWC, it is unlikely to displace local high languages and vernaculars from their respective domains outside administration *on its own*. It should be remembered that this was *not* the language of the Persian Great Kings themselves. For local elites, one would therefore expect that Aramaic would have had very specific domain associations: administration, trade, and interactions with elites from other localities. It would be unlikely to displace local languages from other domain functions, provided there were separate social domains. However, other processes of language contact could put pressure on local languages independently (such as Greek on Lycian), and as wide-spread *vernaculars*, Aramaic dialects were among these competing vernaculars as well.[36] I am unaware of any signs of Old Persian functioning as a high language or vernacular outside the Persians themselves.[37] One might wonder if the practice of inscribing three or four different languages in royal inscriptions[38] would create multiple high languages in different contexts, or better merely affirm existing statuses. The latter might be

[34] Hasselbach-Andee (2020, 465–66) also sees Persian use of Imperial Aramaic as resembling a strict understanding of diglossia.

[35] Similar to Jonker's (2021, 202) suggestion of Aramaic's status due to "practical reasons."

[36] Hogue (2018, 59) thinks there was no opposition to Aramaic as a prestige language, but sees resistance to its use as a vernacular. Cf. Gzella 2017, 234.

[37] Cf. Schmitt 1993, 2017; Tavernier 2008, 2017, 2018; cf. Samuel 2019.

[38] Old Persian, Babylonian Akkadian, and Elamite in their respective cuneiform scripts and sometimes Egyptian hieroglyphs. On a southern Levantine fragment from the sort of vessel typically with all four, see Stolper 1996; Meyers and Meyers 2009.

more likely, so that one could expect that the various localities retained their own set of "high" and "low" languages (if they pre-existed), in addition to Aramaic. The use of several different high languages for imperial display alongside a LWC neatly fits Fishman's Type C. Payne's analysis of Achaemenid Lycian inscriptions would seem to bear this out, though in the context of language change (with Lycian and Greek appearing to be high languages, in the context of a shift to Greek; Payne 2007). As rightly noted by Fraade (2012, 3*), one needs to resist the tendency to assume only one vernacular or high language.

For the Judaeans, we need to reckon with different language situations in different regions. Indeed, as several scholars of immigrant communities in the US have noted, language retention is often correlated with language concentration (see Fishman 1966, esp 151, 362). Areas in which Hebrew speakers were concentrated can be expected to have maintained their Hebrew dialects as vernaculars; areas in which they were less concentrated, they can be expected to have adopted a local vernacular within three generations.

Babylonia

Judaeans lived in several locations in Babylonia, in a few large cities and in several rural settlements.[39] The wider language situation in Babylonia itself included both Akkadian and eastern Aramaic dialects (one of which formed the basis of Imperial Aramaic, Gzella 2011, 574). Given the use of Aramaic in Babylonia for administration, the literate Judaeans in Babylonia were probably trained in (imperial) Aramaic.[40] Whether the continued use of Yahwistic names implies a continued vernacular usage of Hebrew, a shift to vernacular Aramaic, or a diglossia is uncertain; the relatively local settlements combined with

[39] Pearce 2016; Alstola 2019; some unprovenanced documents relating to three settlements have been published by Pearce and Wunsch 2014.

[40] Jursa 2012; Alstola 2019, 252–53, 274. Beaulieu (2007) argues Aramaic was a widespread vernacular already in the Neo-Babylonian Empire, with Akkadian associated primarily with the state and law (though Nabonidus was deliberately "bicultural," 204). That documents concerning the Judaeans in the countryside were written in Akkadian does not indicate the Judaeans themselves knew Akkadian. Cf. the cautionary comments in Waerzeggers 2015, 185–87.

a distribution around the region means each interpretation is possible (cf. Alstola 2019, 273–75). Insufficient data probably survive to assess whether a diglossia was maintained or for which domains.[41] Different communities may have had different linguistic practices.

Egypt

The Judaeans living in Egypt produced texts in Aramaic, and I am unaware of direct evidence for their use of other languages. Given the context, one may wonder if they spoke some Egyptian or Hebrew.[42]

Levant

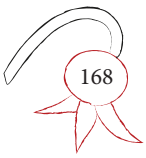
The languages in both Samerina and Yehud are questionable. In terms of a high language, the very creation and transmission of the Tanak must mean that at least for some Judaeans and Samarians, Hebrew continued to function as a high language, at least for cultural and literary purposes. The existence of two forms of this language (classical and late), raises the question whether there were (at least) two different groups who maintained Hebrew as a high language or if they represent different registers/domains. One could analyze these as stylistic, chronological, class, or regional differences. The Aramaic documents from Samaria and Idumea show that Imperial Aramaic was certainly used for administration and law. Neither of these directly indicate vernaculars or potential other domains. This brings us back to the complaint in Neh 13 and the questions raised by CAT above.

The complaint in Neh 13, written in Hebrew, comes from someone who clearly views (and knows) Hebrew as a high language. But the complaint itself would appear to be the loss of Yehudite as a *vernacular* – something in of itself not necessarily linked to the domain

[41] Zadok (2015, 143) posits some names as evidence of interchange between Hebrew and Aramaic, but this may say more about the scribe than the community.

[42] Muraoka and Porten (2003) refer to the language of the texts as "Egyptian Aramaic." For the Judaean garrison, Folmer (1995, 745; 2020, 389) argues they spoke Aramaic. Lemaire (2014, 306) finds no trace of Hebrew, despite the use of Hebrew for "priest." Though Aḥatabu daughter of Adiyah has hieroglyphs as well as Aramaic on her stela (Berlin ÄM 7707 [TAD D20.3]), one probably cannot use this to adduce widespread vernacular use of Egyptian by her family.

functioning of a high language (as in Fishman's typology). Further, one wonders if this means the language we know as Hebrew, or a specific dialect of that language that had been spoken in Yehud (as, say, opposed to that which had been spoken in Samerina; cf. Sanders 2020, 280). Moreover, the complaint is not against the use of Aramaic for the official domain, but the switch of vernacular to another local vernacular (Ashdodite, whatever one decides that means).[43] I suspect, therefore, that at issue in Neh 13 is *not* Hebrew as a high language nor Aramaic as a LWC – something presumably shared between elite Yahwists in Yehud, Samerina, and Babylonia – but a local dialect as a vernacular, a distinctly *Yehudian* dialect. As Fitzpatrick-McKinley (2015) has argued, a key issue for local elites was competition with other local elites. Nehemiah 13 would seem to reflect, then, a bid by Yehud (literate) elites to maintain or create a distinctive identity – probably in competition with other Yahwist elites in the other provinces.[44] In either case, what is visible in Neh 13 is not directly relevant to the status of Hebrew as a high language, or to the collation of the Tanak. Rather, it might add a minor piece of corroborating evidence that the Tanak (and its medium of Hebrew as a high language) was a shared, cooperative, and/or compromise project between Yahwists with varying vernacular dialects.



To posit an enduring maintenance of diglossia in Yehud (in this case, Hebrew as a high language, Aramaic as LWC, and Yehudite as a vernacular), one needs specific social functions for each. Imperial Aramaic as an administrative language and LWC is straightforward for the provincial elites. Hebrew as high language for "religion" or "culture" is less obvious. Cults and priesthoods are often conservative; one could compare the retention of Hebrew with temple authors retaining Sumerian and Akkadian in Mesopotamia or Latin in the Roman Catholic Church. The preservation of whatever traditions survived the imperial changes perhaps played a role. A vernacular must have existed

[43] Leuchter (2017, 254) states it more strongly – Hebrew was "abandoned" to the vernacular.

[44] Contrast this with an understanding of a more Diaspora-centered identity ideology, as in Hogue 2018, 58–59.

and been more widespread than the written languages, since the vast majority of the residents of Yehud were likely oral. What is decidedly unclear is whether this would be a dialect of the high language or LWC or of one of the spreading vernaculars of Aramaic, or indeed the co-existence of multiple vernaculars for different domains. In any case, the need to maintain a distinctive vernacular would require it to hold some significance. This could be an identity in terms of speaking something distinct from one's neighbors or in terms of adopting an identity of multilingualism.

To get at this last issue, it is time to return to the questions raised in the CAT section above.

How do we know when and what sorts of identities became salient for a communicative interaction in the Persian Empire?

The Great Kings defined their subjects as diverse peoples harmoniously cooperating to support the empire – though the delineation of what constituted a "people" was vague at best[45] and there is no guarantee that imperial lines between groups matched subject understandings. One imperial category that is salient for Yehud is Abar Nahara, originally a sub-satrapy of Babylon and later made independent (Stolper 1987, 1989). In one of the palace inscriptions of Darius (DSf) the Akkadian reads *Ebir nari* where the Old Persian reads *Aθuriya* (Scheil 1929, 8, 18). This suggests that Old Persian *Aθurā* denotes not (only?) Northern Mesopotamia but (also?) Syria-Palestine.[46] See also the subject peoples on the Apadana and tomb reliefs.[47] Notable is a lack of distinctiveness in the imperial Levant: the only distinctions are *Aθuriya* and *Arabaya*:

[45] There remains debate over whether *dahyu-* should be translated "people" or "land." Schmitt (2014, 162–63) argues it means lands that could be personified. Henkelman and Stolper (2009, 290) refer to an "ambivalence" between toponyms and ethnonyms. See also Jacobs 2017.

[46] Henkelman and Stolper 2009, 300–301, see "Assyrians" to denote "Syrians" in the Persepolis tablets, with people from the old Assyrian heartland being called Arbelans. Jacobs (2011, 4.2.1) thinks *Aθurā* comprised both north Mesopotamia and the Levant.

[47] Schmidt 1953, plate 32 a (north) and b (east) Apadana; Schmidt 1970, 108–11, 153–54, 158–63, and plates 25, 30, 67.

no Phoenicians, Ammonites, Samarians, or Yehudians are depicted.[48] Does this mean the (sub)satrapy was seen as homogenous or as characterized by a cosmopolitanism against which the Yehudians might rebel (cf. Berlejung 2016)?

This imperial ideological level of delineation did not work out so neatly on the ground, nor, probably, in terms of language use.

In his recent discussion of the administrative languages, Tavernier (2020) sees three visible layers of hierarchy: that of the highest officials in Old Persian, a middle Aramaic level, and a lower local level. As Tavernier notes, however, it is not entirely clear where, by whom, and in what medium the translations occurred.[49] Tavernier favors a model whereby scribes (*spr*) received written Old Persian orders and rewrote them in Aramaic, since he finds it unlikely that the "chancellor" (*bʿl ṭʿm*) was able to speak but not write in Aramaic.[50] However, there is no need to assume that spoken fluency in a given language equated to literacy in that language, and this is especially true for Old Persian, for which very little evidence exists for its regular written use.[51] A second, local scribe would then typically be responsible for a version in the local language if necessary. Confusingly, analysis of handwriting suggests that few *spr* actually did the manual work of writing.[52] A few cases show individuals serving as both the *bʿl ṭʿm* and *spr*,[53] suggesting some administrators were trilingual. Tavernier sees only one attestation of *spr* functioning as the amanuensis (TAD A6.2, Tavernier 2017, 376).

[48] Two PFT texts mention the Lebanon as a travel destination (Henkelman and Stolper 2009, n. 8 [NN1609, NN1631]) and Tyrians and Sidonians periodically appear in Akkadian texts. The PFT may also refer to Syrians as "Hittites" (Henkelman and Stolper 2009, 304).

[49] Tavernier 2020, 89. Cf. Folmer 2017, 432.

[50] In 2017, 380, however, he favors an oral process.

[51] In fact, at present, only one single tablet is extant outside the royal inscriptions (Fort. 1208-101, Stolper and Tavernier 2007).

[52] Folmer 2017, 429 n. 67, citing van der Kooi. Cameron (1948, 118) thought that an accounting error in PTT 20, line 14, showed the scribe was merely an amanuensis.

[53] Tavernier 2017, 376; Folmer 2017, 425.

This means that the higher levels were more or less the same, but the lower levels could have used whatever written local language was useful or necessary. It seems unlikely that Abar Nahara required this lower level of translation; Aramaic was likely all the administrators needed.

Discussion of the mechanics of multilingualism and translation in the Persian Empire brings us to Schaeder's argument (1930, 204–10) that Neh 8:7–8 and Ezra 4:18 reflect Persian translational practice.

> והלוים מבינים את העם לתורה והעם על עמדם ויקראו בספר בתורת האלהים מפרש ושום שכל ויבינו במקרא
>
> …and the Levites explained the *torah* to the people while they stood. They read from the book of the *torah* of god, מפרש and giving sense,[54] and they understood the reading. (Neh 8:7b–8 [Hebrew])
>
> נשתונא די שלחתון עלינא מפרש קרי קדמי
>
> The letter you sent me was read מפרש before me. (Ezra 4:18 [Aramaic])

Schaeder understood מפרש in Neh 8:8 to reflect a misunderstood Aramaic term for "erklären, interpretieren" (1930, 204), used correctly in Ezra 4:18. Schaeder pointed to the translation between Old Persian and Aramaic in Achaemenid practice as the background for Ezra 4:18 and thus by extension Nehemiah as well.[55] However, in his argument, Schaeder understands his gloss to mean "*ex tempore* übersetzen"

[54] Scholars translate מפרש variously. Batten (1913, 356–57) glossed it as "translate" or "with a loud voice"; Myers (1965, 150–51) and Koehler and Baumgartner (2001, 976) appealed to Schaeder 1930 for "translate (*ex tempore*)" in Neh 8:8; Fried (2015, 213) translated the form in Ezra as "translate" but calls it merely a guess. Blenkinsopp (1988, 283, 288) rejected this for "clearly." Clines (2009, 369) gives "explain precisely" for Neh 8:8.

[55] Schaeder (1930) makes a distinction between the Hebrew root as attested in Lev 24:12 and Num 15:34 "deutlich, distinct, genau" and the Aramaic root. In passing it may be worth mentioning that both cases in the Pentateuch deal with divinatory decisions, and a potentially cognate root in Akkadian also refers to divinatory decisions (*parāsu* V, CAD P, 165, 173–75). This meaning of *parāsu* is not included by Tawil (2009, 307).

(1930, 205), rather than "erklären." The latter, however, better fits the use of the term in some contexts in Imperial Aramaic, for example, TAD D7.24 and maybe TAD A6.1.[56] As seen above, it is true that translation between Old Persian, Aramaic, and local languages was part of the administrative system. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that this was hardly a UN simultaneous translation service, but a process whereby multiple people knew the same information and in which the higher levels did not need to resort to the physical labor of writing. Moreover, officials would likely have had assistants and advisors to keep them up-to-date on related matters, making "explain" a fitting understanding for a process that could also include translation. Indeed, in Neh 8:8 it is clear that the primary force of the verse is not linguistic but pedagogic – the people need help to understand (what is, seemingly, an entirely new set of regulations). This is much more comprehensive than the gloss "translate" would imply. Moreover, if one compares the root in other contexts, it is possible this use implies the sort of scholarship and decision-making associated with divination. The Hebrew root also occurs in Lev 24:12 and Num 15:34, in both cases in the context of a divinatory decision, and one might see a cognate in Akkadian *parāsu* V.[57] The force is less in the "clarity" of the language and more in the clarity of the decision, which is appropriate both in divinatory and indeed administrative interpretative contexts. Thus, *contra* Schniedewind (2013, 140), Neh 8:8 is hardly proof of the death of vernacular Hebrew.

[56] Texts available in Porten and Yardeni 1986–99, 4:174, 1:94. Folmer (1995, 192) understands both texts and Ezra 4:18 as "explain" but later (2011, 591; 2020, 386) suggests מפרש is a technical term for Persian translation. Tavernier (2008, 60) first understood מפרש in D7.24 as "translate" but later (2017, 348) he understood it as "explain" in D7.24 but "translate" in Ezra 4:18. Porten and Lund (2002, 269) list the root in A4.5, A6.1, C1.1, D5.58, and D7.24, but D5.58 is too fragmentary for any sense.

[57] CAD P, 165, 173–75; not included in Tawil 2009, 307. There is a problem here, as there is a difference of Shin and Sin, though not visible when unpointed. Nevertheless, the *HALOT*, 976 translation as "decide clearly" fits the divinatory connotation of *parāsu* V.

It is worth recalling that the majority of humans in history have likely been multilingual rather than monolingual and that the equation of "nation"–"language"–"country" is a nineteenth-century invention. Further, it was noted that languages can have separate domains and social functions, meaning they can coexist with others even if one or more have identity functions. Several scholars have indeed argued that plurality was important for Palestine of later periods.[58] The retention of a local vernacular for family life (i.e. Neh 13) is clearly assuming a norm of in-home language learning – but that on its own has no necessary implications for norms related to other languages having functions in other domains. If Yehudian "elites" operated within Abar Nahara through Imperial Aramaic or other extra-domestic language registers, the domestic sphere need not have conflicted.

Regardless of how one identifies "Ashdodite," if the domestic sphere were deemed to be a space in which a set of vernacular norms was necessary, we need to ask why some families chose to diverge from that norm. As the present context of Neh 13 implies, marital arrangements can indeed be significant for the "mother tongue" of children. One should remember, however, control over proper marriage arrangements involve multiple potential identity markers – not just ethnicity, but also "class," occupation, residence, patronage relations, and family alliances.

In order to make such a decision for Neh 13, one would need to know more about the social structures than what the two verses tell. For example, what if the author objected to trade-related occupations, since occupation was often hereditary? (Cf. concerns over "Tyrians" [Edelman 2006] and "Canaanites" [Stevens 2006, 120].)

Can we know or develop a theory of social rules or norms around language use within the Persian Empire and/or the various Judaean communities, and if so, how?

As noted above, according to CAT, the use of a *lingua franca* or LWC most likely represents practical considerations of comprehension. The use of (Imperial) Aramaic within contexts of administration, taxation,

[58] Ong 2015; Smelik 2007; Fraade 2012. Cf. Koller 2020.

military, and probably trade would not likely be perceived as *divergence*. This is despite the indisputable fact that its adoption by the empire facilitated its ubiquity. Due to the ephemeral nature of vernaculars, however, the uses – and thus the (non-)existence of separate domains much less their subjective evaluations – is lost. One may adduce the linguistic affiliations of names as one piece of evidence for vernacular usage, yet the existence of multiple vernaculars tied to different contexts or even the deliberate maintenance of multilingualism cannot be automatically discounted. Could "class" distinctions in pronunciation or accents have been salient markers between groups – say between children of officials against children of dependents, for instance? Or were such vernacular divides only meaningful between "ethnic" groups? CAT also reminds us that what one interlocutor perceives as divergence ("not speaking Yehudit") may either not have been intended as such by the speakers so accused, or, indeed, be an accurate linguistic assessment.[59] Further, the "rules" whereby one would make a choice to speak in one vernacular or another are not likely re-constructable outside official contexts, or they would require much more extensive social investigation than can be done in the present study.

How directly do issues around dyad communication relate to the production of written texts in general, and how might they differ between different textual genres, such as administrative texts and literary texts?

First one needs to determine the function and register to which the text belongs: administration, culture, education, etc. Assuming separate social domains implies that different rules would have applied for different domains. Communication via Imperial Aramaic for imperial usages below the very top was no doubt *de rigueur*. Local high languages' usage would have depended on local elite power structures and the elite language habitus. For the Hebrew Bible and its texts, the appropriate domain is of course a difficult question, even if it is often assumed to have been "religious." The author(s) and audience of Nehemiah, however, must have been from a small group

[59] Cf. Alfaraz's (2018) study of the differential assessments of the quality of spoken Spanish based on presumed origin of the speaker.

(advanced literates)[60] who presumably utilized written Hebrew and written Aramaic – indeed the final book (Ezra-Nehemiah) uses two languages.[61] The author(s) were communicating with other advanced literates in one domain concerning what was likely an entirely separate domain (the family). In CAT terms, the choice to write in Hebrew was a behavioral tactic that depended on the author's perception of the context, strength of in-group identification, perception of potential conflict, and personal values. They seem to perceive the context as one with a secure use of Hebrew for a literary domain but a changing vernacular one. The author(s) perceive this as deliberate divergence for the domain of the family, and thus it is assessed negatively. The import of this strongly depends on the social group dynamic that the historian reconstructs. If the children diverging from the vernacular norm are of the same group as the author, then the issues are potentially ones of group cohesion, maintenance, and/or group norms. If they are members of a separate group, this could be perceived as a deliberate slight and indicative of wider tensions. Such groupings may be just as likely in terms of intra-elite rivalry as some sort of proto-nationalist ideology. In either case, as CAT reminds us, the perceived divergence took place against a background of previous engagements, presumably one in which the implied vernacular norm was communicated. Again, as this is a literate complaint about potentially oral individuals with a different educational background, it likely derives from individuals with more power to make local language norms. One might wonder if it represents an attempt to maintain norms (diglossia) or to impose norms from one domain/medium ("literate culture") to another separate domain/medium (daily/domestic life).[62]

[60] There is also the fundamental problem, outside the present scope, of whether "authors" and scribes/amanuenses were the same for such advanced literature. Cf. Hezser forthcoming.

[61] Ben Zvi (2009, 279) considers three languages to be the consensus, though Schniedewind (2013, 143) rejects it. Ong 2015 argues (for the Roman period) that the region was multilingual and diglossic. Cf. Koller 2020.

[62] A thorough engagement with media theory would be apropos here, but must await another day.

Do the above considerations concerning Code-Switching, CAT, and diglossia provide tools to re-assess some of the recent proposals concerning Yehud?

Ben Zvi (2009), on the choice between two dialects of Hebrew, considers them in relation to emerging canon and to authority – but the underlying idea is the potential of relative prestige between the two. One could relate this to Fishman's type 4 high/low language, written/formal and related vernacular. The question this would raise is the social rules which would have surrounded such a distinction: would the high language have carried connotations of "authority," status, education, and/or class? If this were the situation in Yehud, it is likely that the high idiom would be associated with the ruling class of the province. However, this on its own would only make it a *prerequisite* for "serious" cultural value. Bourdieu discusses the role of education in the maintenance of norms of proper language in modern states, without these norms automatically determining the resulting "position" of any given work of "literature" in the "literary field"; similarly, a high language in Yehud would be the expected idiom of the literary individuals in Yehud without automatically conferring prestige on any given output of such persons. Indeed, the later preservation of some texts in a different idiom suggests that the processes by which the concepts of textual authority and canon appeared were multivalent. A decision on these questions requires decisions on the dating of various texts and attitudes towards them, which is beyond the present scope. As with the discussion of Neh 13 above, Ben Zvi's discussion of SBH and LBH prompts one to consider again more social contexts than just "ethnicity" or "religion," potentially including something like "class."

The above discussion shows some assertions of Schniedewind concerning Yehud to be incorrect. The imperial use of Aramaic would not have required the *community* to become bilingual (2013, 139), as we know local scribes could still translate Aramaic correspondence to the local language. It would have merely required Aramaic for those seeking imperial employment or advancement. It would have also been restricted to domains concerning the empire – taxation, military, administration. This is the difference between language replacement and displacement. Schniedewind is also misleading when he says

scribes were "trained in Persian courts" (2013, 155). The administration certainly did train some scribes at Persepolis,[63] but the majority of local, lower-level scribes would have been trained locally, albeit for imperial purposes.[64] The mechanisms of administrative standardization are unknown.

Aramaic pressure on the vernacular, however, could indeed have been important, but not directly because of the empire's use of the language. Persian deportation of speakers of Aramaic dialects into the region, if such occurred, could have done so. Schniedewind implies that a reason for Aramaic replacing Hebrew as vernacular was new settlers in new settlements in Yehud (2013, 144), but this argument assumes the vernacular of these new residents – which is a complete unknown. The "gap in Hebrew" Schniedewind describes also begs the question. Hebrew texts were being copied, transmitted, and added to in the Persian period. There can have been no total gap in the elite, written use of Hebrew; all that could have changed was the restriction of the domains of its usage.

Edelman (2016) explored code-switching to Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible, largely corresponding to Blom and Gumperz (1992), positing Hebrew as a "we" and Aramaic as "they" code for the "imperial other" (2016, 129–30). CAT and diglossia research, however, suggest that this is only one potential interpretation. Imperial Aramaic certainly had imperial connotations – perhaps positive or negative depending on the situation – but it also potentially carried connotations of diplomacy, trade, neighboring groups, or other classes or occupations, depending on the dialect in use. In a situation of stable diglossia, a switch to or from Aramaic could just as easily mark a switch of domain as of identification. The documents in Ezra certainly would

[63] PF 871 and 1137 (Hallock 1969, 253, 330) do mention Persian "boys" copying texts, though it is not clear this is in the context of training. Elamite *puhu* can mean "boys" or "subordinates," e.g., Henkelman 2008, 273–74.

[64] And, *contra* Schniedewind's claims, we do not know that Ezra was a real person nor that Nehemiah, as a governor, needed to be able to write, as he would have had scribes and amanuenses in his employ. Neither character can be used as proof of the palatial context of scribal training.

fit an imperial domain, as might the stories in Daniel; one might read Jer 10:11 in line with an "international" domain. So far, this is not so different from Edelman's analysis, though it questions the saliency of "identity" for these choices – if they relate to rules of domain usage within contemporary diglossia, they would likely be classified by CAT as fitting into communicative norms and thus not perceived in terms of social identity *per se*.

Lastly, we can return to Leuchter's argument (2017) concerning the impact of scribal training in Imperial Aramaic. There is no doubt that Leuchter is very right to insist that the participation of Yehudian (and Samarian) scribes in the imperial-wide system of education and scholarship is a significant feature of the empire. But what is the significance of using Aramaic script for writing Hebrew? As we saw above, the inscriptional manifestation of the imperium was not in Aramaic script, though the medium for most "middle management" was. The most likely interpretation of the adoption of the script was pragmatic – scribes needed the script for their employment, but the majority no longer needed paleo-Hebrew.[65] Some advanced scribes may have had the leisure to preserve this script for archaizing or antiquarian purposes (like Sumerian in Mesopotamia), but presumably most did not. Given Aramaic's status as an LWC, it is highly unlikely that it would have carried social connotations of DB (*contra* 2017, 259). The real significance was the access to international scholarship and indeed imperial ideology which mastery of the LWC afforded them (cf. Wiesehöfer 2016, 130). Whether participation in this cosmopolitan context encouraged the transmission of materials in a different domain and language in an analogously "comprehensive" but not "cohesive" (2017, 266) way is something to consider on non-sociolinguistic grounds.

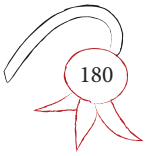
[65] Schniewind (2013, 159, 161) previously had argued that script and orthography can have identity salience (citing Trudgill 2001, Chapter 7). However, Schniedewind fails to recognize the context of Trudgill's discussion in modern nation-states and their top-down language education policies, something surely inappropriate for the Achaemenid context, despite the standardized Imperial Aramaic (cf. Wiesehöfer 2016).

One could also apply the various linguistic theories to script choice, much as to language choice (e.g., Bender [2008] relates it to code-switching, and Unseth [2008a] uses the term "digraphia"). In terms of understanding the use of script in Yehud, recall that Yehud's use of Aramaic and its script came during the Neo-Babylonian Empire (though both were known by officials long before then). It was thus a previous imperial decision for administrative use. The Persians merely continued this practice. For scribes in Yehud, this was no change within the administrative domain. The question script choice raises, then, are the same raised by CAT for language choice. Do we know what connotations the Aramaic script carried within the Persian Empire, or that of the Hebrew script? Leuchter argues that Aramaic script carried both the numinous character of Akkadian script (2017, 253) and the "imperial myth" due to DB §70 (2017, 258–60). While it is indeed possible that DB circulated in the west in various languages – Aramaic included[66] – only Aramaic would be expected in Aramaic script. Any connotations concerning the script would probably come from its international and imperial uses, a path towards pragmatic advancement in the administration, military, or trade. One might wonder if use of Aramaic script also served as a way to participate in wider scholarly conversations (as discussed by Sanders for the language and implied by Leuchter). Given the nature of the education system (cf. Silverman forthcoming), it is likely the older paleo-Hebrew script was only part of the most rarified and advanced levels of scribal education and limited to antiquarian usage. In fact, the early usage of the paleo-Hebrew script might suggest that it held a numinous or runic connotation consonant with such restricted use: for the writing of the name of YHWH at Gerizim (Magen et al. 2004, 22–23, 33–35; Dušek 2017, 143) and in some of the Qumran documents and copies of Leviticus. One might interpret the seals and coins using paleo-Hebrew script as associating with a numinous connotation, antiquarianism, or an educated-class identity.

[66] Leuchter (2017, 260 n. 46) cites Wilson-Wright 2015 for the evidence of DB's circulation, though Wilson-Wright never writes that; her argument concerns the presence of humans speaking Old Persian.

It would take later, post-Persian crises and conflicts to make the old script significant. In other words, in CAT terms, identity only became salient when differentiation was needed with too similar antagonists (the Samaritans) or too distinct ones (other Seleucid provinces, Romans).[67] If square characters gained sacred value (e.g., in the Rabbinic literature) this would have been a *result* of texts having been written in it becoming sacred, rather the script's sacredness imparting sacrality to the texts.[68]

Conclusions



This article has only scratched the surface of relevant sociolinguistic theories (see Ong 2015 for more in relation to first-century CE Palestine), and it has not had the space to address a wider range of data. The modest goal has been twofold: to point to a need for more nuance in discussions of the relationships between language choice in the Persian Empire and social processes such as identity formation, and to argue that a wider array of social structures beyond ethnicity or reactions to "empire" need to be considered.

Let us recapitulate the material covered in this study so far. To properly analyze the position of language choice in marginal provinces of the Persian Empire in general, and the Judaeans in particular, we can:

Categorize the empire as a "Type C" situation with a Language of Wider Communication (Imperial Aramaic) operating with a stable "diglossia," with several high and low languages in the various provinces. The imperial center itself highlighted three or four different high languages in its official inscriptions. For each province, we need to assess what domains were assigned to which languages – high and low – as well as the longevity of such relations. To further assess how these arrangements worked on the ground, we need to know: 1)

[67] Vanderhooft (2011) already argued that a shift to Aramaic characters had no ideological basis, but the revival of paleo-Hebrew in the Ptolemaic era did.

[68] Savage (2008, 7) notes Arabic script associated with scripture (Qu'ran), which gives it religious value. For more detailed discussions of ways one could think about the significance of scripts, see Eira 1998; Higgins 2019.

when and what sorts of identities became salient in communication within the empire; 2) the social rules and norms of language use; 3) the relations between dyad communication and production of written communication.

For the situation in Yehud, we need to know more about the vernacular dialects of Hebrew and/or Aramaic, to assess how these related to the mix of languages in their literature – and how these related to the interactions between elites of various provinces, with the non-elites in their own provinces, and with their Persian overlords.

The comparative studies of Fishman discourage a view that Imperial Aramaic would replace Hebrew dialects, merely displacing them from administrative and trade uses. Were Hebrew dialects removed from the vernacular during the Persian period, then the pressure would have more likely derived from competing vernaculars as a result of social processes not necessarily related to the Persian Empire.

In order to determine social rules of language choice, including code-switching, the functions and identities of high and low languages, and identity saliencies as required for the application of CAT, further social data is necessary than Neh 13 supplies or this study could adduce. Nevertheless, domains and rules related to class, occupation, residence, or patronage relations should be considered alongside ethnic or religious considerations.

The one, minimal conclusion this study can make at this point is to claim that the choice (and mix) of languages within Yehud most likely relate more to the interactions and rivalries between Yahwistic elites in differing provinces than with a reaction against or direct relation to the Persian rulers – excepting the usage of Aramaic in administrative texts.

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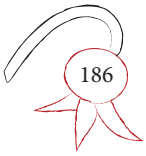

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