

RLST 124I: Varieties of Ancient Judaism
Spring 2009
Handout #8 (May 14, 2009)
“Talmud”

Tosefta (circa 250? 300? CE)

“Supplement”

- expansion and commentary on the Mishnah

Talmud Bavli

Babylonian Talmud (= “Study”)

- eventually, the authoritative writing of Oral Torah for all of rabbinic Judaism
- commentary on **36** of the **63** tractates of the Mishnah
- contains enormous amounts of non-Mishnaic tannaitic material (*baraitot*) as well as much more amoraic commentary (*gemara*)
- editing completed circa 550-600 CE by the Babylonian *savoraim*

Talmud Yerushalmi

Palestinian Talmud or *Talmud of the Land* or *Jerusalem Talmud*

- commentary on **39** of the **63** tractates of the Mishnah
- remained unedited; last commentaries probably put together circa 425-450
- while consulted by most forms of rabbinic Judaism, not considered as authoritative as the *Bavli*

gemara

“Study”

- amoraic commentary (usually in Aramaic) appended to the Mishnaic and other tannaitic materials to form the Talmud; signaled in the text by the initials *GM*

tannaim

“Repeaters”

- circa 70 CE (or earlier) to 200 CE
- the early generations of sages (expositors of the Oral Torah)
- their study resulted in the **Mishnah** and various *tannaitic midrashim* (biblical commentaries; mainly on the Torah)
- their texts are written in a late form of Hebrew
- although generations of Babylonian tannaim are recorded in later texts, the main work seems to have been done in Palestine (cities of Galilee: Usha, Sepphoris, Tiberias)

baraita (pl. *baraitot*)

- a text attributed to a *tanna*, but not found in other tannaitic texts (Mishnah, Tosefta, or midrashim)
- usually written in the same Hebrew dialect as the **Mishnah**

amoraim

"Commentators" (lit., "sayers")

- circa 200 CE to 450 CE
- the later generations of sages (expositors of the Oral Torah)
- their study resulted in the two editions of the **Talmud** (*Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*), comprising commentary (*gemara*) on the **Mishnah**, and including other tannaitic texts (*Tosefta*, *baraitot*)
- their comments are written in a combination of late Hebrew, modeled on the Hebrew of the **Mishnah**, and different forms of **Aramaic**
- two groups of amoraim were active: in Palestine (mainly in cities of Galilee, such as Tiberias) and in Persia (in cities near the capital, such as Sura and Pumbedita)

savoraim

"Interpreters"

- circa 450-600 [?] CE
- the third generations of sages (editors of the Oral Torah)
- responsible for the editing of the Babylonian Talmud (not the Palestinian Talmud), including adding extra commentary material and further anonymous sources, and creating cohesive style and content
- active only in the rabbinic academies of the Persian Empire