THE ROUTLEDGE WORLDS

THE GREEK WORLD
Edited by Anton Powell

THE ROMAN WORLD
Edited by John Wacher

THE BIBLICAL WORLD
Edited by John Barton

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN WORLD
Edited by Philip F. Esler

THE CELTIC WORLD
Edited by Miranda Green

THE MEDIEVAL WORLD
Edited by Peter Limb and Janet L. Nelson

THE REFORMATION WORLD
Edited by Andrew Pattegree

THE ENLIGHTENMENT WORLD
Edited by Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter James, Christa Knuttsen and Lane McCalman

THE HINDU WORLD
Edited by Suddal Mitul and Gene Thursby

THE BABYLONIAN WORLD
Edited by Gwendolyn Leick

Forthcoming:

THE EGYPTIAN WORLD
Edited by Toby Wilkinson

THE VIKING WORLD
Edited by Stefan Brink and Neil Price

THE RENAISSANCE WORLD
Edited by John Jeffries Martin

THE ELIZABETHAN WORLD
Edited by Susan Doran and Norman Jones

THE OTTOMAN WORLD
Edited by Christine Woodhead

THE BYZANTINE WORLD
Edited by Paul Stephenson

THE BABYLONIAN WORLD
Edited by Gwendolyn Leick
CHAPTER TWO

THE WORLD OF BABYLONIAN COUNTRYSIDES

Seth Richardson

The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development.1 Frederick Jackson Turner, The Significance of the Frontier in American History, Columbian Exposition, Chicago, July 12, 1893

INTRODUCTION: A CIVILIZATION OF VILLAGES

Turner's famous thesis—revolutionary in 1893—is by now long out of fashion in telling American history, useful only as a talking point for revisions and reappraisals. The original thesis was about a pericentric process: the western frontier, through its cornucopia of resources and refugees, shaped the society of the metropole (the urban East). Frontier history has now become a discipline concerned with the diversity of places (emphasis on the plural) that accommodated a variety of societies, politics, and economies.2 At the same time, critiques from the fields of geography and comparative politics are reviving attention to spatial relations as an irreducible political element of the state.3 These critiques are both long-anticipated (especially following the influence of Robert McC. Adams)4 and newly received by the archaeological arm of Ancient Near Eastern studies.5

Historical studies of the Babylonian countryside are only recently looking at place and not process.6 Whether the countryside was a landscape accommodating Orientalist narratives about the-desert-and-the-sown, the symbiotic thesis of dimorphism, or the passive actor to the expansionist state, the countryside has appeared as an undifferentiated foil to state narratives, rather than a subject in and of itself. One of the results has been to relegate rural political history to the most remote end of antiquity, because histories typically require that urban dominance of their hinterlands be a finished process by the end of the proto-historic period (twenty-fourth century BC) so they can get on with the business of telling stories about territorial states, empires, and international relations.

In material studies of settlement pattern and economy, the Babylonian countryside is commonly avowed to be the major catchbasin for population and production—this
society was ninety percent non-urban. The duty of reporting on this thing, "the countryside," is normally considered to be thereby discharged: ex-urban communities seem historically irretrievable, insufficiently represented in documentary sources, and only contingently appearing when intersecting with the particular interests of cuneiform-writing urbanities. Thus has an overwhelmingly rural and agricultural landscape of villages and villagers been upstaged by what we call the world's "first urban civilization."

These constructs sound patently false when stated so baldly, but are difficult to re-orient without the presentation of a counter-narrative. Counter-narrative is, indeed, the conceit of this chapter, but it essays upon territory which is doubly anachronistic: not only was there no native expression for "Babylonia," but also no single, stable, and emic term for "countryside," either (see Table 2.3). And so what is meant here by "Babylonian countryside"? I mean to use a geophysical definition, to refer to those settled zones, no further north than the latitude of Sippar, which looked to second-tier settlements as their central places, rather than to cities, and which were not always securely fastened to the political order of any urban state. It would be a mistake to insist that this refers to only a few places: about half of all known Old Babylonian place names, for instance, are only known from a single attestation, and their political affiliation is then obscure. Excluding the areas that were only environmentally conducive to semi-nomadic pastoralism, "countrysides" here means those settlements and lands that lay beyond the cities' immediate areas of cultivation.

Such divisions are more easily proposed than mapped out. First, "countryside" does not have the geographical validity that the designation "city" does (urban variation notwithstanding): it includes rural villages, fishing towns, merchant posts, military forresses, bandit hideaways, seasonal pastoralist villages, purpose-built new foundations, tribal outfits, private landed manors, kin-based collectives, work camps, and émigré outposts, in a variety of built and natural environments — too much heterogeneity to argue for group consciousness or cognitive unity (hence the plural "countrysides"). A second problem is diachronic: areas sometimes in the "countryside" were not always so productive (fields lying just outside Uruk and Nippur in the thirteenth century BC, for instance, were, by the late eighth century BC, the territories of Aramaean pastoralists, Chaldean tribesmen, and even Arabian camel-holders.

Third, a functionalist problematic: not everything rural was necessarily "countryside." For instance, Aš-šukûn-î was an Old Babylonian village with its own fields; yet it fell within the farmland of the city of Larsa, under its direct and daily administrative control. Under this definition, Aš-šukûn-î was not in the countryside, though its character was certainly that of a rural village. Rather, we will focus on areas beyond the administrative and legal reach of urban states. This brings us to the raison d'ètre of our definition: "countrysides," well-studied for demography and agricultural production, are here treated as political subjects in order to emphasize their active and agentive roles in political ideology and economic security.

First we will examine demographic characteristics of this rural landscape, its heterogeneous character, and divergences from patterns and periods of state history, next, a look at how countrysides were deployed in urban literatures, to detect this interstitial and non-literate world in the very discourses that hoped to elide it.

### The World of Babylonian Countrysides

#### A Survey of Village Settlement

**Early foundations and areas**

The earliest settlements in Lower Mesopotamia (6000 BC) already post-dated a 1,500-year sequence of farming cultures in the raised north, and thus already benefited from a well-developed toolkit of technologies. In hand were all the major domestic herd animals, a long menu of cereal grains, and stable control over ceramics production; the signature adaption for this new alluvial environment was irrigation. Yet although irrigation was the very use made for farming in Babylonia, irrigation did not require state control (the "hydraulic civilization" model), but was also managed at the level of independent small communities in all periods. The Mesopotamian alluvium could boast some of the most productive agricultural lands of antiquity, but with so many braided, natural channels, irrigation did not so much permit cultivation, as extend and intensify it. Village settlement gradually extended into the alluvium from the raised Zagros foothills, but also by deliberate origin or transplant into wetland ecosystems in southernmost Babylonia, where people had originally subsisted by hunting and fishing, and only later by farming. The intensive agricultural regime of Babylonia helped to create a local specialization of labor between irrigated and non-irrigated areas. The northern Mesopotamian mode of mixed farming (single producers with both herds and fields) was never a practical option in the south, where semi-nomadic pastoralism and sedentary farming were particularized in adjacent microclimates and undertakens by neighboring and economically complementary communities. With the productive cells of pasture and marshland never far away from farming, Babylonia formed a more chambered and differentiated economic landscape than the north.

There were, nevertheless, identifiable sub-regions of Babylonian: a riverplain in the north from Sippar as far south as Nippur, with constant shifting, meandering channels; a flat-topped plain from Isin to Ur, in which irrigation regimes were more stable; marshlands spreading out to the southeast of Ur; and an estuarial zone beyond that. Regional variation also ran east—west: the Euphrates channels shifted more frequently (with greater consequences for all settlements) than the deeper, lower Tigris. Along the northeastern edge, Ur, Kf, and Sippar sat next to a well-defined desert frontier, a steppe, or land with few permanent settlements, supporting only nomadic herders bringing wool and capsids to market. Along the eastern flank across the Tigris, from the Diyala plain down to the marshlands, cities such as Umma, Girsu, and Lagas lay along a less severe ecological border, some 20,000 square kilometers of meadowland running up to the Zagros foothills, supporting cattle pastureage and even limited agriculture. In the very south, one might further distinguish a "Lagas triangle" and an "Urak triangle." The former, delimited by Lagas, Larsa, and Ur, was continuously settled and cultivated, with its individual fields closely contested and administered, the latter, around Urak, Larsa, and Ur, featured more open space and freestanding villages, with a looser degree of central control.

**How many villages?**

Some typologies rank settlements according to function or adjacency, but it seems most useful for present purposes to look at only the smallest sites (hereafter, "villages"),
Table 2.1 Number of villages (<2 ha.) in selected middle/lower Babylonian areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Uruk</th>
<th>Nippur</th>
<th>Eridu</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All sites (in all periods)</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>1,139</td>
<td>190</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early-Mid Uruk (4000–3500 BC)</td>
<td>53–94</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>145–180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Uruk (3500-3200 BC)</td>
<td>568±38–40,536</td>
<td>219±20</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>76–102</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jemdet Nasr (3300–2900 BC)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED I (2900–2750 BC)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED III (2750–2350 BC)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akkad (2350–2150 BC)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ur III-Larsa (2112–1890 BC)</td>
<td>27±14</td>
<td>41±14</td>
<td>12±8</td>
<td>37±19</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Babylonian (1800–1595 BC)</td>
<td>10±14</td>
<td>43±14</td>
<td>12±8</td>
<td>37±19</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kassite (1475–1155 BC)</td>
<td>19±14</td>
<td>79±14</td>
<td>20±14</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-Kassite MB (1155–626 BC)</td>
<td>48±14</td>
<td>10±14</td>
<td>18±14</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

a Figures for the Uruk and Nippur areas derive from Adams and Nauen 1972, Table 7 and Figures 15, 18, 19 (p. 15, 18, 19), and Adams 1984. Table 4 (superscript T), T14, respectively, figures for Eridu are from Wright’s survey (Wright 1985) Fig. 23.

b This total refers to the range of possible sizes whose duration is less secure within the Uruk sequence.

c Adams 1981: site 1155 is a larger mound, but was probably <2 ha. in this period.

those <2 hectares (160 meters diameter), with about fifty dwellings and a 2250-
person population.17 These places are difficult to find, not only less identifiable than larger ones by survey, but have also been disproportionately reported where they are closer to larger sites. Thus, there were more small villages than survey figures suggest, and especially sites away from cities have been underrepresented, yet still the fluctuations in number tell us something about these early periods.

These survey areas cover only a portion of Babylonia – the north is not represented at all18 – and the historical periods are not of comparable length.19 One aspect that stands out clearly in this 3,000-year survey, however, is just how anomalous were the 2,500 years of "rural abandonment" in the middle-thousands millennium; otherwise, Babylon had always been home to hundreds of small settlements arrayed around a finite number of cities. Most villages at most times could point back to centuries of stable occupation, reinforced by kinship, property, or administrative mandate. Despite this stability, only rarely did these tiny places ever become larger; conversely, villages were almost never the result of the dwindling occupation of a previously larger place.20 Villages were typologically adapted to environmental niches, purpose-built (like cities) into the landscape to serve particular needs.

More important than aggregate numbers, village settlement did not always move in lock-step with the fortunes of urban states. Two sequences of small-site longevity (i.e., sites which survived across period-lines) can be discerned, one in the Early–Middle–Late Uruk, another from Ur III to Kassite times. These were both long stretches of time during which the number and size of major cities fluctuated drastically, but many villages maintained continuous occupation sequences which must be understood on their own terms, not as responses to urban expansion and collapse.21

Table 2.2 Distribution of settlements as percentage of total occupational area (Adams 1981)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>ca. 2ha</th>
<th>ca. 7ha</th>
<th>ca. 15ha</th>
<th>ca. 50ha</th>
<th>ca. 100ha</th>
<th>ca. 200ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late ED</td>
<td>3±1</td>
<td>6±8</td>
<td>4±5</td>
<td>7±2</td>
<td>66±3</td>
<td>12±1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akkadian</td>
<td>6±1</td>
<td>12±4</td>
<td>9±5</td>
<td>8±5</td>
<td>63±6</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ur III-Larsa</td>
<td>10±5</td>
<td>14±6</td>
<td>8±8</td>
<td>11±0</td>
<td>40±4</td>
<td>14±7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB</td>
<td>12±1</td>
<td>17±6</td>
<td>8±4</td>
<td>11±7</td>
<td>39±1</td>
<td>11±2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kassite</td>
<td>25±2</td>
<td>31±6</td>
<td>8±0</td>
<td>4±6</td>
<td>30±6</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MB</td>
<td>35±2</td>
<td>31±8</td>
<td>4±9</td>
<td>14±6</td>
<td>16±2</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Uruk region, thirty-five of fifty-three villages identifiable in the Early Uruk were still occupied in the Late Uruk (<2,000 years), but no more than 200 years later, only seven of those original villages were still there, and no Uruk village appears to have survived into the ED II/III. Meanwhile, the number of villages with single-period-only occupation was much higher during the transitional Jemdet Nasr and ED I than in preceding or succeeding phases.22 The period 3100–2750 BC was, then, a time of wholesale abandonment of older villages, with only a few new ones replacing them; this subtle change would be hidden if one only looked at overall numbers of village sites.

The Ur III-Kassite longevity sequence presents something of the opposite picture: it crosses the OB collapse, characterized by massive deurbanization in all areas. Indeed, viewed as a snapshot by period, there was a sudden doubling of villages, but it must be stressed that this was accomplished by the survival of existing villages with the addition (rather than substruction) of new foundations.

Table 2.2 shows an emphatic growth in village (and a dramatic decrease in city) occupational space. Around Nippur, the number of villages crested in the Kassite period (Ur III: 43; OB: 43; Kassite: 79; MB: 48), but many of these replaced the existing inventory. A majority (61 per cent22) of Kassite-period villages were new, but the majority (70 per cent22) of OB villages had also survived. In the following Middle Babylonian period, the majority (77 per cent22) of villages were precisely these new Kassite towns, and only three of the OB villages (6.9 per cent) now remained. A rurbanizing transition had taken place, but it occurred within the Kassite period, not between OB and Kassite times.23 Where the Uruk sequence had terminated with few villages of any kind (and massive urbanization), the second millennium sequence involved not only growth in village populations, but also their gradual relocation to different sites, a complex outcome to a longue durée rurbanization trend.24 Down to the Parthian period, cities and towns indeed continued to strongly re-emerge, but the number of tiny villages never stopped growing by leaps and bounds.25

Varietals: environment, typology, and adaptation

Most villages were socially and economically organized around primary agricultural production, yet these regimes always displayed heterogeneity and specialization. Settlement layout of even the smallest villages displayed a great range of form, including: multiple, paired, or composite pattern-clusters; tiny sites laid out in ring-shape;
with canals radiating in all directions; with enclosing walls, large institutional buildings, or fortresses. Layout patterns showed community access to irrigation water and, thus, different relationships both between rural neighbors, and with urban authorities. Some villages in linear-array along riverbanks needed no communal organization for water access; others, supplied with water via take-offs directly from major watercourses, required only modest interdependence; still others, employing the lowest dendritic levels of managed canal systems, coordinated their activities closely with state authorities (e.g., in agéna-distretcs).  

Other primary and secondary subsistence modes flourished in the micro-environments which permitted specialized orchard and seed cultivation, fresh- and saltwater fishing, and water buffalo husbandry; yet others provided secondary services of trade and transport when they were located on important waterways. Archaeological surveys have indicated specialized production at even the smallest sites, with some villages exhibiting high concentrations of brick- or pottery-kiln slag, luxury goods (e.g., copper finds), or even status objects such as maceheads, wall cones, obsidian, and stone bowls. 

Other occupational communities — millers, brewers, ox-drovers, soldiers — were stationed in non-urban places, leaving traces only in the textual record. These varieties of layout and function reveal a textured landscape amidst the verities of primary production, stable across time and space. Compare these against the range of toponymic terminologies in use. Table 2.3 illustrates the wide variety of terms from a single historical period alone, each with its own administrative, social, or geographic particularity. While none of these terms was exclusive of all others, the proliferate terminology reveals a spectrum of differentiation; permutations of character were as numerous as permutations of terms and forms.

### THE COUNTRYSIDE IN URBAN LITERATURES

Belles-lettres and law

From earliest times, the mise-en-scene of Mesopotamian literary narrative was firmly rooted in the urban landscape. Deserts, steppes, and wastelands were employed in Sumerian stories and poetry as loci of disorder, danger, and backwardness. In proverb collections, Dumuzi songs, and etiologies such as the "Marriage of Mar.TU" (featuring the notorious raw-flesh-eating nomad), the countryside acted as literary counterpoise to the organized safety of the cities. Rural village life was rarely depicted for its own sake, though pastoral images were not uncommon: in the "Debate between Winter and Summer," Summer claims credit for the abundance of rural households (ē), farmsteads (ē.mē), and villages (ē.durū); a Lagaš hymn praises the countryside for its wine; the prosperous fields and villages of Zabalam are the place to which the uncouth Gudam, unfruitful for city life, is remedied by the goddess Inanna. Few pieces, however, chose rural life as a subject for celebration. Even the late "Farmer's Instructions," though set entirely in the fields, never suggests that its "farmers" are countryfolk — the piece is no Theokritos Idyll. The "Debate between the Hoe and the Plow" is a rare exception, not only celebrating the Hoe's superiority, but also asserting a note of disdain for the urban, elite Plow. The home of the Hoe is with the laborers, in their reed-huts out in the plain, and along the riverbanks — Hoe tells Plow, in a nearly unique expression of "country pride" and separatism:

---

**Table 2.3 Old Babylonian Sumero-Akkadian varietal terms for countryside places**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.3</th>
<th>Old Babylonian Sumero-Akkadian varietal terms for countryside places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIVIL SETTLEMENTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CIVIL SETTLEMENTS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ValueType</td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-pàtì</td>
<td>&quot;border town&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-PN</td>
<td>&quot;village of PN&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dal-múk</td>
<td>&quot;settlements (and inhabitants)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dū.GN</td>
<td>&quot;rain-amount of GN&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>&quot;PN-DN&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-durū</td>
<td>&quot;house (of PN/DN)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-sabīšu (or al-durū)</td>
<td>&quot;hamlet&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-PN</td>
<td>&quot;village/outlet of PN&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eš-hā</td>
<td>&quot;encampment&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kar-GN</td>
<td>&quot;settlements (and inhabitants)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kar-GN</td>
<td>&quot;tent (encampment)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kar-hā</td>
<td>&quot;farmstead (of GN/RN)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kar-hā</td>
<td>(lit. &quot;threshing floor&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neš-karsu</td>
<td>&quot;settlement, habitation&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neš-karsu</td>
<td>&quot;town, town of (larger) town;&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neš-karsu</td>
<td>&quot;farms (of PN)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neš.kasal</td>
<td>&quot;little towns&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ROYAL MILITARY INSTALLATIONS</strong></th>
<th><strong>ROYAL MILITARY INSTALLATIONS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ṣiḫū</td>
<td>&quot;fortress (town), district&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṣiḫū-DN</td>
<td>&quot;royal household&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṣiḫū-ru</td>
<td>&quot;emplacement (of GN/DN)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṣiḫū-ru</td>
<td>&quot;watch-tower&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(uru.)zi.gar</td>
<td>(lit. &quot;orch-place&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DISTRICTS/AREAL UNITS</strong></th>
<th><strong>DISTRICTS/AREAL UNITS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a gār</td>
<td>&quot;irrigation district (of PN)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a gār-PN</td>
<td>&quot;nearby region&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a gār-PN</td>
<td>&quot;irrigation district (of PN)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ahanna</td>
<td>&quot;land (i.e., cattle) of GN&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ahuūru</td>
<td>&quot;land (i.e., cattle) of GN&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ahuūru</td>
<td>&quot;adjacent region&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adē</td>
<td>&quot;bank of the river PN&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adē</td>
<td>&quot;cultivated land of GN&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adē</td>
<td>&quot;pasture, steppe&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adē</td>
<td>&quot;before-the-steppe&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adē</td>
<td>&quot;district (of PN)&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adē</td>
<td>&quot;district (of PN)&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DELIMITATIONS</strong></th>
<th><strong>DELIMITATIONS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>akkārā</td>
<td>&quot;boundary, territory&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akkārā</td>
<td>&quot;boundary&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akkārā</td>
<td>&quot;boundary&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

a. This list is illustrative, not exhaustive. Excluded here are terms in use only at Mari (e.g., ṣiḫū, ṣiḫū-ru, gār-PN, gār-DN) and those which only last had one of the substantival meanings above (e.g., našu in the 3BG is only used in the sense of the edge of a field, not a territory). 

b. Attested at multiple, overlapping levels of administrative geography, i.e., an ṣiḫū-GN may indicate dozens of ṣiḫūs; but individual plots of land within those gārs may also be called akkārā (i.e. gār). 

c. Denotes arable and local users in context. 

d. Uses limited to literary contexts.
(The laborer and his family) can rest because of me in a cool, well-built dwelling. And when the fire-side makes the hoe gleam, and they lie on their side, You are not to go to their feast!  

Little in Akkadian literature contradicts the premise of this urban bias. City and land often appear as word pairs, as in *in mukal bat nimma*: “My city frowns on me as an enemy; indeed my land is savage and hostile.”  

In isolated instances, the countryside is served up in pastorales as an image of purity  

or stolidity,  

and some ambitious poetics extended the sun god’s protection over even “he whose family is remote, whose city is distant . . . so far as human habitations stretch, you (Samaš) grant revelations to them all.”  

Rural locales could even play host to divine chapels or other small religious establishments.  

Most often, however, rural lands were social voids, home only to the brigand and the fox, places from which gods were simply absent; only cities were the true seats of the civilization ordered by divinities and kings.  

The countryside is also missing from early law. Since even the political relations of urban rulers and subjects had not been legally clarified, it is unsurprising that no constitutional system of state and land was articulated. Kingship only resided, strictly speaking, within cities, and state and personal status  

were legally defined by city and class — not territory.  

One notes the disparity between the insistent demarcation of boundaries in royal inscriptions, and their utter absence in the law codes; there is also mutual exclusion in the codes between the term “dumu GN” (also in common-use) and the relative class structure of aššur-lu-kallānu—warnum. “Jurisdiction,” as such, was an absent feature. We are presented with the seeming conundrum of states that had sovereignty externally, but were internally segmentary; consequently any discussion of constituted, Westphalian states is anachronic.  

The ambiguous internal political relations of the state were mirrored in its legal structures, which persisted in a multiplicity of executive, precedential, and traditional laws. The rate mention of the countryside in the law codes (2100–1750 BC), however, leaves little doubt that the state’s legal power did not extend continuously into the hinterlands. If a slave ran away to the countryside,  

or an ox was killed by a lion inu ginin,  

no legal remedy was offered by the state, only a regulation for compensation between private individuals. The palace household simply did not have the ability (though certainly the ambition) to assert power everywhere.  

Rather, royal legal authority was fully vested in rural areas only where the crown acted as founder and owner, e.g., fortresses and garrison towns.  

Politics and rhetoric: the third millennium

Turning to historiographic inscriptions, it becomes rapidly apparent that the state had deeper interests in the countryside. The earliest royal narratives were not only largely concerned with conflicts over rural border (especially the Gutian fields between Lagaš and Umma), but the cause, action, and even the physical texts themselves were set in the countryside. The “Stele of the Vultures” monument of Eannatum, ruler of Lagaš, was erected on the boundary line of the irrigated farmland, and the text mentions at least two fields (Dana-in-Kihara and Badag) by name. His subsequent inscriptions document many other fields: Usuradu, Sumbubu, Eluha, Kinari, Dii ašši,  

Figure 2.1 Sustaining areas of Babylonian settlements, including sites of all sizes.
Du‘Urigiga, and Lumagirumma—šakugera. This detailed knowledge of specific fields at the edge of the state illustrates as much as the control itself how crucial these productive areas were to the state. Yet claims were not control: a mid-twentieth-century AD “Sumerian temple state” model took many such state claims of total control over hinterlands at face value, but it has long been shown that neither state nor temple directly owned more than a fraction of these lands. Indeed, the Lagaš case may have been anomalous: only in this area was Babylonia so densely settled and cultivated. In most places and periods, open space was available on many sides of almost every major city, and the modest production catchment-areas of these cities do not suggest that either daily administration or political control of hinterlands was “naturally” consequent. Figure 2.1,9 which models the actual production zones of all identified Babylonian sites in three different periods, shows that non-contiguity of production was the norm in most periods. Borders were political and ideological constructs, not the natural result of material conditions, and border-conflict thus not necessarily a paradigm for early states.

The Lagaš-Umma texts describe constantly shifting boundary lines, revealing the vital interest of the central authority to establish a spatial basis of power. At Lagaš, the border was first marked by a “no-man’s land” between the Num-channel and the Gutédanna; then at a levee called Nammudakigara; then again from Antasura to Edimgalabun; yet again to a place called Mubikura; the last ruler would eventually claim the boundary of Lagaš had historically run “to the sea.” Contemporaneously, King Lugalzaggesi of Uruk meticulously detailed an eleven-point boundary demarcated by canals, forts, and villages.11 The political and legal relations of persons collected within these Sumerian city-state boundaries is elusive, but royal interest in borders is not in doubt. In early northern Babylonia, extension of state control over the countryside was even more contingent and incomplete than the comprehensive system of the south, and independent rural freeholds were more common in hinterlands surrounding Kish, Nippur, and Akkad.12 In all times and places, however, it was in the state’s interest to tell its constituent audiences that its power across space was unbroken.

And then, all of the physical features of the Babylonian countryside disappeared in Sargonic royal inscriptions; the concerns here were city walls, city rulers, and city dwellers. The conceptual map of the Akkadian state incorporated no landscapes beyond the city walls.13 Sargon claimed to have demolished three dozen city-walls in wars throughout Sumer; Rimši expanded this campaign by also “expelling” (šu-šu-ba) tens of thousands of city people into the countryside.14 A typology of the conquered reveals that exile meant non-existence: those killed and taken, the physically destroyed, were at the bottom; at the top were those granted subject status and still within the political realm; those “expelled,” however, were also said to be “annihilated,” because those incorporated from urban communities were political non-beings. There never was any reeling of victory in terms of land—only in body counts, and the capitulation of specific, named elite persons. Instead of geographic expressions of control, we must read clues such as temple-hymn lists to discern the extent of Akkadian control—a pointillist state, elite by elite, household by household, city by city.15

Yet Sargonic rule could never afford to neglect rural borderlands: letters between administrators show that villages still acted as boundary-markers, that persons who were “citizens” (dumu GN) should not reside in or flee to other city-states, and that local elites continued to compete for territory even within the bounds of the larger kingdom.16 It was an Akkadian administrative practice to create new agricultural estates by uniting lands formerly belonging to two city-states, but this did not so much alter some (shimeric) fixity of city-state boundaries as it weakened the allegiance of elites away from specific cities. The dynasty was chiefly content to control urban nodes of power by retaining city rulers (ensi’s) as provincial governors, and govern the countryside via a more-urgent system of clientage (in the south) and royal estates (in the north), with a few “intercity” administrative outposts providing further control of interstitial areas in the south.17 When the Akkadian state fell, there was a resurgence of interest in local borders: Gudea, ruler of Lagaš, was the first to proclaim legal protections for persons within the city-state borders (ki.su-ra ra GN), and gave to the goddess Ninsî the epithet “lady of the boundary” (nin in.dub ba).18 Utu-begaš of Ur, who soon after conquered Lagaš, was also concerned with restoring its boundaries not against foreign encroachment, but against “the man of Ur.”

City-state borders simply never became superannuated within larger states until the first millennium,19 internal, rural hinterlands remained contested places that required the exercise of political control. After the recovery of territories from Elam, Ur-Nammu of Ur “determined” (KA . . . GI) boundaries of the city-gods of a half-dozen city-provinces in his famous “cadastre” text,20 and ki.su-ra’s are known for five more Ur III cities.21 Borders were not uniformly demarcated: some provincial borders were simply lines connecting four points, others connecting more than twenty-seven,22 and neither the ordering (i.e., N-S-E-W) nor the terminology (both ki.su-ra and are used) of boundaries was fixed. Multiple features acted as border-markers: towers, villages, canals, riverbanks, hills, shrines, households, and tells (no inscribed monuments are mentioned). Only the vague expressions ever suggest a “national” boundary: Ur-Nammu mentions a “border of the land of Sumer” (in.dub.ki enhancing), and Išbit-Sin’s thirteenth year celebrated the submission of the Amorites of the “southern border” (IM üba).23 The “core” provinces were administered by a dual system of provincial rulers (city ensi’s and) and (Tanninda’s whose zones of authority did not always coincide geographically. To say that Sargonic’s controlled the countryside would be simplistic, but they indeed tended to be ouni buuниเตฉนiated with rural estates; meanwhile, the growing number of villages demanded closer rural governance.

The Old Babylonian period (2004–1595 BC)

By the turn of the millennium, countryside boundaries formed a patchwork of private, city-state, temple, and manorial lands. The second millennium would see not only the expansion of palatial regimes, but also a recalculation of royal authority within and without city walls. During these four critical centuries, states became increasingly shaped by rural populations. Before the Old Babylonian period was over, in fact, cities and temples would have to begin a long struggle to preserve their holdings from the state by protective measures.24 The designations “Amorite” and “Akkadian,” once perceived by scholars to be ethnic designations, likely acquired geographical meanings in this time, i.e., non-urban and urban peoples. Twentieth- and nineteenth-century rulers asserted chieftaincy of Amorites—but later OB rulers claimed kingship over Amorite lands.25 Early kings in these dynasties were slow to adopt urban royal titles: not until Išhin-Dagan did a First Isin dynasty ruler claim to be a “king of
"justice" (nī.sī ša) and debt relief which all specified "the land" and its inhabitants as specific beneficiaries. OB kings were also energetic in their detailed administration of productive lands, the source of institutional wealth and political entitlements. Administrators called šāpār māātum (and šāpār nāšum, šāpārī) held authority over lands undefined by any city. A term for rural citizenship (māārtāt māātum) begins to be attested, and also rural assemblies (villages which gather and "speak with one voice") and councils of elders (līšūr GN/māātum). Among these sons-of-the-soil were people settled in ex-urban fortresses, on whom kings increasingly relied as their military and administrative base. On the other hand, the countryside was politically volatile. The "rebellious land" is alluded to in many royal inscriptions which make clear that the enemies they discussed were abroad in the state's own countryside: Larsa's wars against Pt-nārātīm, Ammisaduqa's against Arāhab, "man of the lands," Ammisaduqa's letters about enemies ina līšūr māātum, the emergent hāqara, etc. The state's engagement of the māātum and exposure to its dangers were closely related aspects of a single dynamic which changed the nature of the state itself. Comparing the archaeological and textual records, one observes that although palatial dynasties did not survive the "Dark Age" of the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries, rural corporations endured as the foundations of state power in the second half of Mesopotamian history.

National states (1475–985 BC)

In the next epoch, a succession of national dynastic states arose, replacing city-state confabulations with genuine territoriality; this territory finally had a name, mārtuš Kardumil (lit. "land of the quay of the god Dumuš"). Though a unified Babylon was new on the scene, there were periodic and areal exceptions. Political unification of the Kassite state was not accomplished until c.1475 BC with the overthrow of the long-lived "Sealand Dynasty" of the marshy south. The "Sealand" was kept as a province and perhaps tacitly honored in early Kassite titulary, preserving the kingship of Ur. This area periodically reasserted its autonomy: a second Kassite dynasty (1025–1005 BC) extended as far north as Nippur, and repeated provincial uprisings came during later Assyrian domination. A short-lived Bazi Dynasty (originally Bit-Bazi, 1050–985 BC) was based in the northeast reaches across the Tigris in the old "Jamshid" region. The most important post-Kassite state, however, was the earlier second Isin Dynasty (1157–1026 BC), which brought back the cult image of Mandurk from Ellam to Babylon, and thereby expounded a rhetoric of proto-nationalist unity.

The early Kassite administrative system developed around pīḫātī ("districts"); at least twenty are known, with most provincial designations still in use six centuries later. Ten were governed by officials called šakum māāt ("governor of the land"), others by a šakum lāsu (or šulū ṭepāš or šakum GN, but the scope of powers of these governors is unclear. Still other Babylonian rural provinces were under the residual tenancies of autarkic Kassite "households" (Bit-PN/DN/GN). Headmen of these areas (especially east of the Tigris) indeed operated as governors, but their title was šulū lāsu ("lord of the household") rather than šulū šāpārī. The administrative geography is difficult to clarify: of twenty pīḫātī, five were called Bit-GN – but more than 90 other places called Bit-GN were either villages within provinces, or large territories outside the provincial system altogether. These territorial "households" were often
substantial in size (containing several settlements, e.g. the twelve towns of Bit-Enlil), with defined borders (im.si,sá, im.mar, tu, etc.), their own lands (maṭ GN), their own officials (e.g. bazánna’s). A šēl biti who controlled such an area was, nevertheless, no independent tribal ruler, but still a de jure administrator who had to be “installed” (ša lakšuna) by the king.99

66 Rural lands were also classified by watering district (ugär GN) and source of irrigation water (éššád nàr GN); other fields were called ḫurri, cultivated in institutional plow-teams.98 Another important form of tenancy was the royal grant of land, known from nará-monuments, given to (usually noble) individuals for service. These grant-lands typically provided a sustaining area for about 200 persons, but they were not normally politically autonomous or tax exempt, as temple lands sometimes were.77 It cannot be said that feudals were a dominant mode of rural land-holding; what can be said, however, is that rural fields were a normal feature of securing elites to the Crown.99 There were, in short, feudals without feudalism, and the effect was to distribute political capital across the rural landscape,99 amidst tribal territories and administrative districts that were overwhelmingly village-based. Most cities were now enclaves isolated within open productive land that stretched out to the steppe (ṣīra), in other words, an area now distinguished as “open country” (ṣīra ṣerā).100 One feels keenly the increasing insularity of cities in post-Kassite chronicles and royal inscriptions detailing the despoliation of “cult cities” by Aramaean invaders abroad in Babylonia.

Intrastate boundaries persisted, now more often denoted by province than by city or city-god.101 Most terms for internal borders went out of use by the end of the period,102 but many nará-texts (despite curse-warnings) either altered or “re-established” boundaries, a redistricting which seemingly accelerated in the immediate post-Kassite period.103 Rural ḫašati were not bedrock social communities, but administrative units subject to revision. Unfortunately, we have a poverty of data regarding the legal status of rural persons in relation to larger communities beyond knowing that independent freeholds and freeholders did exist alongside a growing class of dependent ṭkate- farmers.104 Virtually no information about the sale or lease of rural fields exists outside of the nará’s (already exceptional cases), except insofar as they show that the king’s right to dispose of tracts of land was not unlimited. In sum, the post-Kassite sources present a paradox: an overwhelmingly rural society with little textual content devoted to countriesides.

From hierarchy to core to borderland (895–129 BC)

With the advent of the Aramaean irruptions into the Babylonian countryside, yet another articulation of land and society came into force. Tribes took advantage of the divided dynastic situation to occupy fields even at the very outskirts of Babylon and Borsippa, but chronicles also report the deliberate “scattering” of some urbanites into the countryside by invading Elamites.105 The extent to which ruralization was a reversion to rural subsistence, and how much a result of occupation by new peoples is an open question. Evidence is sparse: Nippur, the largest source of Middle Babylonian documentation, produced little about the countryside between the eleventh and eighth centuries except patchy reports about brigands and hostile tribes throughout the lands.106 Several large Chaldaean (Bit-Dakkantu, -Amakantu, -Jakín) and Aramaean (Gambù, Paqādu) tribes became more politically prominent in later centuries, but

in this time no single group dominated the countryside: chronicle refers to the incursion of “105 kings of the lands of the āṭḫamu” and the “(numerous) houses of the land of the Aramaeans.”107

These tribes did not form any essential state-level unity, and the insistence of inscriptions and chronicles on their hostility to “cult-cities” does not indicate any organized control of the countryside. Throughout the first millennium BC, there were resident in Babylonia more than 175 (mostly Chaldaean) groupings called Bit- (PN/DN/GN) and twenty-nine distinct Aramaean tribes that did not all “belong” to the five larger groups. Toponymic variants point to fifty-plus settlements simply called buḫitti (“the red huts”), others simply named bitiḫi (“the houses”), kapimi (“the villages”), bitiḫi (“the foris”). Urban documents show little interaction with most of these tribes: 119 (68 percent) of Chaldaean “households” and 18 (62 percent) of Aramaean tribes are attested only once or twice. The further away groups were located from cities, the less specific geographic knowledge is attested: thirty-nine settlements of Bit-Amakantu, around Nippur, Ur, and Isin, are known by name (twenty-seven close to Ur); sixteen settlements of Bit-Dakkantu, on the western fringes between Borsippa and Ur; and only eleven of Bit-Jakín, in the deep Sealand south, most named only in Assyrian sources.108 Babylonian texts documented primarily ṭaxu-lands parcelled out to state clients (štāqīti, marakašti, -Bit, -kasāš), dependent farmsteads, and the vast estates of banker-families such as the Mūšāši,109 but the toponymy and population of Babylonian villages were now overwhelmingly West Semitic.110 Many Aramaean tribes practiced seasonal transhumance (ranging as far as Syria), but Chaldaean settlements were sedentary at an earlier point, and often fortified. By 700 BC, Chaldaeans were also resident in the Babylonian cities, and Arab settlements had moved into Bit-Dakkantu and Bit-Amakantu in “walled towns, each surrounded by numerous unwalled hamlets.”111

The political structures of rural groups are obscured by the eric, statis terms used to describe them. The Assyrian kings Salmanasser III (850 BC) and Adad-nirari III (820 BC) would refer to Chaldaean “kings” as tribal, but gifts inscribed by Bit-Dakkantu and Bit-Jakín leaders use instead titles such as šakmu ša GN or simply “son/descendant of GN,” even when referring to their “palaces.” Our best information about political power in the countryside derives from the accusations against the Daktarian Nabû-Suma-Itukan, who expelled Babylonian citizens to the steppe and “directed his attention (away) from Babylon to his own land,” which he mobilized by “treaty and oath” (lāti u nāmāti). The formalities of “lords” and “servants” were employed in letters between headmen, but the basis of tribal politics was “brotherhood,” and rule possible only when there was a primus inter pares.112 Yet within a generation, some of these ambitious chieftains (with tribal backing) would seize Babylonian kingship: a certain Baba-ṣu-iddina, called a paqādi nāmāti (“caretaker of the lands”) was probably the same man elevated to kingship c.812 BC; around 770 BC, the first certifiably Chaldaean king, Eriba-Marchuk of Bit-Jakín, would take the throne of Babylon.113 This hardly initiated a “Chaldaean” dynasty, however: within the next forty years the throne would be usurped by leaders of Bit-Dakkantu and Bit-Amakantu before returning to a Jakínite, Marduk-apla-iddina II.

By the mid-eighth century BC, a twin system of authority held sway where lands were either royal or royal: the šēl bitišu and šakin timi emerged as important officers, with powers even over the disposition of land grants. Aramean, Chaldaean, and Kassite
tribal territories were under the authority of powerful sheikhs (nāšik, nāšu, and šīl šašu, respectively)). Their jurisdictions were only local, but with powers close to kingship within their own lands. Urban officials now needed active alliances with rural chieftains for their cities to survive. Nippur’s tashshubku, for instance, was semi-independent from the Crown at Babylon, but this was due to (rather than resulting in) his alliances with tribal chiefs. Multi-centered, hetarchic political authority now prevailed in Babylonian lands, balanced precariously throughout the coming sixth to fourth centuries when Babylon was simultaneously an imperial world capital and satrapal seat. The term (māt) Karduniša had fallen into complete desuetude (except in Assyrian parlance; kings of Babylon might proclaim themselves “King of the land of Sumer and Akkad,” but only māt Akkadā was still in independent use outside of this phrase. In the south, little land remained attached to urban corporations, and Bit-Jalītun and the Sealand (māt Tūnīt) occupied a vast swath of territory. The distribution that persisted prior to 2000 BC (i.e., a rural/tribal north, and a densely urbanized south) was almost fully reversed after 1000 BC. Babylonian cities, once the nuclei of borderless, cellular territories, now sat on frontiers between tribal countries. In the millennium prior to the eighth century AC founding of Baghdad, this transformation was amplified at the supraregional level, too: where Babylonia had for 3,000 years been the urbanized center of the Ancient Near East, it was, for the next 1,000 years, a borderland between other empires – first Rome and Parthia, then Byzantium and Sassanid.

CONCLUSION

The state is first of all a claim; it carries a constant and urgent burden to present and re-present itself as natural, to achieve an elusively coextensive with its landscape. Every day the state must wake up and cajole, propagandize, persuade, and coerce its constituents and clientele, using powers only made real when exercised. The identity of the Mesopotamian state with the land was asserted (as propaganda is) through a deliberate disambiguation of social relations and political unity, a discourse created from the elision of affinities which never ceased to be multiple, overlapping, or hermetic (e.g., groups based on law, ethnicity, household relations). Nor did “unity” always require poetic sleight-of-hand: it was inscribed at the most fundamental levels of signification. The Sumerian sign UN (Akk. nīl) “people” and kalam (Akk. mētu) “land,” for instance, is one and the same.112 This imbrication of meaning is common to most languages, and implicit within translation issues – when is māt “land,” when is it “country,” “kingdom,” “nation,” “countryside” – but the symbolism is no less arbitrary and constructed.113 What the state wished most to obscure was that it was not natural, but a network of urban elites resting atop irreducibly local hierarchies; the image it wished to assert was that the state was cellular and uninterrupted in space. Yet sub-state constituencies – competing, coexisting, collaborating – never ceased to act politically, even when they had no political ambition of achieving state identity. Two specific episodes illustrate this rhetorical foreshortening, and the implacable specificity of place. Gudea, a ruler of Lagaš in the twenty-second century BC, presented the analogue of the land to be (the natural) family: “the land of Lagaš (ki-lagāš)114 is of one accord as the children of one mother.” The loyalty ethic was very cemented with this pointed power: “No mother would have words with her child, and no child would disobey its mother.”115 Yet Gudea’s expressions of unity are betrayed by his own description of the segmentary constituencies he called on to do the work of the “land of Lagaš.” Gudea had to solicit eleven work-parties, one each from his “land” (kalam), his “realm” (ma-da), the “built-up city” (iti-dī-a), the “rural settlements” (a-dam), five separate “clans” (im-nu-a) under standards of three different gods, and the areas of the Gu’a-edenu of Ningirsu and Gu-šu-burta of Ninhursag.116 Politics required the simultaneous elision and solicitation of local identities.

A second “scene from the land”: Sumu-El of Lagaš’s eighth year-name (c.1886 BC) celebrated a military victory over a people called Pi-‘nāratīm (“Mouth-of-Rivers”). The place is virtually unknown117 and certainly out of company with Sumu-El’s victories over Kazzali, Uruk, and Kiš – but this campaign was important enough to provide mu-ū.a.sa names for his next three year-names. Although Sumu-El “destroyed” Pi-‘nāratīm, the Larsa king Sin-šu-šumā had to “destroy” it again forty-six years later (before warring with Uruk, Kazzali, Elam, and Isin). Finally, in 1858 BC, Rim-Sin of Larsa had to fight it again in the year after he defeated “Uruk, Isin, Babylon, Sutu, and Rapšuqm.” Only in year-names is Pi-‘nāratīm ever dignified with the determinative “”, and in other writings is denied “.” It was hardly even a place – how could it have been a major enemy? Yet the Larsa kings celebrated year-names recording defeats of a dozen such little places, sometimes not even bothering with names (e.g., “Euphrates villages”). That kings worried against hinterland villages at the same time as they contended against international superpowers is truly arresting. Yet it reminds us of the military role of rural areas in other Babylonian “scenes from the land”: the Umma-Lagaš border conflict; the collapse of the Akkadian,122 Ut III,123 and First Dynasty of Babylon states;124 the isolation of Babylonian cities in the post-Kassite.125 Rural space continued to play a critical role in the political life of historic states: in times of stability, safe passage across open space required political negotiation, outreach, and maintenance; in times of change, the interruption of networks by non-urbanites realigned the balance of urban states.126 These facts dispel easy assumptions that rural lives and places were undifferentiated or unchanging (either synchronically and diachronically), some substrate culture from which states were secondarily assembled, disassembled, re-assembled. State–country contests were dynamic processes under way at the same time as (and in connection with) state–state competitions. To restore flexibility and historical change for the countryside is to give better recognition, in the end, to the nature of the urban state, and its difficult story to animate itself.

NOTES


3 Tilly 1985; Bulon, 1998.
4 E.g., Schwartz and Falconer 1994, especially essays by G. Stein (Ch. 2) and C. Kramer (Ch. 14).


6 Notably, Fleming 2004a, Steinkeller 2007, pp. 37-48; the definability of even the largest geographical term in our field was already brilliantly interrogated by J.J. FinleyLeutenin in his article of 1962. Other Assyriological literature has sometimes assumed too much a total state power over hinterlands, e.g., Bailey 1967 and Leemans 1982, pp. 245-8.

7 A welcome exception is G. van Driel's 'On Villages' (2001); E. Stone's fourteen-page study (although promisingly entitled 'Mesopotamian Cities and Countryside'), in Snell 2003, devotes only the last page to the countryside as a subject of social and political interest.

8 Rather, (mab) Kardkaniash, restricted in erac use to the fifteenth to twentieth centuries BC (RGTC 61, RGTC 8). A few references to a "land of Babylon" (kur Babilon / ki dungi-ra2), rather derive from outside Mesopotamia, or have a strictly local meaning, i.e., the land around the city of Babylon, outside "Babylonia" (PBS 111 43 32: fippa bitti ti i2 i.e. eden a kur k.dungi-in n4)

9 Of 2,225 total place-name entries in RGTC 5, 604 (43.3 per cent) are known only from a single text or year-name formula. Methodological problems in accounting for these "lonely oidy" abound (e.g., GNS may not be in rural zones, they may not be in Babylonia, there has been much more evidence since the publication, etc.), but the estimate nevertheless suggests a certain distribution of evidence. Of even later times, Sanzio-Weedenberg 1990: "The Persian empire may well have included many villages or niches inhabited by Arameans and Obelites, besides those where existence is known."


11 Cole 1996, Ch. 2.


13 Indeed, large-scale cultivation required such management, but not all production was large scale. Burin 1981.

14 Wright 1981.


16 Only for the conquest of Urak did Sargon specify the submission of multiple (i.e., sixty) governors (RIME 2:11:1; Irnanitu of Urak (Year "ba") claimed to have given freedom for the "surrounding villages" of the region; Rim-Sin's defeat of Irnanitu's state specifically included ura diilli la ma da bar2; see, the "various cities of the land of Urak" (RIME 4:14:9).

17 These definitions generally prefix Steinkeller 2007 (City and Countryside), who distinguishes six grades of sites as small as 2 ha. (in the Ur III province of Urmanu alone, he already estimates around 10 of these smallest communities), to Adams 1981 and Adams and Nissen 1972, who account for "villages" as occupying up to 10 ha. and 6 ha., respectively. Differential rank-sizes are observable even within the modest frame of 2 ha.; most sites cluster around modal sizes of 3, 5, 10, and 20 hectares; cf. Stone 2003, pp. 153-4.

18 The village-heavy territories around Kish, Diilif, Babylon, Sippur, etc., are not represented. In terms of area: the Urak survey covered about 2,900 square kilometers; the Nippur-Adab survey was approximately four times this size. In terms of time: the shortest period here is the Akkadian state (ca. 1400 years), which cannot be directly compared to the 2000-year Early-Middle Urak or Middle Babylonian periods.

20 Alone among the sites, Adams 1981 surveyed at 2.0 ha. or below in this respect is Site 99, a very small Akkadian occupation, grown larger in Ur III-OB times (slightly larger sites between 2.0 and 4.0 ha. seem to have had some greater chance of becoming larger). Isin is another rare example, a major urban center which appears to have had modest beginnings (i.e., below 10 ha. in Early Dynastic occupation).

21 The fourth to third millennium boasted many small sites whose number indeed gradually declined all the way into the Akkadian period. In the north, this decline harmonized with shrinking territorial occupations, but in the south the number and size of cities created as village occupation fell. The better-surveyed south presents a coherent picture of urbanization, but the north area does not seem to have undergone the same transformation.

22 Of twenty-six middle Babylonian villages identified as occupied for a single-period only within the timespan of 2200 to 2550 BC, twenty-three were identified within these three centuries (i.e., 3100-2800 BC), Adams 1981. In the fourth and third millennia, single-period occupation was uncommon and longevity the rule, when compared to the post-Ur III period.

23 A similar pattern can be evinced in the southern survey data (Adams 1981: 90) that 19 Kasite villages (47.5 per cent) were new in that period, but 10 of 16 OB villages (62.5 per cent) survived into that time as well; 9 of 10 MB villages (90 per cent) had prior Kasite occupation, but only 1 of 19 OB sites (5.3 per cent) survived through all three periods.

24 There was a significant increase in villages between 2.1 and 4.0 ha. in the Ur III-OB periods.

25 Adams 1981, Table 15.

26 Adams and Nissen 1972, Fig. 11: Ring-site: site 156 (Ur III Ears); radiant canals: site 4-53 (Kasite); enclosing walls: 356, possibly 355, and Ur-Erdu site 72; large institutional buildings: 356, 435, Ur-Erdu site 166; fortresses: 11, 1075, and possibly 1250, 1341, and 1503. While these forms are not in and of themselves so noteworthy, that they are attestations at even the smallest sites is of interest here. Stone 2003, p. 153 also points out that sites below 2 ha. such as Tell Harmal had economic and cultural features that were distinctly urban.

27 Though there are many examples of this type of settlement layout, a particularly interesting string of these is evident in the OB-Kasite levees at sites 534, 5189, 1595, 1593, 1606, and 1602 (Adams 1981).

28 Rather than secondary (what the Amminadapu Edict calls nibubris, the "minor crop" beside cereals) crops.


30 One might, via an "archaeology of knowledge," add those communities which were tied together by administrative land grants and cadaster, i.e., identified "communities of the table." See C. Kramer in Schwartz and Falconer 1994, on variability of scale and specialization in otherwise ideologically egalitarian rural settlements.

31 For a discussion of this urban bias, see Van De Mieroop 1997, esp. Ch. 3.

32 Though Dormus himself is called in one version "brother of the countryside" by Inanna, Ses urna bar.na.

33 Several proverbs suggest that the village was a dwelling-place of Inanna (Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (hereafter, ETCSL): http://www.etcsl.orient.unh.edu), 6.1.21, 6.2.3, 6.3.5.


35 Lambert 1960: 35, II. 82-3.


37 E.g., the "Babylonian Thorough's" aphoristic "You are as stable as the earth, but the plan of the gods is remote," (Lambert 1960: 73 l. 58).

38 Lambert 1960, l. 1375, and pp. 122-5, on the pasture's material common with Surpu.

39 Examples of these are too dispersed and numerous to receive full treatment here, but can be found from the Early Dynastic period onwards. Rural temples and temple personnel are known as having been located at boundaries, fields, riverbanks, and even in open country; the importance of rural shrines in early state formation in ancient Greece has been argued by de Polignac 1995.

40 dunnu GN was, of course, a longstanding term for a citizen of an urban corporation, but the extensibility of the term to non-urbanites is doubtful (cf. below, cp. var. zalmun).

41 This absent mentalis is also reflected in the slow development of cartography within the scribal curriculum. Geography was mostly documented in the territorial list-form of cadasters and point-to-point itineraries; not until post-1500 BC are even a few regional maps attested (Ridgway, "Karte und Asynuliter Landkarten," pp. 464-73).

42 Hullek 2005: 0.1.2, 2.0 (especially 2.1.1 and 2.2.3.2), 4.1; Westebook, "Introduction: The Character of Ancient Near Eastern Law," pp. 1-90, esp. pp. 25-6 (the state was not an
Sarram-lau, all places close to Sippur; the indicated city-god, however, is Sin, not Samàl. The passage in ex. 2 from i i - iv 32 otherwise clearly refers to Marad, but twice refers to sides totally as 4-IM-mar-di-bi, “its western side” (ii 6 and iv 28). This confusion is exacerbated by the broken passages between i 16 and iii 1, where at least twenty-seven lines are missing.

62 Adab, Nippur, Sippur, and (unsurprisingly) Kishara; the “side” (da) of Umma is also attested (IGTC 2 306, 329).

63 Kiritbā's boundaries were simply delineated by four features on four sides; Marad’s border, by contrast, included at least twenty-seven sides with only the eastern side listed in full, and an unknown portion of the southern side. Apalî’s eastern border is drawn by connecting only two points, while its northern border connects six. The single most detailed border is that of Marad’s western one (shutting Kazzalu and Kīl), with seventeen loci.


69 RIME 4 2.4.1 and 2.6.1: Zabuha and Abī-ṣarṭ of Laru as “Amorite chiefs”; 4.2.1, Sin-kīlād as “king of the Ammōânīum”, later; 2.3.7, Kudur-mahag as ud da.kur.mū.ar, “father of the Amorite land” and 3.6.10 and 3.9, lugal.dâ.gaan.kur.mū.ar.du, “king of all the Amorite land.”

71 RIME 4 2.6.1, 5.6.10, 3.8.7.

82 Ward-Sin and Rim-Sin were last to distinguish the “land of Lagâl” in city lists (RIME 4 2.4.11-22, 2.4.19), the māda Kuttalu is also specified by Sin-iddinum and Ward-Sin 2(12-1, 2.15-15).

83 Both Kiz.i-nu and in-lu: RIME 4 2.8.3 and 7 (in which the “boundary of Uru” is said to be fixed at the city-wall), 2.9.1, 2.9.1, 2.12.31, 3.6.10, 4.1.23, 4.1.25, 4.2.8.1, 5, 5.6-7, Sin-iddinum: 2.9.14, Ward-Sin: 2.13.6 and 27; Rim-Sin: W.H. van Soldt, Letters in the British Museum vol. 2 (1 Ab 13) 1994, no. 103; Babylon Hammurâbi: RIME 4 3.6.2, 7 and Roth, op. cit., p. 78 ii 48-54, 54; D الهامورابیة: 4 3.7.2 and 8; Ammunitana: 3.9.2; Armitagia: 3.5.2. Hammurâbi’s thirty-third-year name, crowning his serial conquests of Elam, Larsa, Ešnunna, and Mari, boasted of “restoring Sumer and Akkad which had been scattered,” this invites some question as to whether these reestablishments were specific single events.

85 Kings employing language of settlement in rich pasturage, etc. (see prior note for citations): Sin-iddinum, to settle “his land”; Ward-Sin for Laru, Ur, and the “broad land”; Hammurâbi for Sippur and Babylon themselves for Sumer and Akkad, Ammunitana and Armitagia for the “widely known people.”

86 Contra Leemans 1982 who neglected such terms denoting farmsteads as ē PN, ē bā, and ē diru.-PN.
The world of Babylonian countryside

See below no. 78-80 about the legal distinguishing of "the land"; RIME 4 2.9.15, in which Sin-idimann calls himself "the one whom his numerous people truly chose."

Royal rule of countryside domains, this implies, did not require negotiated political authority. Conditional (urban) epiphetes, meanwhile conspicuously replace titles of kingship for Larsa kings Sil-Sili and Water-Dad-and-Ward-Sin (RIME 4 2.12.1, 2.13.13), the longest list of epiphetes that appears in the prologue to the Code of Hammurapi, in which he never claims to be king of anywhere, per se — just "king," cf. LL 1 i.38-55 (Roth, op. cit.). See also van Soldt 1990, no. 166, for an intriguing (but sadly broken) allusion to differential royal control.

75, 81, 86, 91, 106, 111, 112, 115-16, 117, 119, 121, 123-21, 123.26: nam.dgal nam.lugal ga kal la ga.iah bi.ia.bu.dig, 2.13-23: hur sag.su-bal.gin.; cf. 3.7-2. Note as well the insistence on civic covee-labor as participatory and profitable, e.g. 2.9.7, 2.9.6, 2.12.20-21; note especially the idealized statements of abundant wages, and the consequent rhetoric of worker happiness.

Lengthy paras to the contentedness of the land, kings' familiarity with the open countryside, and refugio pastures were propogated by Rime-Dagan (RIME 4 1.4.8) and Enli-lani of Isin (1.10.1001), Ward-Sin (2.15.24) and Rim-Sin (2.14.15) of Larsa, among others. On "the land," see also Postgate 1964, esp. pp. 4-5.

E.g., RIME 4 2.8.7 (gamba la ma.da.ga.ki); 2.9.6 (note the serial phrase gamba la.su (= lama) 2.9.7, 2.9.6, 2.12.20-21; the three distinct markers, 4.1-10-11 (gamba ma.da.na.ki.ka.gi.ki).

Nowhere is this more evident than at Babylon: the year-names of this dynasty specify equity and freedom for la.ma.da.na (Hammurapi 02), ma.da.dig, (Samuluna 02), kalma ram (Ahi-udul 02 and 1.3.1), ura (i-a), ma.da (Amminidug 21 (cf. year 03, consecration of a kalma), and Amminidug 133, Hurriele 1999, RIME 4 1.4.6. Rime-Dagan of Isin's removal of service obligations is extended to three types of corporations: temples, cities, and "the land of Sumer and Akkad," cf. Enli-lani of Isin (1.10.101 1 i-2), who established justice for Isin and Nippur, but only made the "heart of the land (the land)" content. See also year-names for Lilit-Sitar-ta (i-1) and Irdanehe (ba): Ur-Nuna, however, was the first to specify kalma as the direct object of his justice.

I have discussed elsewhere the most famous such edict, that of Ammisaduga (Richardson 2005).

Hammurapi's numerous letters to his Larsa administrators are the best known case, adjudicating private holdings, and balancing them with administrative distributions of sites, sites, and sulo-allotments.

E.g., e2.pu.mitum Isamumulatu 08. One might note also the absence of OB state administrators with the wide-ranging powers of city-based enus of the Akkadian and Ur III state.

A term for rural persons is anticipated from Old Sumerian sources as kalam ma ka ("of (our) country"); Wilcke 2003, 4.1-2. A parallele construction of urban and rural citizenships appears in LL 2 i-15 (Roth 1995: 27) for the liberation of citizens of Nippur, Ur, Isin, and the "land of the city of Sumer and Akkad" (kalam ma na mu man mu kis-e-ri ki-ki) and OB sources for nār mātum, a "citizen" (lit. "son") of the land, including Westrock 2003, "Introduction," pp. 36-44, sub. 4.1-1 (cf. LL); CAD M, 5-1b (also nār mātum ēlim, nār nāmur) versus lullu (position of clientage).

E.g., TGL 7 10.142 (CAD K 1906 sub. kopa), and M. Sod, "Die altbabylonische Stadt Hallhalla," in Dietrich and Loerke 1998, p. 435.

RIME 4 2.9.6 and 2.13.13 and 2.7.13.5; note also the specific connection between kingship and fortresses evident in 2.4.10 (Darum was Rime-Dagan's "military government" and "city of his principeship"); 2.7.13.5 (Samuluna's fortresses are the "fortress" of his land), and 2.7.13.1 (Sin-kalid, not content to be king of Ur, is also military governor of Darum). On the Late OB trend towards a militarization of the countryside, see also Richardson, op. cit., esp. 57.24-24 and Appendix the reign of land revolt against Samuluna was certainly a critical moment of change for Babylonia in this respect: if the construction of city walls was the hallmark of early OB kingship, the emphasis later shifted squarely to the construction of fortifications in the countryside. This, together with the massive deportation
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Cole, S.W. 1996 Nippur in Late Assyrian Times (SAAS IV), Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.


Foster, B. 1993 Before the Muses, Bethesda, MD.


— 2000 Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.


Michalowski, P. 1993 Letters from early Mesopotamia, Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.


Roth, M. 1997 Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.

CHAPTER THREE

LAND AND LAND USE

The middle Euphrates valley

Lucia Mori

THE ENVIRONMENT

Unlike Mesopotamia's lower alluvial plain where, if suitably irrigated and managed, the land allows for the exploitation of substantial rural areas, a large part of the middle Euphrates valley winds through an arid plateau, where the potential for settlement and agriculture is dependent on the waters of the river and its tributaries, the Balikh and Khabur (Sanlaville 1985: 20), the only perennial watercourses in the area alongside the Euphrates itself. The landscape is characterized by a clear distinction between the steppe plateau, with its limestone and especially marly and gypsum soils, unsuited to agriculture (Geyer 1985: 256), and the river valleys with their silty soils, fertile and productive if suitably irrigated and drained. These two contexts offer very diverse potential for the exploitation of natural resources.

The middle stretch of the Euphrates, from the Turkish–Syrian border in the north to the Iraqi towns of Hit and Ramad in the south, cuts into the arid plateau to a depth ranging from a few tens of metres to over a hundred metres. Its valley is relatively narrow, from five to eight kilometres, increasing in width to the south from Deir ez-Zor. Floodplains open up in some sections of the valley, forming a series of more or less independent 'cells' (Sanlaville 1985: 21–22). The main floodplains are found, from north to south, near Raqqa, at the confluence of the Euphrates and Balikh at Abu Leil, near the confluence with the Khabur, and then further downstream at Ashara and Harriri (Geyer 1990: 68). Alternating with these are narrower sections where the valley takes the form of a gorge (Qara Qozak, Tabqa, unsuitably selected in recent years for the construction of dams, and Halabiya) (Sanlaville 2000: 101).

A series of alluvial terraces make up the complex geomorphology of this area (Geyer and Monchambert 1987: 295; Margueron 1988: 49) in proximity to the plateau, Pleistocene terraces develop from eight to ten metres above the waters of the Euphrates. These are covered mainly by the grassy steppe also present on the plateau; cultivation is scarce, due on the one hand to the distance from the river and on the other to the presence of gypsum crusts covering large areas (Geyer and Monchambert 1987: 297). Descending towards the valley bottom are two levels of terracing dating to the early Holocene, bounding the lower alluvial terrace at a height of up to two metres. The