MULTILINGUALISM IN ANCIENT CONTEXTS

Perspectives from
Ancient Near Eastern
and Early Christian
Contexts

EDITORS

Louis C. Jonker
Angelika Berlejung
Izak Cornelius

6

MELTING POT, SALAD BOWL, CONTACT ZONE?

The Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/
Palestine in the 5th–4th Century BCE

Felix Hagemeyer
Leipzig

6.1 INTRODUCTION

For the Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine with the important coastal cities of *Ġazze/Gaza*,¹ *ʿAsqalān/Ashkelon*, *Esdūd/Ashdod*, and *Yafā/Yafo*, the period from the 5th to the 4th century BCE represents an important pivotal age. This era is characterised above all by increasing relations of the coastal cities with its direct neighbours (such as, Phoenicia, Judah, and Edom in particular) and the Achaemenid Empire. The Achaemenid or Persian Empire lasted from approximately 559 BCE to 331 BCE and, at its peak, included the areas of modern-day Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as Israel/Palestine.² In 539 BCE, Cyrus II of Persia (r. 559–530 BCE) had achieved the decisive victory against the Neo-Babylonians.³ Subsequently, Babylonia and the Levant (including southern Palestine) were integrated into the Persian Empire as Satrapy *Babylonia and Eber-Nari*. Judah became the province of *Yehud*.⁴

In the first half of the 5th century, the Persian Empire experienced a period of permanent military conflict with Greece, and rebellions in different Satrapies increased. However, the Phoenician cities in the area of present-day Syria and Lebanon formed an

- 1 Due to the extremely small amount of archaeological data, Persian period *Ġazze/Gaza* cannot be studied in this chapter with regards to multilingualism and multiculturalism.
- 2 Due to its territorial extension, the Achaemenid Empire lacked a uniform administrative structure, instead it was divided into satrapies and provinces. On the history of the Persian Empire under the rule of the Achaemenids, see Matthew W. Waters, *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire, 550–330 BCE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Amélie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (London: Routledge, 2010).
- 3 For a re-contextualisation of Cyrus's foundational act and epoch in light of recent scholarship, cf. the chapters in M. Rahim Shayegan, ed. *Cyrus the Great: Life and Lore*, Ilex Foundation Series 21 (Boston, MA: Ilex Foundation, 2018).
- 4 The chronological division of Persian rule over Israel/Palestine in Persian I (ca. 539/8–450 BCE) and Persian II (ca. 450–332/2 BCE), first proposed by Charles E. Carter (Charles E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 294 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999]), cannot be proven at least on the basis of archaeological evidence. For an overview of the historical development in Israel/Palestine under Achaemenid rule, cf. Josette Elayi, "Achaemenid Persia and the Levant", in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant*, eds. Margret L. Steiner & Ann E. Killebrew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 107–22; Christian Frevet, *Geschichte Israels*, 2nd Ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2018), 337–58; Angelika Berlejung, "Geschichte und Religionsgeschichte des antiken Israel", *Grundinformation Altes Testament: Eine Einführung in Literatur, Religion und Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 6th Ed., eds. Jan Chr. Gertz, Angelika Berlejung, Konrad Schmid & Markus Witte (Stuttgart: UTB, 2019), 159–66. On the question of historiography and the negotiation of identity in the Persian period texts from the Hebrew Bible, cf. the chapters in Louis C. Jonker, ed. *Texts, Contexts and Readings in Postexilic Literature: Explorations into Historiography and Identity Negotiation in Hebrew Bible and Related Texts*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament II 53 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

alliance with the Achaemenids against Greece. In return, Phoenicia gained control of southern Palestine, enabling the Palestinian coastal cities to expand their participation in international trade across the Mediterranean. Archaeologically, this can be seen for example in the growing number of imports of *Attic Ware*, which strongly increased in the 5th and 4th centuries.⁵ This positive economic development was also stimulated by the introduction of coinage. From the middle of the 5th century, local coins were minted in *Ġazze*/Gaza and probably also in *ʿAsqalān*/Ashkelon and *Esdūd*/Ashdod. Besides the imitation of *Greek tetradrachmae*, so-called *Philisto-Arabian Coins* were also produced.⁶ Finally, in 333/2 BCE Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 BCE) subjugated the Levant and during the following Diadochi Wars Palestine came under Ptolemaic rule until the end of the 3rd century.⁷

Overall, the economic and political conditions in the 5th–4th centuries, which had changed significantly compared to the preceding Neo-Babylonian period, led to increasing multiculturalism and multilingualism in the Southern Levant. As these phenomena and their effects have usually only been studied in detail for the Judean Highlands,⁸ this chapter will focus on the Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine.

- 5 For a synopsis of the archaeological finds, see now Dieter Vieweger, *Geschichte der biblischen Welt. Vol. 3: Persische bis römische Zeit* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2019), 54-74; cf. also Ephraim Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 538–332 B.C.* (Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1982).
- 6 The term “Philisto-Arabian Coins” refers to coins minted on behalf of satraps, governors, local rulers, nomadic tribes or independent cities in the southern provinces of the Achaemenid Empire. On Persian coinage in the area of the Southern Coastal Plain, cf. Haim Gitler & Oren Tal, *The Coinage of Philistia of the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC: A Study of the Earliest Coins of Palestine*, *Collezioni Numismatiche* 6 (Milan: Ennerre, 2006). For a recent treatment, see Haim Gitler & Oren Tal, “Reclassifying Persian-Period Philistian Coins: Some New Identifications”, *Israel Numismatic Research*, 11 (2016): 11-22.
- 7 The Ptolemies were primarily interested in increasing agricultural productivity in their territories through innovations (such as the introduction of new agricultural crops), the use of slaves and the introduction of debt bondage. The direct Greek influence led to a steady Hellenization and to an increasing mixing of the local oriental culture with allochthonous influences from the West. On the historical developments and changes in Israel/Palestine immediately before and after the reign of Alexander the Great and their impact on material culture, see Hans-Peter Kuhnen, “Israel unmittelbar vor und nach Alexander dem Großen: Geschichtlicher Wandel und archäologischer Befund”, in *Die Griechen und das antike Israel: Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Religions- und Kulturgeschichte des Heiligen Landes*, eds. Stefan Alkier & Markus Witte, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 201 (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2004), 1-27. Cf. also Alexander Fantalkin & Oren Tal, “Judah and its Neighbors in the Fourth Century BCE: A Time of Major Transformations”, in *From Judah to Judea: Socio-economic Structures and Processes in the Persian Period*, ed. Johannes U. Ro, *Hebrew Bible Monographs* 43 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 134-97.
- 8 On the political, economic, religious and social developments in Persian period *Yehud*, see e.g. the chapters in Christian Frevel, Katharina Pyschny & Izak Cornelius, eds. *A “Religious Revolution” in Yehud? The Material Culture of the Persian Period as a Test Case*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 267 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2014); Oded Lipschits & Manfred Oeming, eds. *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006); Yigal Levin, ed. *A Time of Change: Judah and its Neighbours in the Persian and early Hellenistic Periods*,

Therefore, the first part of this chapter is dedicated to the analysis of archaeological and epigraphic finds from *ʿAsqalān*/Ashkelon, *Esdūd*/Ashdod and *Yafā*/Yafo with regard to cultural diversity and multilingualism. The second part examines the biblical narrative of Nehemiah 13:23-24 as this passage is nearly the only biblical story set in Persian period Jerusalem that reflects *Yehud*'s relationship to the Southern Coastal Plain.⁹

6.2 THE MULTILINGUAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF THE SOUTHERN COASTAL PLAIN IN THE 5TH–4TH CENTURY BCE

6.2.1 Multiculturalism and Multilingualism in *ʿAsqalān*/Ashkelon

After its destruction by the Neo-Babylonians in 604 BCE *ʿAsqalān*/Ashkelon (map ref. 1570/6190),¹⁰ classical *Ascalon*, was resettled in the late 6th century BCE.¹¹ For

Library of Second Temple Studies 65 (London: T&T Clark, 2007). Cf. also Israel Finkelstein, "The Territorial Extent and Demography of *Yehud*/Judea in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods", *Revue Biblique*, 117/1 (2010): 39-54.

- 9 In the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Ashdod and its inhabitants are briefly mentioned again. In Neh 4:1 the Ashdodites want to prevent the reconstruction of the Jerusalem city wall. Ashkelon and Jaffa are not mentioned at all. The oracle in Zech 9:5-7, which refers to Ashkelon, Ashdod and Gaza, can clearly be dated to the Hellenistic period. For this dating, see e.g. Ina Willi-Plein, "Prophetie und Weltgeschichte: Zur Einbettung von Sach 9,1-8 in die Geschichte Israels", in *Geschichte Israels und deuteronomistisches Geschichtsdenken: Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Winfried Thiel*, eds. Peter Mommer & Andres Scherer, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 380 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010), 301-15; Markus Saur, "Gedeutete Gegenwart: Ezechiel 26, Sacharja 9 und der Eroberungszug Alexanders des Grossen", in "My Spirit at Rest in the North Country" (*Zechariah 6.8*): *Collected Communications to the XXth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Helsinki 2010*, eds. Herrmann M. Niemann & Matthias Augustin, *Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums* 57 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2011), 77-84 (esp. 80-83). Cf. also Angelika Berlejung, "Was ist eigentlich 'Ashdodisch'? Überlegungen zu Neh 13,23f. und Sach 9,6", in *Nächstenliebe und Gottesfurcht: Beiträge aus alttestamentlicher semitischer und altorientalischer Wissenschaft für Hans-Peter Mathys zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Hanna Jenni & Markus Saur, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 439 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2016), 20-22.
- 10 All coordinates are given according to the NIG/ITM standard (New Israel Grid/Israeli Transverse Mercator).
- 11 For a synopsis of the history of Ashkelon, see Lawrence E. Stager & J. David Schloen, "Introduction: Ashkelon and its Inhabitants", in *Ashkelon I: Introduction and Overview (1985–2006)*, eds. Lawrence E. Stager, J. David Schloen & Daniel M. Master, *Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 3-10. Cf. also Lawrence E. Stager, "Ashkelon on the Eve of Destruction in 604 B.C.", in *Ashkelon 3: The Seventh Century B.C.*, eds. Lawrence E. Stager, Daniel M. Master & J. David Schloen, *Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 3* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 3-11; Alexander Fantalkin "Why Did Nebuchadnezzar II Destroy Ashkelon in Kislev 604 B.C.E.?" in *The Fire Signals of Lachish: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Israel in the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Persian Period in Honor of David Ussishkin*, eds. Israel Finkelstein & Nadav Na'aman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 87-111 for a detailed treatment of the Neo-Babylonian destruction of Ashkelon in 604 BCE.

the following Persian period, the classical Greek geographer *Pseudo-Scylax* reports in the 4th century BCE that *‘Asqalān/Ashkelon* became “a city of the Tyrians”. He further noted that it served as headquarters of a Tyrian governor, thus a royal seat.¹² After the death of Alexander the Great, the city became part of the Ptolemaic Empire, but around 290 BCE during the reign of Ptolemy I. Soter (r. 305/4–282 BCE), *‘Asqalān/Ashkelon* was completely destroyed in the course of the Diadochi military conflicts.¹³

Apart from these sparse notes from classical sources, the Persian period is well documented with regard to the archaeological finds. In the area of the *North Tell* (North Slope, Phase 6) there is evidence of a Persian-period mudbrick building from the second half of the 4th century BCE.¹⁴ On the *South Tell* (South Slope [Grid 38], Phase 13) a villa with a central courtyard is characteristic. The presence of Attic Greek imports allows dating the building to the first half of the 5th century. After a period of decline, at least three *insulae* (South Slope [Grid 38], Phase 10) were built, which lasted until the first decades of the Hellenistic era.¹⁵

In another area of the *South Tell* (South Slope [Grid 50], Phases 6-3), a warehouse was excavated dating from the first half of the 5th century. Numerous fully preserved *amphorae* were discovered, a large number of which had been imported from Greece. In later times this building went out of use and the area functioned as a cemetery for dogs.¹⁶ Towards the end of the Persian period or at the beginning of the Hellenistic

12 Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplus* 1.78. Cf. also Stager & Schloen, “Introduction: Ashkelon and its Inhabitants”, 9.

13 According to Lawrence E. Stager (Lawrence E. Stager, *Ashkelon Discovered: From Canaanites and Philistines to Romans and Moslems* [Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1991], 23-24; Lawrence E. Stager, J. David Schloen, Daniel M. Master, Michael D. Press & Adam Aja, “Stratigraphic Overview”, in *Ashkelon I: Introduction and Overview (1985–2006)*, eds. Lawrence E. Stager, J. David Schloen & Daniel M. Master, Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1 [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008], 287, 317, 322) traces of destruction can be detected on the *South Tell* in Grid 38, Phase 10 and Grid 57, Phase 3. Grid 50, Phase 3 was possibly suddenly abandoned during the conquest of the city. In a pit located in this area of the *Tell* (Grid 57, Phase 3, Room 341), 18 silver *tetradrachmae* of Alexander the Great and Philip III Arrhidaeus (r. 323–317 BCE) were found. The last coin is dated around 290 BCE and thus offers a solid *terminus post quem* for the destruction.

14 Cf. preliminary, Stager et al., “Stratigraphic Overview”, 236.

15 Ibid., 283-87.

16 Lawrence E. Stager associates the dog cemetery with a Phoenician healing cult that flourished in Ashkelon during the Persian era. However, a corresponding temple has not yet been found. Cf. Lawrence E. Stager, “Dogs and Healing in Phoenician Ashkelon”, in *Ashkelon I: Introduction and Overview (1985–2006)*, eds. Lawrence E. Stager, J. David Schloen & Daniel M. Master, Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 565-68. For an archaeozoological study of the 1238 dog skeletons excavated in Ashkelon, see Paula Wapnish & Brian Hesse, “The Ashkelon Dog Burials: Data and Interpretations”, in *Ashkelon I: Introduction and Overview (1985–2006)*, eds. Lawrence E. Stager, J. David Schloen & Daniel M. Master, Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 541-64.

era, another extensive seaside warehouse complex was established.¹⁷ Imported pottery from Greece and, to a lesser extent, from Italy is well represented in the 5th and 4th centuries. While in the 5th century imports from Greece with, e.g., *Black-* and *Red-Figured Ware* predominated, in the 4th century *Italic Red-Figured Ware* appeared for the first time. Later on, *West Slope Ware* from Athens arrived.¹⁸ All in all, these imports reflect extensive trade relations and multicultural exchange across the Mediterranean.

Further insights into the multicultural and multilingual influences in Ashkelon can be illustrated by the example of ostraca. Numerous Phoenician ostraca from the 5th and 4th centuries have been found on the entire site, of which about 30 inscriptions have been published by the excavators of the *Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon* to date.¹⁹ An important example of multilingualism and multiculturalism is for example ostrakon *Ashkelon* 2.4.²⁰ This fragment of a jar dates from the 4th century and is inscribed in Phoenician cursive. The ostrakon bears the inscription בן עבדבעל [xx] למנוכינ[xx], “Belonging to *Mannu-ki-N*[xx], son of ‘*Abd-ba’al*’. The father ‘*Abd-ba’al*’ bears a clearly Phoenician name, while his son’s name, *Mannu-ki-N*[xx], is Babylonian. Personal names with the element *mannu-ki* (“who is like the god xyz?”) were popular in Mesopotamia from the Old Babylonian to Late Babylonian and from the Neo-Assyrian to Neo-Babylonian periods and were later used by West Semites in the Persian period.²¹

Phoenician influence is also indicated by amulets or pendants, which were found in archaeological contexts from the 5th and 4th centuries. One of these pendants

17 Stager et al., “Stratigraphic Overview”, 313-17.

18 Cf. Lawrence E. Stager, “Ashkelon”, in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Vol. 1, ed. Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 109. On the development of pottery imports from Greece to Israel/Palestine in the period of the 5th and 4th century, see Robert Wenning, “Griechischer Einfluss auf Palästina in vorhellenistischer Zeit?” in *Die Griechen und das antike Israel: Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Religions- und Kulturgeschichte des Heiligen Landes*, eds. Stefan Alkier & Markus Witte, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 201 (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2004), 29-60. For an introduction to the decoration techniques of Athenian vase painting, their prerequisites and developments from the Archaic through the Late Classical period (ca. 500–340 BCE), cf. the chapters in Beth Cohen, ed. *The Colors of Clay: Special Techniques in Athenian Vases* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006).

19 Photos of the ostraca, transcriptions and a philological discussion of each inscription can be found in Frank M. Cross, “Inscriptions in Phoenician and Other Scripts”, in *Ashkelon I: Introduction and Overview (1985–2006)*, eds. Lawrence E. Stager, J. David Schloen & Daniel M. Master, Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 333-72.

20 Reg. No. 26227. Find spot: Grid 57, Square 68, Layer 269, Bucket 857. Cf. Cross, “Inscriptions in Phoenician and Other Scripts”, 350-51.

21 See Cross, “Inscriptions in Phoenician and Other Scripts”, 351 for further literature. On the sociolinguistic rules and strategies for the choice of non-semitic and/or multilingual personal names represented in the Levantine corpus of inscriptions of the 1st millennium BCE, cf. Angelika Berlejung, “Identity Performances in Multilingual Contexts: The Cases of Yarih-‘ezer from Amman and Ikausu/Achish from Ekron”, *Welt des Orients*, 49/2 (2019): 252-87.

(measuring 44 x 29 x 3 mm)²² consists of a circle (as symbol for the head), a horizontal bar (as symbol for the outstretched arms) and a triangular body with three pierced holes. This artefact, as well as at least four similar pendants, can be associated with the cult of *Tanit*, the Punic and Phoenician goddess of fertility and the patron goddess of Carthage. Besides the more than 30 Phoenician ostraca, less than a handful of Persian ostraca with inscriptions in other languages (Aramaic, Greek and possibly Cypro-Syllabic) have been excavated so far.²³

6.2.2 Multiculturalism and Multilingualism in *Esdūd/Ashdod*

Esdūd/Ashdod (map. ref. 1679.7293), classical *Azotus*, destroyed in the last third of the 7th century BCE by the Egyptians, did not show any significant resettlement until the 5th century.²⁴ Later on, in the second half of the 5th and especially in the 4th century the city experienced a great demographic and economic upturn. This can be seen, for example, in the local coinage of *drachmae* and *obols*, which bear the (partially abbreviated) Aramaic legend 𐤌𐤕𐤕 (𐤌𐤕𐤕) (*šdd*) on the reverse.²⁵ Like Ashkelon, Ashdod was conquered by Alexander the Great around 333/2 BCE and became part of the Ptolemaic Empire in the late 4th century.

The analysis of the architecture from the Persian period (Stratum V) is difficult for most parts of the city. On the *acropolis* (especially in Area A), the Persian period buildings were built over by later Hellenistic structures.²⁶ In Area K, a large quarry

22 Reg. no. 26278. Find spot: Grid 50, Square 48, Layer 197, Bucket 600. See Stager, *Ashkelon Discovered*, 31, 37. An almost exact parallel was recently discovered during excavations in *Tell Sandaḥanna/Maresha* (map. ref. 1904.6112). This object measures 44 x 30 x 4.5 mm and is made of copper alloy. On this pendant, see Samuel Wolff, Ian Stern, & Adi Ehrlich, “A Newly Discovered Tanit Pendant from Maresha”, *Rivista Di Studi Fenici* 46 (2018): 29-42 (with further references).

23 Particularly unusual for the Persian period is the extremely small number of ostraca written in Aramaic script, excavated to date in Ashkelon. To mention is Ostrakon *Ashkelon* 3.1 (Reg. no. 30146. Find spot: Grid 50, Square 49, Layer 264, Bucket 14; see Cross, “Inscriptions in Phoenician and Other Scripts”, 366). This fragment of a storage jar features the Semitic name יבנבטל (*Yibnabaʿal*; “Baʿal has built”). On onomastic parallels in the Aramaic texts from Elephantine and in the Hebrew Bible, see Cross, “Inscriptions in Phoenician and Other Scripts”, 366.

24 For a synopsis of the history of Ashdod and the archaeological finds, see David Ben-Shlomo, “Ashdod”, in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Archaeology*, Vol. 1, ed. Daniel M. Master (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 67-72. Cf. also Moshe Dothan, “Ashdod”, in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Vol. 1, ed. Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 93-101.

25 For references, see footnote 6. For the coins recently found during the renewed excavations in *ʿAšdōd Yām/Ashdod-Yam* (map. ref. 1640.6320), cf. Alexander Fantalkin, Mati Johananoff & Shahr Kispin, “Persian-Period Philistia Coins from Ashdod-Yam”, *Israel Numismatic Research*, 11 (2016): 23-28.

26 On this, see Moshe Dothan, ed. *Ashdod II/III: The Second and Third Seasons of Excavations*, ‘Atiqot English Series IX–X (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1971), 38.

stone building was excavated and interpreted as a public edifice due to its architecture and size. Taking into account a similarly constructed house in *Tell el-Qasile*/Tell Qasile (Stratum VI, *Building G*) the building probably dates to the 5th century BCE.²⁷ Southeast of the *acropolis* a cemetery with some shaft tombs and chamber tombs (Area F) has been built roughly at the same time.²⁸

Despite the overbuilding of the Persian period architecture during the Hellenistic era, numerous small finds can prove the multilingual and multicultural character of the city for the period of the 5th and 4th centuries. An ostrakon (measuring 42 x 45 mm)²⁹ from the middle of the 5th century, for example, mentions the personal name *Zbdyh* (זבדיה, “Yahwe has given”). This theophoric name referring to the god Yahweh belonged to a man who probably came from the provinces of *Yehud* or *Idumea*. According to the inscription, he apparently sold wine in the coastal region. In addition, the presence of Judeans (or Idumeans³⁰) and/or trade relations with *Yehud* are documented by objects like *Judean horse and rider figurines*³¹ and, in particular, an ostrakon with an elusive Hebrew *graffito*³² incised before firing.

27 See Amihai Mazar and David Ben-Shlomo, “Stratigraphy and Building Remains”, in *Ashdod VI: The Excavations of Areas H and K (1968–1969)*, eds. Moshe Dothan & David Ben-Shlomo (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2005), 60. On the Persian *Building G* at Tell Qasile, cf. Bruno Maisler, “The Excavations at Tell Qasile: Preliminary Report”, *Israel Exploration Journal*, 1 (1950–1951): 69, Fig. 2.

28 Dothan, ed. *Ashdod II/III*, 187–89, Plan 24–26.

29 IAA inv. no. 1972-119; first published in Joseph Naveh, “An Aramaic Ostrakon from Ashdod”, in *Ashdod II/III: The Second and Third Seasons of Excavations*, ed. Moshe Dothan, ‘Atiqot English Series IX–X (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1971), 200–01.

30 Based on at least three Idumean ostraca, which were purchased from the antiquities market, trade relations and cultural interactions between *Esdūd*/Ashdod and Idumea can be proven. The three ostraca TAO A8.38, TAO A9.24 and TAO A36.4 (Bezalel Porten & Arda Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea*, Vol. 1: *Dossiers 1–10: 401 Commodity Chits* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 389 (TAO A8.38), 423 (TAO A9.24); Bezalel Porten & Arda Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea*, Vol. 2: *Dossiers 11–50: 263 Commodity Chits* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 241 (TAO A36.4)), each written in the middle of the 4th century BCE, bear witness to the transport of several hundred litres of wheat from Idumea to the city of מְחֻזָּא (*Mḥwz*). According to Porten & Yardeni, *Textbook*, Vol. 1, 389–90; Arda Yardeni, *The Jeselsohn Collection of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2016), 724 מְחֻזָּא can be identified with the port of ‘Ašdōd Yām/Ashdod-Yam.

31 Dothan, ed. *Ashdod II/III*, Fig. 97:15; Moshe Dothan & Yosef Porath, *Ashdod IV: Excavation of Area M: The Excavation of the Lower City*, ‘Atiqot English Series XV (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1982), Fig. 34:7; David Ben-Shlomo, “Material Culture”, in *Ashdod VI: The Excavations of Area H and K (1968–1969)*, eds. Moshe Dothan and David Ben-Shlomo, Israel Antiquities Authority Reports 24 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2005), Fig. 3.116:3. Another *horse and rider figurine* (reg. no K1360/1) is only mentioned in the excavation report, but is documented neither as a drawing nor a photograph (cf. Ben-Shlomo, “Material Culture”, 244).

32 IAA inv. no. 1963-2480. See now the republication in Walter Ameling et al., eds., *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae / Palaestinae*, Vol. 3: *South Coast. 2161–2648* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 212–13, Fig. 2302.

The presence of Greeks, or at least Ashdod's contacts with Greece, can be demonstrated by imports of Attic and Cypriote pottery, as well as Greek inscriptions. One example is a Greek *graffito* (measuring letters 8 x 9 mm) carved into the base of a small bowl of *Black-Glazed-Ware* after firing.³³ Only the letters ΔΗ [...] ("De [...]"), which probably represent the first letters of the owner's name, have been preserved. The owner of the vessel may have been active as a Greek mercenary or merchant in the Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine. Evidence for Aramaic language or Aramaic script can be demonstrated particularly well with an ostrakon from *Nabī Yūnis*/Mišpē Yona (map. ref. 1666.7359), classical *Cariathmaus*, near Ashdod. The artefact (measuring 35 x 41 mm) dates from the second half of the 4th century and bears an Aramaic inscription featuring the theophoric personal name בעלצר/ד (Ba'al-šr/d, "Ba'al is [the God] Šid/Ba'al is guarding").³⁴ Due to the amount of כ4 (4 *Kors*) mentioned in line 2 of the ostrakon, the text was interpreted as a donation receipt for a local shrine or as a delivery note.³⁵ However, a delivery note is more likely since no architecture has been found on site during previous excavations indicating a local sanctuary from Persian times.³⁶

6.2.3 Multiculturalism and Multilingualism in *Yafā/Yafo*

Yafā/Yafo, or Jaffa (map. ref. 1757.6623), classical *Ioppe*, has been associated with the legend of Andromeda and Perseus since antiquity. Besides the example of *Pseudo-Scylax*, also *Pliny the Elder* and *Strabo* mention this connection.³⁷ With regard to the historical developments in the Persian period and according to the inscription on the sarcophagus of *Eshmun'azar* of Sidon, the Persians transferred *Ḥirbet el-Burğ/Dor*

33 IAA inv. no. 1969-1918. See now the republication in Ameling et al., eds. *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, Vol. 3, 211-12, Fig. 2301.

34 IAA inv. no. 1960-62. Cf. Ameling et al., eds. *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, Vol. 3, 197-98, Fig. 2294.1. In the *editio princeps* (Frank M. Cross, "An Ostrakon from Nebī Yūnis", *Israel Exploration Journal* 14/3 [1964]: 185-86) the ostrakon was interpreted as Phoenician.

35 Cf. Cross, "Ostrakon", 186; Ameling et al., eds. *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, Vol. 3, 198.

36 In *Nabī Yūnis*/Mišpē Yona small scale excavations were carried out in 1960 (Menashe Brosh, "Tel Yona", *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 44 [1972]: 26). In 2012 a salvage excavation was conducted due to construction work (Dmitry Yegorov, "Ashdod: Mizpe Yona", *Hadashot Arkheologiyot – Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 125 [2013]: 1-4).

37 *Pseudo-Scylax*, *Periplus* 104.3; *Plin. N.H.* 5.69; *Strabo* 16.2.28. For a synopsis of the history of Jaffa and the archaeological finds, see Aaron A. Burke, "Early Jaffa: From the Bronze Age to the Persian Period", in *The History and Archaeology of Jaffa*, Vol. 1, The Jaffa Cultural Heritage Project Series 1/Monumenta Archaeologica 26, eds. Aaron A. Burke & Martin Peilstöcker (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, 2011), 63-78. Cf. also Jacob Kaplan & Haya Ritter-Kaplan, "Jaffa", in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Vol. 2, ed. Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 655-59; Ze'ev Herzog, "Jaffa", in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Vol. 5: *Supplementary Volume*, ed. Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2008), 24-36.

and *Yafā*/Yafo to the Sidonians.³⁸ The Phoenician rule over Jaffa is at least indirectly confirmed by a passage in the Hebrew Bible. In Ezra 3:7 it is mentioned that Lebanese cedar wood was imported via Jaffa for the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem in the late 6th century BCE.

In any case, the abundance of late Persian to early Hellenistic *local Red Slipped Ware*, as well as the architectural remains confirm that Jaffa was a typical Phoenician city during Persian times.³⁹ In the early Persian period, a fortification wall was built of local *kurkar* ashlar in the eastern part of the *Tell* by using the *header-stretcher technique*. The excavator, Jacob Kaplan, identified this construction as “Sidonian wall”.⁴⁰ In the later part of the Persian period a new building (*Building M*) was built near the city wall, which was characterised by Haya Ritter-Kaplan as a Sidonian warehouse for trade with Attica.⁴¹

In terms of epigraphic finds from Jaffa, a Persian period seal (measuring 40.5 x 37 x 18 mm) discovered in the foundation fill of a late Byzantine period building represents a significant example of multilingualism.⁴² The inscription reads: לענניהו בן שמעיה, “Belonging to ‘Ananiyahu Son of Šema‘yah”. Both the name of the owner of the seal, ‘nnyh (“Yahweh has answered me”), and the name of his father, šm‘yh (“Yahweh has heard”), are clearly Yahwistic. As for the Persian period, versions of both names are well documented in Aramaic documents from Egypt, the *Wādī-ed-Dāliye* papyri as well as in the Hebrew Bible.⁴³ It is remarkable that the Hebrew script used for the seal inscription shows clear Phoenician influences.⁴⁴ Therefore, the seal is an expression of the intertwining of the Phoenician culture with the culture of the Judean Highlands.

38 Manfred Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, Altes Testament Deutsch. Ergänzungsreihe 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 475. For more detail, see Burke, “Early Jaffa”, 74 and Ameling et al., eds. *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, Vol. 3, 22 (with further references).

39 Orit Tsuf, *Ancient Jaffa from the Persian to the Byzantine Period: Kaplan Excavations (1955–1981)*, The Jaffa Cultural Heritage Project Series 3/Ägypten und Altes Testament 89 (Münster: Zaphon, 2018), 95. On the Persian to Byzantine period pottery excavated by Joseph Kaplan between 1955–1982, see Tsuf, “Ancient Jaffa”, 96–331.

40 Kaplan & Kaplan, “Jaffa”, 656; Tsuf, “Ancient Jaffa”, 58–64, Fig. 5.5–11.

41 See Haya Ritter-Kaplan, “The Connections of Sidonian Jaffa and Greece in the Light of the Excavations”, *Qadmoniot* 15 (1982): 64–68. Cf. also Kaplan & Kaplan, “Jaffa”, 657–58; Tsuf, “Ancient Jaffa”, 65–68 (esp. 65).

42 IAA inv. no. 2000-3722. See Martin Peilstöcker & Benjamin Sass, “A Hebrew Seal from Jaffa and the Hebrew Script in the Post-First Temple Period”, *‘Atiqot* 42 (2001): 199–210. For a juglet with a Phoenician inscription excavated in Jaffa, see Rina Avner & Esther Eshel, “A juglet with a Phoenician inscription from a recent excavation in Jaffa, Israel”, *Transeuphratène* 12 (1996): 59–63.

43 For references, cf. Peilstöcker & Sass, “Hebrew Seal from Jaffa”, 205.

44 See for more detail, Peilstöcker & Sass, “Hebrew Seal from Jaffa”, 202–05.

Jaffa's interactions with Greece are mainly reflected in imports of smaller quantities of *East Greek Ware* during the 6th century.⁴⁵ The cultural and economic contact then intensified in the course of the Persian period, e.g., through the growing import of *Attic Black and Red Figured Wares*.⁴⁶ Relevant Greek inscriptions can only be identified from the Hellenistic period onwards. To mention is, for example, a white marble slab (measuring 185 x 315.9 x 50 mm)⁴⁷ with a dedication mentioning Ptolemy IV Philopator (r. 221–204 BCE) and Berenice II Euergetis (ca. 267/6–221 BCE). This object is often associated with a temple for Ptolemy IV.⁴⁸ So far, however, no archaeological evidence of such a building dating to the 3rd century BCE has been found in Jaffa.

6.3 THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF THE SOUTHERN COASTAL PLAIN AS REFLECTED IN THE HEBREW BIBLE: NEHEMIAH 13:23-24 AS TEST CASE

Apart from archaeological and epigraphic sources, literary texts can also provide information regarding the situation in the Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine during the Persian period. Since there are no relevant sources from the coastal region itself, texts from the Hebrew Bible, such as Nehemiah 13:23-24,⁴⁹ must be consulted. This narrative is polemically directed against mixed marriages between women from Ashdod (as well as women from Ammon and Moab) and Judean men.⁵⁰ Furthermore,

45 On the *East Greek Ware* imported to Jaffa, cf. Tsuf, "Ancient Jaffa", 240-48.

46 See Tsuf, "Ancient Jaffa", 248-53 for a detailed study of the *Attic Black and Red Figured Pottery* excavated by Jacob Kaplan.

47 IAA inv. no. 1993-2061. For a detailed study, see Ameling et al., eds. *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, Vol. 3, 32-34 (with further literature on p. 34).

48 See, e.g., Kaplan & Kaplan, "Jaffa", 659. But cf. the comment in Ameling et al., eds. *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, Vol. 3, 34: "[The] priest [mentioned in this dedication inscription] implies a cult and an altar, but not necessarily a temple."

49 As this chapter deals exclusively with the multicultural and multilingual situation in the Southern Coastal Plain, a comprehensive exegetical analysis of Neh 13:23-24 would go beyond the scope of this chapter. For a comprehensive exegesis, see now Berlejung, "Was ist eigentlich 'Aschdodisch'?" 13-25 (esp. 13-19; with further literature).

50 For an anthropological, social and psychological definition and delimitation of the terms "mixed marriage", "intercultural marriage", and "interreligious marriage", see the discussion in Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13: A Study of the Sociology of the Post-Exilic Judaeian Community", in *Second Temple Studies, Vol. 2: Temple and Community in the Persian Period*, eds. Tamara C. Eskenazi & Kent H. Richards, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series* 175 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 242-65 (esp. 245-53); Katherine E. Southwood, "The Holy Seed: The Significance of Endogamous Boundaries and Their Transgression in Ezra 9-10", in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*, eds. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers & Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 189-224 (esp. 189-96). For an in-depth treatment on intermarriage and group identity in the Persian and Hellenistic period, cf. the chapters in Christian Frevel, ed. *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 547 (New York: T&T Clark, 2011).

Nehemiah 13:23-24 criticises that children born of mixed marriages and living in Jerusalem know only “the language of Ashdod” (Neh 13:24 NRSV), while they do not speak “the language of Judah” (Neh 13:24 NRSV).⁵¹ The text thus deals with questions of identity and multiculturalism.

As far as the dating of this narrative is concerned, Christian Frevel and Benedikt J. Conczorowski opt for a composition in the first half of the 4th century BCE. In their opinion, Nehemiah 13:23-29 was written in *Yehud* as a critical response to the prosperous economic situation on the coast of Israel/Palestine during the Persian period.⁵² According to Jacob L. Wright and Angelika Berlejung, however, Nehemiah 13:23-25* dates to the second half of the 4th century.⁵³ In any case, the 4th century would be conceivable as the time of origin. At least, the archaeological finds (see section 6.2.2) testify that Persian Ashdod was indeed an economically prosperous city that served as a *salad bowl* or rather as a *contact zone*⁵⁴ for different cultures. However, this did not result in a complete cultural amalgamation and the formation of a new homogeneous society in this city (in the sense of the monocultural metaphor of a *melting pot*). The multilingualism demonstrated for Ashdod on the basis of ostraca is an expression of the fact that the different ethnic groups and cultures co-existed and did not fully merge.

- 51 On this, see for more detail Berlejung, “Was ist eigentlich ‘Aschdodisch’?” 13-25 (esp. 13-19). The concept of Judean identity as represented in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which is characterized by strategies of demarcation from foreign influences, cannot be presented in detail here. See, e.g., Becking, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Construction of Early Jewish Identity*, Forschungen zum alten Testament 80 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), and Gary N. Knoppers, “The Construction of Judean Diasporic Identity in Ezra-Nehemiah”, *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 15/3 (2015): 1-15 for the discussion of the literature and arguments.
- 52 Christian Frevel & Benedikt J. Conczorowski, “Deepening the Water: First Steps to a Diachronic Approach on Inter-marriage in the Hebrew Bible”, in *Mixed Marriages: Inter-marriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 547 (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 33.
- 53 Jacob L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and Its Earliest Readers*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 348 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 245-53; Berlejung, “Was ist eigentlich ‘Aschdodisch’?” 15.
- 54 I prefer the concept of *contact zones*, which was introduced for the humanities (especially in historical sciences and archaeology), to the cultural idea of the *salad bowl*. The latter is more strongly influenced by the social sciences and has so far been applied mainly to the situation in modern North America. On the typology of contact zones, see Christoph Ulf, “Eine Typologie von kulturellen Kontaktzonen („Fernverhältnisse” – Middle Grounds – dichte Kontaktzonen): oder Rethinking Cultural Contacts auf dem Prüfstand”, in *Kulturrkontakte in antiken Welten: Vom Denkmodell zum Fallbeispiel. Proceedings des internationalen Kolloquiums aus Anlass des 60. Geburtstages von Christoph Ulf, Innsbruck, 26-30 January 2009*, eds. Robert Rollinger & Kordula Schnegg, *Colloquia Antiqua* 10 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 469-504. See also Philipp. W. Stockhammer, “Rethinking Philistia as a Contact Zone”, in *Tell it in Gath: Studies in the History and Archaeology of Israel. Essays in Honor of Aren M. Maeir on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, eds. Itzhaq Shai, Jeffrey Chadwick, Amit Dagan, Chris McKinny, Joe Uziel & Louise Hitchcock, *Ägypten und Altes Testament* 90 (Münster: Zaphon, 2018), 375-84 on the implementation of this concept in the Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine.

In addition to the dating, the purpose of Nehemiah 13:23-24 should also be examined. Does the text respond to the economic and cultural attraction of the Palestinian coast and calls for the social and cultural isolation of *Yehud* (in the east) from the coastal plain (in the west/southwest)? Or does the “language of Ashdod” function as a symbol or code for internal developments in Jerusalem not related to the situation on the Southern Coastal Plain, which were classified by the biblical authors as threatening the Judean identity? If the latter assumption is correct, why was there no direct reference made to these developments? Why would such a code have been necessary? So, there is much to be said for the first assumption.

In any case, the reference to the “language of Ashdod” is of further interest and leads to the question of what kind of language it refers to. First of all, Edward Ullendorf’s theory that the language of Ashdod is an incomprehensible language (from a Judean viewpoint) must be rejected.⁵⁵ The Judean imported pottery in *Esdūd*/Ashdod and the relevant ostraca (see section 6.2.2) show that *Yehud* and Ashdod interacted with each other in many ways. Consequently, their inhabitants must have been able to communicate with each other. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Nehemiah 13:23-24 refers to a Philistine or Neo-Philistine dialect that was actively spoken in the 4th century BCE.⁵⁶ Such a dialect would have to contain at least some elements of the Aegean or Cypro-Minoan languages. However, there is no epigraphic evidence that such an idiom was used in the Persian period.

It is possible that the “language of Ashdod” is referring to Phoenician⁵⁷ or Greek.⁵⁸ Both languages are epigraphically documented for the Persian period in *Esdūd*/Ashdod. However, according to archaeological evidence, they do not seem to have had the significance to be called the “language of Ashdod”. Another possibility is that Nehemiah 13:23-24 refers to Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the Achaemenid Empire.⁵⁹

55 On this, see Edward Ullendorf, “C’est de l’hébreu pour moi!” *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 13/1 (1968): 125-38 (esp. 133-34).

56 See, e.g., André Lemaire, “Ashdodien et Judéen à l’époque perse: Ne 13,24”, in *Immigration and Emigration within the Ancient Near East: Festschrift E. Lipiński*, eds. Karel Van Lerberghe & Antoon Schoors, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 65 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995) 153-63 (esp. 161-63). Cf. also Wilhelm Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia: samt 3. Esra*, *Handbuch zum Alten Testament* I 20 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949), 208-09.

57 Cf. e.g., Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, *The Old Testament Library* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 363.

58 Johannes Thon, “Sprache und Identitätskonstruktionen: Das literarische Interesse von Neh 13, 23-27, und die Funktion dieses Textes im wissenschaftlichen Diskurs”, *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 121/4 (2009): 568; Berlejung, “Was ist eigentlich ‘Ashdodisch?’” 16.

59 Already scholars like Kurt Galling have taken the position that Neh 13:24 criticizes the suppression of Hebrew by Aramaic in the Persian period; see Kurt Galling, *Die Bücher der Chronik, Esra und Nehemia*, *Das Alte Testament Deutsch* 12 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &

As the local coins indicate, Aramaic was used as an administrative language in Ashdod (see section 6.2.2). However, would the biblical authors really have reacted critically to the increasing use of Aramaic (“the language of Ashdod”) in *Yehud*? In the 4th century BCE, Aramaic had long been accepted in everyday use in Jerusalem and *Yehud*. Moreover, many texts of the Hebrew Bible are characterised by a positive attitude towards the Aramaic language and the Aramaeans.⁶⁰

All in all, the “language of Ashdod” probably does not refer to the local Ashdodite dialect or to a specific language that was perceived as foreign and unconventional by the biblical authors. So, does the mention of Ashdod in Nehemiah 13:23-24, following Angelika Berlejung,⁶¹ metaphorically refer to the multilingual and multicultural character of the entire Southern Coastal Plain? If this is the case, then why does the biblical text explicitly speak only of the city of Ashdod? Why, for example, is Ashkelon not mentioned, or why do the biblical authors not use the expressions “language of the coast” or “language of the Philistines”?

In my opinion, regional differences, or regionalisms, between the coastal cities must be considered in the Persian period. As analysis of the archaeological finds and study of the historical sources have shown, *ʿAsqalān*/Ashkelon (see section 6.2.1) and *Yafā*/Yafa (see section 6.2.3) were strongly influenced by Phoenician politics and culture. Although both cities were also multilingual, Phoenician dominated at least in the written language, as demonstrated by 30 Phoenician ostraca found in Ashkelon. However, *Esdūd*/Ashdod had a much more multicultural and multilingual character. At least the archaeologically documented inscriptions and languages, as well as the Judean influence on the material culture, show that the city was not dominated only by one particular culture. This can be explained by the reduced Phoenician influence. By all means, there are no sources that prove for the period in question that Ashdod was under direct Phoenician control.⁶² Therefore, in my opinion, the mention of Ashdod or

Ruprecht, 1954), 253. Cf. also Ingo Kottsieper, “‘And they did not care to speak Yehudit’: On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era”, in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, eds. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers & Rainer Albertz (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 95-124; Thon, “Sprache und Identitätskonstruktionen”, 557-76.

60 See Berlejung, “Was ist eigentlich ‘Aschdodisch’?” 14; and for more detail, Angelika Berlejung, “Family Ties: Constructed Memories about Aram and the Aramaeans in the Old Testament”, in *In Search for Aram and Israel: Politics, Culture, and Identity*, eds. Omer Sergi, Manfred Oeming & Izaak J. de Hulster, *Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 20* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 355-77.

61 Berlejung, “Was ist eigentlich ‘Aschdodisch’?” 13-25 (esp. 18-19).

62 On the lack of historical sources for the reconstruction of the history of Ashdod in the Persian period, cf. also the comment by Ephraim Stern: “The history of this area in the Persian period is shrouded in obscurity and can be reconstructed only by conjecture since the historical and epigraphic sources are scanty.” (Stern, “Material Culture”, 243).

the “language of Ashdod” in Nehemiah 13:23-24 does not refer to the entire Southern Coastal Plain, but only to the specific multicultural and multilingual situation in *Esdūd*/Ashdod during the 5th and 4th century BCE.⁶³

6.4 CONCLUSION

During the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, the Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine functioned as a *contact zone*. In the coastal cities of Jaffa, *Esdūd*/Ashdod and *ʿAsqalān*/Ashkelon, there were numerous interactions of allochthonous individuals (like Phoenicians, Judeans, Greeks and others) with the local population. Therefore, through migration and transcultural processes, a unique multicultural and multilingual maritime culture developed over time.⁶⁴ However, the cultural character in the three coastal cities was not homogeneous but was shaped by local developments and regionalisms, as well as the co-existence of different ethnic groups and cultures.

According to the archaeological and epigraphic evidence, as well as the historical sources, *ʿAsqalān*/Ashkelon seems to have been affected by multicultural and multilingual influences, nevertheless, the Phoenician culture clearly dominated. A similar pattern emerges for Jaffa, although due to the smaller amount of archaeological data compared to Ashkelon, further finds have to be awaited. *Esdūd*/Ashdod, in contrast, was more multilingual and multicultural by comparison. At least the material culture as well as the archaeologically documented inscriptions and languages demonstrate

63 That the biblical authors must have been particularly familiar with the specific social, multicultural and multilingual situation in Ashdod is also supported by the fact that *Esdūd*/Ashdod was the coastal city closest to Jerusalem. The exact nature of the port facilities of Ashdod from the Persian era (to be found in *ʿAšdōd Yām*/Ashdod-Yam) could so far not be clarified during the excavations conducted. For the results of the renewed excavations in Ashdod-Yam, cf. preliminarily Alexander Fantalkin, “Ashdod-Yam on the Israeli Mediterranean Coast: A First Season of Excavations”, *Skyllis* 14/1 (2014): 45-57; Angelika Berlejung & Alexander Fantalkin, “Ausgrabungen in Aschdod-Yam 2017: Hafenzentrum und Klosterstadt”, *Welt und Umwelt der Bibel* 86 (2017): 66-68. On the excavation of Jacob Kaplan in Ashdod-Yam during the late 1960s, see Jacob Kaplan, “The Stronghold of Yamani at Ashdod-Yam”, *Israel Exploration Journal* 19/3 (1969): 137-49.

64 On similar developments and processes in the transition phase from the Late Bronze Age III (ca. 1200/1150–1150/1100 BCE) to the Iron Age I (ca. 1150/1100–1000/900 BCE), which resulted in the formation of the Philistine culture, cf. now Felix Hagemeyer “„Sie kamen, sahen, siegten [...]“: Die Migration der Philister nach Israel/Palästina und die Herausbildung ihrer Kultur in der frühen Eisenzeit”, in *Migration und Kulturtransfer in den Kulturen des Vorderen Orients in der Antike*, eds. Norbert Nebes & Iris Gerlach, Jenaer Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 10 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, forthcoming). Cf. also Aren M. Maeir & Louise A. Hitchcock, “The Appearance, Formation and Transformation of Philistine Culture: New Perspectives and New Finds”, in “*Sea Peoples*” *Up-To-Date: New Research on Transformations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 13th–11th Centuries BCE. Proceedings of the ESF-Workshop held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, 3-4 November 2014*, eds. Peter M. Fischer & Teresa Bürge, Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 35 (Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 149-62.

that there was not only one dominant particular culture (especially not the Phoenician culture). This can be explained by the reduced political influence of Sidon and Tyre compared to the situation in Ashkelon and Jaffa.

In any case, the multilingual and multicultural character of the coastal cities and their economic power aroused envy and resentment in the province of *Yehud*. This attitude is reflected in certain texts of the Hebrew Bible, such as Nehemiah 13:23-24, which were written to counteract the economic superiority and multicultural influences of the coast, at least from an ideological perspective. In contrast to the latest exegetical trends, it could be demonstrated that the “language of Ashdod” negatively connotated in Nehemiah 13:23-24 is not to be understood as a symbol or code for the influences of the entire Southern Coastal Plain on Jerusalem. Instead, the biblical authors were obviously aware of the differences between the coastal cities and their cultural regionalisms. Therefore, in Nehemiah 13:23-24, they apparently made a clear reference to the specific situation in Ashdod and its heterogeneous, multilingual and multicultural character, which attracted the inhabitants of the Judean Highlands.