

Kings of Jerusalem at the Late Bronze to Iron Age Transition – Forerunners or Doubles of David and Solomon?*

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Egyptian texts are notorious for not referring to enemy or subject kings by name, to the extent of sometimes not mentioning the existence of such rulers. Yet it has become increasingly clear – from a range of evidence including results from recent art-historical analyses – that the Egyptian New Kingdom ‘empire’ in Syro-Palestine was largely controlled through a system of vassal rulers. Archaeological evidence can be used to posit the existence of a local dynasty based at Jerusalem during the time of the late 19th and early 20th Dynasties, c. 1200 BC on conventional dating. The monumental architecture there shows that there was an organised state, while connections with Egypt are shown by the fragments of an apparent Egyptianising building (palace or tomb?) and other Egyptian objects. If we allow this hypothetical dynasty to have ruled a wider territory, including Megiddo and the Jordan Valley then a surprising series of parallels appears with the activities of the Davidic dynasty. It is acknowledged that the plan and furnishing of Solomon’s Temple belong to a Late Bronze tradition. Are the figures of David and Solomon based on memories of a Late Bronze dynasty centred on Jerusalem or is there something fundamentally wrong with the archaeological dating based on Egyptian chronology?

An objection that has frequently been raised against the historicity of a Solomonic ‘empire’ is that there is no hint of it in any contemporary record – or for that matter, any reference to Solomon or his father David. For example, Finkelstein and Silberman (2001, 128) raise the matter as a point in favour of the biblical ‘minimalist’ case: ‘... for all their reported wealth and power, neither David nor Solomon is mentioned in a single known Egyptian or Mesopotamian text.’ Likewise Lemche (2008, 144): ‘Not one contemporary document from the ancient Near East mentions these two imperial monarchs.’

Such arguments sound convincing until we consider the nature of the contemporary documents *expected* to have mentioned these kings. Egypt and Mesopotamia were the most prolifically literate areas of the ancient Near East, but what kind of ‘historical’ records did they leave for the period in question? Conventional chronology (to use Kenneth Kitchen’s dates) makes David and Solomon contemporary with the late 21st and early 22nd Dynasties. The late 21st-dynasty rulers in question were Amenemope (993-984 BC), Osorkon the Elder (984-978 BC), Siamun (978-959 BC) and Psusennes II (959-945 BC). The

documentary record for these kings is meagre, to say the least; for example, Osorkon the Elder is only (with certainty) mentioned in two documents. No Egyptian records from this period concern foreign affairs, with the exception of a fragmentary and conventionalised scene in which Siamun is shown dispatching an enemy (Kitchen 1973, 280-281; 2006, 109-110, 618, Pl. XVI, A). These rulers are thought to have been followed by Shoshenq I (945-925 BC), founder of the 22nd Dynasty. His victory reliefs (Ritner 2009, 200-213, 215-218, 221-222) give only brief, generalised, accounts of his triumph over ‘Asiatics’ (see below).

Historical information from Mesopotamia is even more threadbare for this period. Here is the documentary record for the Assyrian kings for the same time-frame (using John Brinkman’s dates):

Assur-rabi II (1012-972): no surviving records
Assur-resh-ishi II (971-967): one stela (with one phrase)
Tiglath-pileser II (967-935): one stela
Assur-dan II (934-912): annals (not necessarily complete) reconstructed from fragmentary tablets; four building texts, some in multiple copies (Grayson 1976, 70-81).

Their Babylonian counterparts are equally obscure, in a period characterised by rapidly changing dynasties and

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ephemeral monarchs: ‘Within the span of half a century, between the years 1026* and 980*, a total of three dynasties and seven rulers came and went in Babylonia... A noteworthy feature of this age is its almost utter dearth of primary documentation.’ (Brinkman 1968, 148-149). Most of what we know of the kings of this period comes from later chronicles and king lists, with contemporary documents being restricted to the odd *kudurru*, legal text or inscribed arrowhead. The picture is even more bleak after 980 BC, when even the readings of some kings’ names are uncertain. In the standard reconstructed chronology it is not even known who reigned in the three decades or so before the accession of Shamash-Mudammiq, c. 900 BC (Brinkman 1968, 48-49).^[1]

It seems remarkable that anyone should expect a mention of David and Solomon in the records of such rulers – when they barely mentioned themselves ... Acknowledging this, Finkelstein and Silberman (2001, 129) admit that ‘... it is not so surprising that there are no references to either David or Solomon in the rather meagre contemporary Egyptian or Mesopotamian texts.’

The Power of Names

With respect to Egypt, the inscriptions of Shoshenq I (a focal point of this colloquium) illustrate an important point: his laconic war-records barely acknowledge the existence of foreign rulers, let alone name them. Immediately above his much-discussed list of Palestinian toponyms on the Bubastite portal the Pharaoh is shown, sword raised to dispatch numerous enemy captives before Amun, with this caption:

Smiting the chiefs of the Nubian tribesmen, of all inaccessible foreign lands, of all the lands of the Phoenicians [Fenkhu], and foreign lands of the Asiatic back-country. (tr. Ritner 2009, 201)

In an accompanying text Amun addresses Shoshenq with these words:

Receive for yourself the sword, O victorious King, for your mace has struck the chiefs of the foreign countries. (tr. Ritner 2009, 202)

The reliefs at Shoshenq’s El Hiba temple also laud his campaigns:

To you I [Amun] have given all lands in peace, every foreign country being beneath your sandals. To you I have given Nubia, the great ones and the chiefs. (tr. Ritner 2009, 224)

These vague, formalised statements are the nearest one gets to any reference to the foreign rulers that Shoshenq faced in Palestine.^[2] Yet there must have been some. The standard interpretation, of course, is that his famous toponym list includes at least one or two of the towns that were under the control of King Rehoboam of Judah, along with many towns in the northern kingdom that would have been ruled by the new Israelite king, Jeroboam (see conveniently Bimson, ‘Shishak and Shoshenq’ in this volume). One may disagree with that position (as the present writer does), on chronological or other grounds. Many scholars of the ‘minimalist’ persuasion doubt the very existence of a state of Judah at this period: but they generally accept the existence of the northern kingdom – if only as a ‘chiefdom’; and even the most extreme of minimalists would surely accept that important Philistine cities such as Gaza had local rulers and that Palestine generally was not in a state of complete leaderless anarchy.

Shoshenq I’s campaign records highlight a serious problem for the historian: pharaonic records are *extremely* sparing of detail when it comes to the rulers that they encountered in Western Asia. There is a strange, somewhat baffling, contrast here with their records of encounters with their western neighbours, the Libyans. Here New Kingdom war records freely give the names of various enemy leaders. To give but a few examples, Merenptah refers to Dydy and his son Meryey, chiefs of the Libu, and Ramesses III to Kapuer and his sons Meshesher and Meshesher, chiefs of the Meshwesh (see Cooney 2011, 190-193). But the pharaohs took a very different attitude to the rulers they encountered in Nubia and western Asia.

From the Middle Kingdom we have a number of short inscriptions on bowls and ceramic figurines giving the names of many Palestinian rulers – the so-called Execration texts (Wilson 1969b, 328-329). They give the names of two rulers of a town called Rušalimum/Lušalimum or the like; though the reading is difficult, Jerusalem was very likely intended (Kitchen 2007, 29). Yet these notable exceptions only serve to prove the general rule – the Egyptian reluctance to refer to Asiatic rulers. In this case their names were inscribed with the express purpose of ritually smashing them to bring ill luck on the named individuals.

A brief yet highly detailed camera-shot is provided by the El Amarna letters (conventionally dated to the 14th century BC), from which we know the names, locations and many other details of a large number of foreign rulers, from the great kings of countries such as Babylonia to the chieftains of relatively small cities in Palestine. Were we to possess a similar body of correspondence from later dynasties we would surely have further names; letters were sent, but from surviving 19th-dynasty documents we only know the name of one Asiatic recipient, ‘Baalat-remeg’, the *wr* (chief or prince) of Tyre – from the journal

[1] This is not to say, of course, that all is well with the standard Babylonian chronology for this period – see James *et al.* 1991, 277-290; Furlong 2010, 81-90.

[2] There is another possible reference on the Bubastite portal but this is restored: ‘You have made a great slaughter among their [chiefs], utterly without limit...’ (tr. Ritner 2009, 203)



Figure 1. An Egyptian Middle Kingdom figurine from Sakkara, depicting and naming an 'Asiatic' ruler, which was made to be ritually broken.

of a frontier official in the reign of Merenptah (Wilson 1969a, 258). But letters, where the addressee had to be named, are a different matter from pharaonic inscriptions. In these, Asiatic chiefs are almost always presented as anonymous.^[3]

[3] One extremely rare exception from the 18th Dynasty comes from the records of Amenhotep II, which refers by name to one Qaqa, prince of Giboa-Shemen near Megiddo (Hoffmeier 2003, 22). Manley (1996, 72) wondered whether it reflected 'the gravity of the threat posed by the rebels is evident from the fact that Qaqa is the only Palestinian or Syrian chief actually mentioned by name in an 18th Dynasty royal inscription'. This is unlikely as the town he ruled is utterly obscure. Rather than reflecting the gravity of the situation, the opposite seems to be the case. When mentioned by Amenhotep, Qaqa had already been deposed. Hence he and his 'name' were now powerless. Significantly his replacement as ruler of Giboa-Shemen is simply referred to as 'another chief'. I have so far found only three other exceptions. One concerns the 'Hyksos' king Apophis, referred to by name as the *wr* of Retenu on the stela of Kamose (Wilson 1969a, 554). Yet although considered a 'foreigner' by Kamose, Apophis was still a Pharaoh (describing himself with royal titulary in a letter to the ruler of Kush captured by Kamose – see Wilson 1969a, 555). The second, from the famous late 19th-dynasty letter of the satirical scribe refers to one Qazardi, chief of

To the best of my knowledge, the reasons behind the reluctance to name Asiatic rulers have never been fully explored or explained. One can begin with what can only be described as Egyptians' deep-seated xenophobia. Non-Egyptians were always looked down on as 'vile foreigners'. As Doxey (2001, 490) notes: 'The names of enemies, dangerous animals, and foreigners were written on figurines and other symbolic objects that were ritually destroyed in order to render the named entities powerless.' She interprets this in religious terms – names were essentially the key to everlasting life and that it was only through the recitation of one's name by the living that the dead could continue to live. Enemies would naturally be deprived of this privilege. Likewise, Hoffmeier (1996, 109), when discussing the striking absence of foreign rulers' names on pharaonic monuments, suggested it could be 'a literary counterpart to the practice of excising the names from inscriptions and defacing the images of one's enemies...'

Still, the matter is far from being simple. The Qadesh battle reliefs of Ramesses II contain other interesting exceptions to the general rule of anonymity regarding Asiatics. When Ramesses II claimed to have driven the army of the Hittite coalition into the River Orontes, his scribes provided an extraordinary list of enemy personnel, in the 'captions' to the reliefs depicting the battle. The Hittite warriors named are either depicted as slain or drowned in the river (tr. Gardiner 1960, 40-41):

Sptr, brother of the Fallen one of Khatti
Trgnns, charioteer of the Fallen one of Khatti
Grbts, shield-bearer of the Fallen one of Khatti
Trgtts, troop-captain of those of (?) *Kbsw*(?)
'Agm, troop-captain of the Fallen one of Khatti
Kmyt, a head of *thr*-warriors
Hrpsr, dispatch-writer of the Fallen one of Khatti
Tydr, chief of suite of the Fallen one of Khatti
Pys, charioteer of the Fallen one of Khatti
Smrts, charioteer of the Fallen one of Khatti
Rbsnn, troop-captain of the Fallen one of Khatti
Hmtrm, brother of the Fallen one of Khatti
Tdr, a head of *thr*-warriors
T . . m, shi[eld-bearer?] of the Fallen one of Khatti
*Twt*s, troop-captain of *'Ins*
Bnk(?), charioteer of him of Khatti
 . . . [of the] wretched [Fallen one] of Khatti
 The wretched chief of Haleb being emptied (of water) by his soldiers after His Majesty had thrown him into the water.

Asher, who is mocked for having been trapped up a tree by a bear (Wilson 1969d, 477). This is not a pharaonic document, while the contemptuous reference to Qazardi suggests that he, like Qaqa, was a defeated foe. Finally, Hatshepsut's account of her expedition to Punt names two individuals in 'captions' to one of the reliefs; the *wr* of Punt Perehu and his wife Eti (Breasted 1906a, 107-108). While from an official pharaonic inscription, there are special circumstances here: Punt was regarded as 'God's Land' and Hatshepsut's mission was conspicuously a peaceful one.

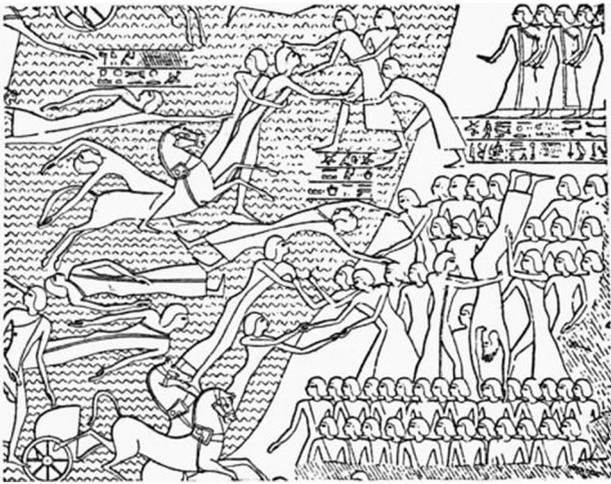


Figure 2. To the right the unfortunate king of Aleppo (Khalab) is shown being drained of water after his dunking in the Orontes (Qadesh reliefs of Ramesses II).

To judge from this list there seems to be a sliding scale as to whether an enemy was directly named or not. Plenty of *little* people are named here – individual chariot-warriors, various captains, a courier, even a brother of the chief of Khatti. But to move up the hierarchical scale, the king of the important city of Aleppo is anonymous – as well as being depicted as ignominiously turned upside down after a dunking in the Orontes. As for Ramesses II’s chief enemy, the Great King Muwatallis, he is referred to throughout this list *only* by his title ‘chief of Khatti’. In fact his name is *completely absent* from all the extensive records left by Ramesses II of his Qadesh campaign.

In the case of treaties (as opposed to war records), the pharaohs were of course obliged to add the names of their opposite numbers. Many years after the battle of Qadesh Ramesses II signed his famous treaty with the Hittite Emperor Hattusilis. Written in Akkadian, the treaty was delivered to Egypt on a silver tablet whence it was translated into Egyptian and carved in hieroglyphics onto the walls of the Temple of Amun in Karnak and on the Ramesseum (Wilson 1969c, 199-203; Beckman 1999, 96-100). Yet there is a subtle difference between two versions of the treaty. In the Hittite version almost every time the king of Egypt is mentioned he is *properly* referred to by name as Ramesses Meryamun. In the Egyptian version Hattusilis is referred to by name only a few times, near the beginning and end of the treaty, otherwise being referred to simply as the ‘Great Chief of Khatti’. More precisely, while the name Ramesses occurs 22 times in the Hittite version and Hattusilis 21 times, in the Egyptian version Ramesses is referred to by name 32 times and Hattusilis a mere *seven!*

It appears that the Egyptian scribes who prepared such texts were reluctant to taint their pens by repeating too often the names of foreign rulers, especially those of higher status,

on the monuments of Pharaoh and even in treaties.^[4] Religious and magical considerations would have played their part in the reluctance to name foreign chiefs. But we are also surely seeing symptoms of pharaonic propaganda. I use the term loosely, or rather retrospectively. As Flammini (2011-2012, 56) notes, “‘propaganda’ is a concept strongly biased by modern and western conceptions, while the ancient Egyptian beliefs were connected to the idea that it was possible to obtain a certain result by putting action into words (i.e. the Execration Texts).’ The point is that from the ancient Egyptian perspective names carry power. They individualise and identify. By removing the name and anonymising the individual, he becomes a mere cipher, a nameless satellite orbiting the great Sun that was Pharaoh. A new pharaoh’s titulary of no less than five names was described as his ‘great name’, a privilege that the Egyptian kings jealously guarded for themselves. It appears that they were reluctant, in their monumental inscriptions, to accord Asiatic rulers even a single name – *especially* the more powerful ones. The irony here is that the more powerful David and Solomon were the less likely they would have been mentioned by name in pharaonic inscriptions.

LBA Levant: the anonymous rulers

The Assyrian kings of the 9th-7th centuries BC carefully recorded the names of the rulers of the lands that they terrorised and conquered – to such an extent that we can use their annals to reconstruct almost entire dynasties in areas such as Syria. By contrast pharaonic inscriptions have managed to deprive historians of the names of hundreds of local rulers in the Levant.

A hallmark of successful propaganda is its endurance. Ancient Egyptian practices have done remarkably well, with effects lasting over three thousand years. The scholars translating the El Amarna letters from the Levant (e.g. Moran 1992, esp. xxvii) have accidentally abetted, by faithfully translating *ḥazannu*, the most common term used in the letters for local vassals, as ‘mayor’. *Ḥazannu* is the Akkadian equivalent of *h3ty-*’, the term used for a mayor of a town within Egypt itself. Yet, as Na’aman (2000, 132) points out:

The self-image of the Canaanite rulers was quite different. They considered themselves to be kings (*šarru*) in their relations with their subjects and with their neighbors, and they sometimes applied the title unintentionally either to other city-state rulers or for themselves. Even the kings of Babylonia (EA

[4] The question remains as to why the Egyptians *did* name various chiefs of the Libu and Meshwesh. The answer would seem to lie in the differing degrees of respect accorded by the Egyptians to various neighbouring cultures. Those of Nubia and the Levant were as ancient as that of Egypt; hence its rulers would be more respected (and feared) than those of the western ‘newcomers’ the Libu and Meshwesh.

8:25) and Mitanni (EA30:1) called them kings.

Despite the protestations of Abdi-Hiba that he owed his position as ruler of Jerusalem to pharaonic patronage, it is clear from his reference to being seated in his ‘father’s house’ (EA 286) that his father had also ruled the city. Many (or most?) other vassals were not appointed ‘mayors’ but local dynasts: most conspicuously, Aziru succeeded his father Abdi-Ashirta as ruler of the powerful kingdom of Amurru (EA 107), while Labayu (possibly based at Shechem) was succeeded in some of his domains by his son Mut-Baal (EA 255:15).

After the Amarna period, when we are plunged back into almost complete darkness regarding local chiefs, one could almost imagine that they had disappeared. Many modern accounts covering the 13th and early 12th century refer to the ‘Egyptian empire’ as if it were run exclusively by a few officials stationed at key sites. While the existence of local rulers under the 19th Dynasty is acknowledged, their anonymity has ensured that, until fairly recently, relatively little attention has been paid to them.

One unfortunate result here is that some archaeologists (e.g. Finkelstein 1998, 168; 2002, 119) loosely refer to an ‘Egyptian empire period’ in Palestine during the late 19th and early 20th Dynasties – allegedly defined by Egyptian pottery and so-called ‘governor’s residences’. If there were considerable amounts of Egyptian pottery throughout Palestine at this period then we might well think that Egyptian officials, traders, soldiers and others had come along with it. But the fact is that there is not. Significant quantities of Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery from the 19th-20th Dynasty period actually come from a limited number of sites: Timna, Tell el-Far‘ah South, Deir el-Balah, Ashkelon, Tell Mor, Jaffa, Apheq, Beth-Shean and Tell es-Sa‘idiyeh.^[5] As put by Burke and Lords (2010, 28): ‘The assemblage of so-called Egyptianising artifacts is not evenly distributed across sites in Canaan; it occurs essentially exclusively at sites in the coastal plain and along the major highway and its secondary corridors.’

There is thus no case for assuming that there was some kind of widespread or uniform colonisation of Canaan or imposition of culture by the New Kingdom Egyptians. Yet there has been serious misunderstanding here. Israel Finkelstein argues as if there was some kind of blanket Egyptianisation of Canaan during the late 19th and 20th Dynasties and that all sites of this period should provide Egyptian-style pottery, buildings, etc. The absurdity of this belief is shown by the conclusions he draws from it: at sites where there is no Egyptian pottery Finkelstein assumes that there was an occupational gap!^[6]

[5] See briefly Killebrew 2004, 341-342; for a recent comprehensive survey see Martin 2011.

[6] This is merely one of the fundamental misunderstandings underlying the Tel Aviv version of a low chronology, which I hope to deal with in more detail elsewhere.

At the same time, more sensitive approaches to the archaeological evidence have provided a way of redressing the balance. For example in 2000 an excellent study was published by Higginbotham entitled *Egyptianization and Elite Emulation in Ramesside Palestine*. During the New Kingdom period we find considerable evidence of Egyptianisation in Palestine – in terms of art, pottery, architecture and religion. Higginbotham set up two models to explain the origins of this Egyptianisation. Did it come about through the imposition of Egyptian ways through direct rule, in a colonial manner, or through the emulation of Egyptian culture by local rulers? Higginbotham carefully weighed the evidence and concluded that, with the exception of certain sites, the emulation model is clearly preferable.^[7]

As Bryan (1996, 42) remarked:

... as most know (though apparently they need to be reminded), there is neither evidence in Egyptian inscriptions that Egyptian officials presided over a permanent administration in the Levant, nor is there strong indication, in the form of monuments at administrative centres, that Egyptian officials were stationed there when making tours in the region. In Nubia, by contrast, Egyptian administrators responsible to the Viceroy of Nubia, who was also Overseer of Southern Countries, are heavily attested on monuments found in the numerous temple and military cities built there by New Kingdom kings.

The Egyptian empire in the Levant was nothing like the Assyrian or Roman empires. It had different aims, ambitions and methods and was, by comparison, a ramshackle affair – though that is only from our perspective (and strictly speaking, from only one ‘modern’ perspective). Control of the region was achieved largely through local princes. And the studies of Higginbotham and others, long overdue, are now bringing the anonymous rulers of Late Bronze Age Syro-Palestine firmly back into the picture.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is a good starting point for investigating what archaeology might tell us about the activities of the local rulers of Palestine at the time of the Egyptian New Kingdom. From the El Amarna letters (conventionally the 14th century BC) we know something of its ruler, Abdi-Hiba. He was clearly the most important Egyptian vassal in southern Palestine and references to other towns show that he ruled more than a single city. Archaeological finds from 14th-century BC Jerusalem have been perceived by some as disappointing or insubstantial and have even led to the extreme conclusion (Steiner 2001, 40) that ‘there has not been a *town* in Jerusalem during the Late Bronze Age.’ Nevertheless there are tombs ‘which produced rich finds of local and imported pottery from the fourteenth

[7] A contrary view is taken by Morris (2005, 9-17).

to thirteenth centuries BCE' (Shiloh 1993a, 702); and, despite claims to the contrary, stratified remains (including fragmentary structures as well as local and imported ceramics) have been found in six different locations in the City of David area (Cahill 2003, 28-33).

What has been strangely missing, for such an apparently important centre, is any trace of fortification built during this period. This does not necessarily mean that Jerusalem was un-walled during the LBA. Many years ago Kenyon discovered remains of the city's substantial Middle Bronze Age wall and related structures (see conveniently Shiloh 1993a, 701-702). More recent work has uncovered more of this massive wall (2 m thick), plus a monumental square structure, 'the Spring Tower', built to protect the Gihon Spring. Made from massive boulders with an average weight of 3-4 tons, the Tower is 'the largest construction known in Jerusalem prior to the Herodian masonry of the first century BCE' (Reich & Shukron 2008, 1801). Another monumental tower protected a rock-cut pool near the Gihon Spring. In the words of Mazar (2010, 47): 'The fortifications are among the mightiest ever found in any Bronze or Iron Age site in the southern Levant.' There is clear evidence that much of the MBA fortifications were still visible in the Iron II period, e.g. Late Iron II walls abutting the MBA ones (Mazar 2010, 48), and a number of scholars including Kenyon, Shiloh and Cahill (2003, 27, 71-72, 79), now joined by Mazar (2010, 48), have made the eminently plausible suggestion that the immense Middle Bronze Age fortifications were in continuous use until Iron Age II. It may well be that the rulers of Jerusalem in 18th-dynasty times simply did not need to build new defences.

Turning the clock forward to the end of the Late Bronze Age there were significant changes at Jerusalem. The main evidence here comes from the Stepped Stone Structure, a massive series of terraces almost 30 m high and about 40 m wide at the base. There are two components: a system of terraces with a rubble fill, over which is a stone mantle. Kenyon (1970, 243), one of its first excavators, dated the first phase of construction to the 13th century BC and its completion to the 10th century, suggesting that it was the 'Millo' which the Old Testament ascribes to David and Solomon (1 Kgs. 9: 15, 24). As 'Millo' means 'filling' it would match this structure perfectly. It appears to have been built to fill a natural gully in the rock in order to strengthen the area above it for some important construction – perhaps for a citadel or fortified palace. Yet Solomon was robbed of this achievement in the 1990s when Steiner and Cahill independently dated the construction of the terrace-system to the early 12th century. Steiner suggested that the mantle over the terraces was built in Iron II, which would still allow a Solomonic date. But that would *only* be the case if Iron II really began in the 10th century BC, which seems to be an increasingly unlikely possibility.^[8]

[8] The literature on the Iron II debate is massive, but the case for lowering '10th-century' strata to the 9th century BC is now overwhelming. For a review of the evidence and history of the debate see conveniently James 2008, with

Cahill's analysis is based on a highly detailed treatment of the pottery finds. She concludes that the terraces and their mantle are a 'single architectural unit', on the basis of the identical pottery found under each. To quote Cahill 'the vast majority of the sherds represent locally familiar forms characteristic of the Late Bronze Age II', including Mycenaean and Cypriot imports. There are also some Iron I pieces, which with two exceptions are fragments of collar-neck pithoi. Now it has become increasingly recognised that these collared-rim jars are not the index fossil they were once believed to be, that is to say evidence of the arrival of a new people, namely the Israelites, at the beginning of the Iron Age. Far from it, this type is known from a number of Late Bronze Age sites, well back into the 13th century BC.^[9] Auld and Steiner (1996, 32) are in general agreement with Cahill: '... we can safely date the building of this terrace system in the late 13th or the 12th centuries.'^[10] All things considered, the date should be close to c. 1200 BC on the conventional archaeological chronology.

In the words of Auld and Steiner (1996, 33):

Nothing of this sort has ever been found elsewhere in Palestine: the terraces of Jerusalem stand alone as the major building enterprise from the very beginning of the Iron Age.... We do not know who built this system. The pottery shows no 'foreign' influence at all... The architecture, on the other hand, is very sophisticated, although it is difficult to find Egyptian or Phoenician connections. So we only know that at the beginning of the Early Iron Age some people, be it local farmers or more likely strangers, mercenaries serving the Egyptian empire, began to build a fortress on the south-eastern hill of Jerusalem, directly above the spring Gihon.

Why farmers or Egyptian mercenaries? The Egyptians built nothing like this anywhere else. It is patently obvious that the Stepped Stone Structure must have required a colossal work-force, organisation and command of local resources. Surely the most likely builder *would have been the local ruler* – either a successor of Abdi-Hiba, or the ruler of a new dynasty. As a thought experiment, let us call

further comment below; cf. the paper by Chapman in this volume.

[9] Collared-rim jars are known from 13th-century Apheq, Beth-Shean and Tel Nami; for references and discussion see Cahill 2003, 45, 52, n. 105, and the forceful discussion by Meitlis (2008), who adduces evidence (in support of an old suggestion by Aharoni) that the overlap of Iron Age I with the LBA began as early as the 14th century BC. See further van der Veen & Zwickel in press. With respect to the Stepped Stone Structure this leaves merely two rims (from a 'Manassite bowl' and possible cyma-profile bowl) from forms still thought to date post 1200/1175 BC.

[10] See also Faust 2010, 123.



Figure 3. Part of the Stepped Stone Structure from Jerusalem, built in the early 12th century (conventional chronology). Photo courtesy of John Bimson.

this local ruler a member of a hypothetical Jerusalemite *Dynasty J*.

Eilat Mazar's discovery in 2005 of an apparently palatial construction, the 'Large Stone Structure', adjacent to the Stepped Stone Structure can only be briefly touched here. Her view was that the building is the palace of king David and hence, in her terms, Iron IIA. Naturally, this started a heated controversy. Finkelstein *et al.* 2007 disputed her claim, arguing that the walls she uncovered do not belong to a single building and that some are possibly Hellenistic! Their arguments are completely unconvincing (see e.g. Mazar 2010, 37-45). Rather, as Amihai Mazar (2008, 106, n. 17; 2010, 42, n. 39) pointed out, the Large Stone Structure may well belong to the very beginning of Iron I, like the Stepped Stone Structure, to which it is connected architecturally. The matter has been clarified by E. Mazar's continuing publication of the finds. Reviewing these, Faust (2010, 121) concludes that 'the connection between the LSS [Large Stone Structure] and the Stepped Stone Structure in area G seems to have been substantiated beyond reasonable doubt.' Both were constructed during Iron I and the pottery finds from the Stepped Stone Structure suggest a date early within Iron I for its original construction.

This means that there is no longer any room in the argument for Auld and Steiner's 'farmers' or Egyptian mercenaries as builders of the Stepped Stone Structure. This, like the palatial Large Stone Structure, was clearly the work of the same local dynasty (or dynast). Recent research has thus completely transformed our picture of Jerusalem at the Bronze-to-Iron Age transition. In the words of Mazar (2010, 45):

The magnitude and uniqueness of the combined 'Stepped Structure' and the 'Large Stone Structure' are unparalleled anywhere in the Levant between the 12th and early 9th centuries BCE.

Further evidence for the character of the local Jerusalemite dynasty at this time may come from the finds of Egyptian artefacts made by Barkay (1996) in the area of the St. Étienne monastery, north of the Damascus Gate: including a serpentine statuette and some architectural fragments. His guess was that these were the remains of a temple, and Barkay (2000) naturally asked: 'What's an Egyptian Temple doing in Jerusalem?' Whether the structure was a temple, a palace or something else is a moot point (see below). But where the finds (including three inscriptions) are datable, they seem to be from the Ramesside period

(Theis & van der Veen, 2012, 521), hence close in time to the building of the Stepped Stone Structure.^[11] Enough to say, for the moment, that the hypothetical Dynasty J was not only rich and powerful enough to build the monumental terraces and palatial structure, it might be that it had some extraordinary – and apparently high status – links with Egypt.

How far might the territory of Dynasty J have extended? Was it a classic city-state, just controlling a few nearby towns and villages, or dare we suggest that Dynasty J ruled other major centres? A. Mazar (2010, 46) concluded reasonably that the Jerusalem of the Stepped Stone Structure ‘could have been a center of a substantial regional polity.’ So, to carry on the thought experiment, let us allow that the territory of Dynasty J included other major cities.

Megiddo

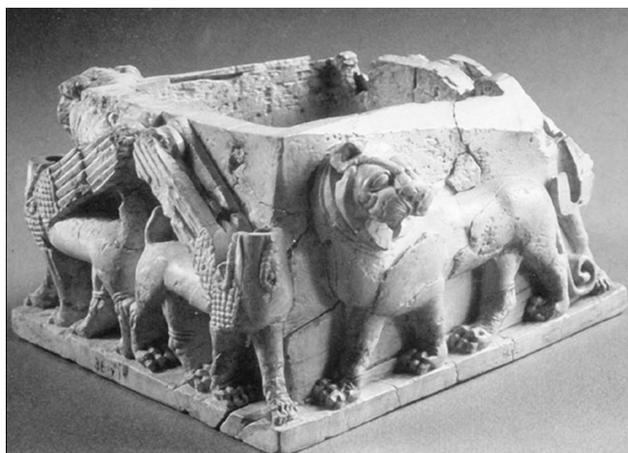


Figure 4. Ivory box from the Late Bronze Age cache at Megiddo.

Going northwards from Jerusalem, to Megiddo, in exactly the same time frame archaeologically, Stratum VIIA is the transitional LBA/IA level and seems to have come to an end about 1150 BC. It produced evidence of a grand palace, with fragments of painted fresco, and imported pottery from Cyprus and the Aegean (Ussishkin 1980, 17; Shiloh 1993b, 1012-1015). Most extraordinary was the so-called ‘treasury’ of the palace containing numerous trinkets of gold and over 382 ivories, the largest cache known from the ancient Levant. Some of these pieces, I barely need to remind, are mini-artistic masterpieces. The style displays an extraordinary mixture and blending of influences from Canaan, Egypt, Assyria, the Aegean and Anatolia. Some, like an elaborate Hittite piece, were clearly imports (see Figure 5). By and large, the ivories can be dated stylistically to the mid-13th to mid-12th

centuries, while an ivory scribe’s palette carrying the title of an Egyptian official of Ramesses III (Loud 1939, Pl. 62) seems to provide a *terminus ante quem* for the collection (Bryan 1996, 56-58).



Figure 5. Ivory from the Late Bronze Age cache at Megiddo, which from its style and iconography is clearly Hittite in origin. It depicts a multi-levelled cosmos – in descending order the stars, the Sun-god (depicted twice), then various ‘demons’, minor deities and mountain gods (most as ‘atlantes’) supporting the different levels, and finally more terrestrial bulls standing on the earth. (For the iconography see further James 1995, 196-200 and for ancient Near Eastern concepts of a layered cosmos see James & van der Sluijs 2008.) Reconstruction after Loud 1939, 44, fig. c.

An earlier generation of scholars, including Loud (1939, 2, 9) who excavated the ivories, assumed that they were the collection of the ruler of Megiddo. Loud’s suggestion that the prince of Megiddo was simply an avid collector was improved on considerably by Barnett (1982, 25) who pointed out the economic advantages:

Today it is clear that ivory was something more than a mere collector’s fancy; it was an important form of wealth, in which perhaps either the local prince or princess traded ... Consequently, the hoarding of ivory began, and the ‘ivory rooms’ formed part of his or her Treasury or bank.

The consensus on the ownership of the ivories was challenged by Singer (1988, 106, 108):

... we are faced with a serious crux: how could this exquisite Hittite ivory find its way into the

[11] For more detail and discussion of recent survey work in the area, see the papers by van der Veen & Ellis and Burger-Robin (in this volume).

collection of a local ruler of Canaan? ... It is ... almost impossible to envisage a local ruler of Canaan with such a range of international contacts, not to mention expensive tastes.

Singer (1988, 103-104, 107-108) assumed that the Egyptian officer mentioned on the scribe's palette was the governor of the city and that it was *he* who was responsible for the collection.

More recent studies, largely by Betsy Bryan and her school (including Higginbotham), have focussed in detail on the artistic style and content of the ivories and have firmly returned to the local ruler model. While some of the ivories are imports, the bulk is locally-made, in a style which is 'Egyptianising' only in the broadest sense. We are looking at a new Levantine style, which is actually *less* Egyptian than earlier products from Syro-Palestine, such as those from Ugarit. So Markoe (1990, 19):

... the evidence of the Megiddo ... ivories thus points to a stylistic trend in the later 13th and 12th centuries B.C. away from dependence on Egyptian models and toward a hybrid Aegean/North Syria-influenced style.

In agreement, Bryan (1996, 77) concluded that: 'In the late 13th to early 12th century, ivories were designed for the local elites, who clearly were not Egyptian ...' She felt obliged to add this reminder (Bryan 1996, 76):

The conclusion we have reached, based on our study of the ivories of the late Ramesside period, that luxury items were being designed and produced for independent city-rulers who borrowed but did not ape Egyptian forms, is not reflected in most histories of Egyptian imperialism.

With respect to Megiddo, a detailed analysis of the finds by Feldman rejected Singer's theory that the collection

belonged to an Egyptian military official and proposed, to the contrary that 'the magnificent collection of ivories found in the so-called Treasury at Megiddo *represents an assertion of increasing autonomy from Egypt*' (Feldman 2009, 190, emphasis added).

The Megiddo ivory collection is royal by any definition. So is much of the iconography. One famous ivory depicts a Canaanite ruler seated on a magnificent throne decorated with winged sphinxes (see *Figure 6*). Courtiers and servants approach him. To his immediate right is a lady, possibly his queen, then a musician playing a lyre, and then a soldier. At the extreme right is a general or prince returning from campaign, with two Shasu-type captives chained to his chariot. The style is not Egyptianising as such – images like winged sphinxes being 'common property' in Near Eastern iconography. As Bryan (1996, 73) remarks:

... there are very few true Egyptian iconographic elements on the plaque and they have been entirely integrated into a Levantine setting, such as the bird who appears under the sphinx throne... The general motif of a ruler seated at a banquet receiving the captives of battle is in fact not found in Egypt. Instead it is the god who receives the captives from the king on Ramesside walls.

Three Egyptian-style details are worth note, however. The king holds a typically Egyptian lotus flower in his left hand. Behind the lyre-player are three papyrus plants each with three flowers, arranged vertically, with a fourth in front of the chariot on the right. The possibility has been suggested that these are effectively Egyptian hieroglyphs (Gardiner M15 and variant M16), a determinative for marshy lands that was employed as a logogram for Lower Egypt, and that the 'craftsmen in charge of the Megiddo plaque would have been conscious of its meaning' (Nataf



Figure 6. Replica of IAA (= Israel Antiquities Authority) 38.780 by Konrad Meier; photograph by P. van der Veen (courtesy of the Arbeitsgruppe für Biblische Archäologie).

2011, 58-59).^[12] There can be no certainty here, but were this to be the case it might be intended to indicate some relationship between the depicted prince and the Egyptian state. A further hint of Egyptian royal iconography is the winged sun-disk above the returning conqueror at the right of the scene. The winged sun-disk is of course well known as a symbol of Egyptian kingship: one, for example, surmounts the stela of Ramesses II from Beth-Shean, made from local basalt.^[13] The winged disk also became the royal emblem of the kings of Judah in later periods.^[14] This one image then speaks volumes. Whether a real individual or an ideal, it was intended to show a powerful Canaanite ruler from near the end of the Bronze Age and one, perhaps, with some pretensions to the symbolism of Egyptian royal authority.

But what then of Singer's justifiable amazement that the ruler of a single city, Megiddo, could have had such 'a range of international contacts, not to mention expensive tastes'. It is, perhaps, hard to conceive that the ruler of *one* city-state, however rich and powerful locally, could have had such far-ranging international and trading connections from Anatolia to Egypt and the Aegean to Assyria. Megiddo was hardly another Ugarit. So to continue the thought experiment, could the ruler of Megiddo at this time have been a king of 'Dynasty J'? Such a model would help to explain both the extraordinary wealth exhibited in the luxury of Megiddo's palace, trade connections and ivory collection, and that exhibited by the monumental structures and prestige Egyptian artefacts from Jerusalem.

[12] Nataf's paper contains many interesting observations, but its overall theme that the 'banquet scenes' on the Megiddo plaque and another from Tell el Farcah South reflect an 'Egyptian mortuary cult' seems very forced. Strictly speaking the appearance of a noble holding a cup in his hand does not indicate a banquet! While there is much resemblance between the arrangement on the two ivories, the scenes are not 'parallel and essentially interchangeable' (Nataf 2011, 53). There is no indication of a military reception on the Tell el Farcah example. Otherwise, Nataf's suggestion that the lady on the Megiddo ivory 'might even have represented Hathor herself' is far-fetched while the unqualified description of the seated ruler as 'deceased' is mere assumption (Nataf 2011, 55, 54). The identification of any iconography outside of tomb paintings and burial finds as 'mortuary' is a minefield. With respect to the two ivories under discussion, the *differences* between the two scenes are more telling than the similarities. As well as the lack of martial imagery, the Tell el Farcah example is fully Egyptianising, in sharp contrast to the Megiddo example. Like the ivory of Kerker from Ashkelon (see below) it was presumably made for an Egyptianising vassal in Philistia.

[13] See Schipper 2012, 32 & Fig. 2.

[14] I am grateful to Peter van der Veen for drawing my attention to this detail and the likelihood that the prince in the chariot may be intended to represent the seated king himself, in a compressed narrative scheme.

Lachish

Space allows a brief look at only one other site, Lachish. Only 35 miles west of Jerusalem it does not beggar belief to imagine that this city too may have been under the sway of hypothetical Dynasty J. Stratum VI at Lachish represents the end of the Bronze Age and was hence contemporary with both the terracing structures at Jerusalem and Megiddo VIIA. It was clearly a flourishing city with a temple which was 'Canaanite' in plan, including generous use of cedar of Lebanon, some painted plaster walls and with a few Egyptian objects or Egyptianising elements (Ussishkin 2004, 62-64, 215-281).

There was also a bureaucracy in Lachish VI that wrote in Egyptian hieratic. This can be seen from ten ostraca from the site written in hieratic on bowls of local manufacture. These (and those from nearby Tell Sera^c) are automatically *assumed* to be evidence of an Egyptian administration. From the style of the hieratic they belong to the late 19th-early 20th Dynasties. Yet, as Goldwasser (1984, 85) notes:

... since the hieratic bowls from Tel Sera^c have no exact parallels in Egypt, they must represent a Canaanite-Egyptian tradition of writing an inscription on complete bowls of local manufacture in good hieratic script.

She further argues (Goldwasser 1991, 251; cf. Sweeney in Ussishkin 2004, 1615) that during the decline of the Egyptian empire Egyptian-trained scribes may have offered their services to Canaanite rulers. Given this, one cannot exclude the possibility that the administration reflected by the inscribed bowls of Lachish and Tel Sera^c is not pharaonic at all. The lack of Egyptian parallels, curiosities in the hieratic and the possible use of a Hebrew word for grain,^[15] together with the local manufacture of the bowls, which apparently record offerings/tax for a local temple, surely open other – though perhaps rather surprising – possibilities (James 2007, 213).

As Higginbotham (2000, 134) has stressed, we do not really know who employed the hieratic scribe at Lachish. A good candidate would surely be the ruler who *is* actually mentioned on the ostraca. Four of the ten inscriptions from Lachish contain the hieroglyphic symbol for a *wr*

[15] With respect to the hieratic bowl from Tel Sera^c bearing a year-date of 22[x], Goldwasser (1984, 78) notes that the opening ligature *b3* 'is rare in Ramesside ostraca', though it may have been common in Canaan as it is known from a second hieratic bowl from Tel Sera^c and one from Lachish. After ruling out various possible Egyptian readings, Goldwasser (1984, 78) ventured 'a reconstruction such as *b3r*, since the Hebrew word גב (grain), which appears in early biblical literature, fits in here easily.' The only obstacle is the lack of space for a determinative, but this becomes less important if we think in terms, not of an Egyptian scribe writing a Hebrew word, but of a Canaanite scribe writing a local version of hieratic.



Transcription:



Translation: The... chief of the foreign country 100.

Figures 7-8. One of the fragmentary ostraca (Hieratic Inscription X) from Lachish which appears to mention a foreign ruler, with transcription and translation by Deborah Sweeney. The figure 100 must refer to some amount of tribute paid. After Sweeney in Ussishkin 2004, 1613. (© Tel Aviv University).

or ‘foreign ruler’ (see *Figures 7-8*). Given the short and fragmentary nature of the inscriptions it is indeed striking that a *wr* is mentioned so many times. His presence on the ostraca surely indicates that he was somehow involved in the administrative process. Was he a vassal ruler paying the tax recorded? Was he helping to collect it? Or was he actually the authority who was levying the tax? If he was a king of the hypothetical ‘Dynasty J’ he may have adopted Egyptian administrative practices, adopted them for his own purposes and used Egyptian or Egyptian-trained scribes to keep his records.^[16]

The late-19th Dynasty Recession

From the mid-reign of Ramesses II to the time of Ramesses III the Egyptians refer to very little activity in Palestine. Papyrus Anastasi III refers to various officials of Merenptah active in Palestine, some evidently military commanders in Gaza, others messengers into Kharu (Palestine). One was the emissary to a Prince of Tyre, mentioned above.

[16] This was argued long ago by Heaton (1974).

The same papyrus indicates that Merenptah maintained some kind of garrison in the central hill country, almost certainly at Lifthah near Jerusalem – but for how long and for what reason awaits further investigation.^[17]

As for late 19th-dynasty campaigns, the capture of Gezer, of course, is famously referred to on Merenptah’s so-called ‘Israel Stela’. It states that ‘Canaan is plundered’ and that ‘Ashkelon is carried off’ – suggesting a campaign through Philistia which culminated in the capture of Gezer (Singer 1988, 4; cf. Gilmour & Kitchen 2012, 10). Merenptah’s presence at Gezer is confirmed by the find of a small ivory ‘sundial’ at the site bearing his name (see Bryan 1996, 59-60 for discussion) and the title ‘subduer of Gezer’ known from his Amada stela (Singer 1988, 4). But as for the much further destination Yenoam (near the Sea of Galilee), said on the Stela to have been ‘made into non-existence’, there is no confirmatory evidence. Indeed, the general context of the ‘Israel Stela’ suggests that Merenptah *may* have blended together here some of his own achievements (Gezer) with those of predecessors such as Seti I who certainly attacked Yenoam (as argued by Redford 2000, 5). The statement that ‘Hatti is pacified’ surely refers to the peace treaty between Ramesses II and Hattusilis (see above), signed a good fifty years before the text on the Stela was composed.

There is no firm archaeological evidence (e.g. stelae) that Merenptah’s ‘empire’ as such extended any further than Philistia, with the exception of the possible garrison at Lifthah. Merenptah certainly did have some influence as far north as Tyre and Ugarit, to judge by the bronze sword with his cartouche found at Ras Shamra and an Ugaritic king’s request for a sculptor to be sent to create a cult-stature of the Pharaoh (Singer 2011a, 107-109). The request was apparently refused and we know that Ugarit firmly remained a Hittite vassal right down to its last days. As Kahn (2012, 259) rightly notes, Merenptah’s relations with the Phoenician city-states such as Tyre ‘were not necessarily vassal relationships, but could have been based on a mutual interest between independent states’.

In the reign of Merenptah’s successor Seti II, an ostrakon refers to an Egyptian commander of a garrison, evidently in the Gaza area. A jar-handle bearing his seal-impression was found at Gezer but this does not prove direct rule. As Gilmour and Kitchen (2012, 15) admit the jar may have belonged to ‘Pharaoh’s representative(s) at the court of a local Canaanite king of Gezer’. While tending to paint a rather rosy picture of Egyptian control over the Levant at this period, Gilmour and Kitchen (2012, 16) stress that the archaeological evidence is extremely slender:

The traces of the 19th Dynasty in Canaan after Ramesses II’s long reign are relatively few. Gezer at least possessed an ivory sundial of Egyptian origin, bearing the cartouches of Sety II’s father and

[17] See van der Veen & Ellis in this volume for discussion and references.

predecessor Merenptah – the ancient equivalent of a pocket-sized alarm clock of today’s traveller and perhaps a trace of some Egyptian envoy’s stay there? After Sety II, little has been recovered in Canaan of his successors Siptah and Queen Tewosret – no more than one scarab amulet of Siptah from Beth-Shemesh and (more interestingly) a faience vessel in the name of Tewosret (as female pharaoh) from Tell Deir ‘Alla. A scarab is often of no more precise evidential value than a stray coin today; the faience vessel may have been a gift to a local ruler or his gift, in turn, to the local deity.

There is no evidence whatsoever for any Egyptian military action in Palestine between the 5th year of Merenptah and the 8th year of Ramesses III, a period of about 30 years. As Kahn (2012, 265) notes:

The reigns of Amenmesse, Seti II, Siptah, and Queen Tauseret are evidently devoid of Egyptian military activity in the Levant, while there is increasing internal strife in Egypt, followed by erosion and decline of its might in the Levant.

To all intents and purposes the Egyptian empire had gone into recession in the late 19th Dynasty and was only restored through the more aggressive policies of Ramesses III.

There is evidence of an Egyptian garrison at Beth-Shean but this only picks up again in the reign of Ramesses III (see James 2010, 69-70). At sites within southern Philistia, such as Gaza and Tell Farah South, and Timna in the Negev, it is safe to guess that a measure of Egyptian control remained. As for the rest of Palestine and Syria, power would have been in the hands of the local princes. Friendly and even respectful relations with Egypt would probably have continued. But political power, like nature, abhors a vacuum. During the period of Egyptian imperial recession, it is hard to imagine that the princes of Syro-Palestine would have abided by our definition of a ‘city-state’ ruler and behaved accordingly. Disputes and wars over resources and territory would have rapidly arisen. It is easy to imagine that greater polities than the city-state could have rapidly developed. As we learn from the El Amarna letters, about 150 years earlier, the main worry of the vassal city-rulers was that some dynasts were attempting to make mini-empires – Abdi-Ashirta and his sons in Syria and the Phoenician coast and the notorious Labayu in the central hill country of Palestine. In the north, as Singer (2011, 215) notes, Amurru developed under Aziru’s leadership into ‘a (more-or-less) ordinary Syrian kingdom, with a centralised royal court and well-organized foreign relations.’ And this was in a time when Egyptian military force was still present, and its prestige still so strong that when summoned to Egypt Aziru obeyed (see Singer 2011, 210). To imagine that local dynasts were less territorially aggressive during the late-19th to early-20th dynasty recession would be absurd.



Figure 9. From the Megiddo ivories. A general or prince? (in chariot) leads his army to war’. (From Loud 1939, Pl. 33; © University of Chicago Press).



Figure 10. From the Megiddo ivories. Charioteers trample down enemies, who from their costumes appear to be local ‘Canaanites’. (From Loud 1939, Pl. 31; © University of Chicago Press).

The reality may be reflected in the iconography of the Megiddo ivories. We have already examined the court scene showing a king receiving a general bringing captives of the ‘Shasu’ type. Other ivories show martial scenes. One depicts an army on the march (see Figure 9). Another depicts a chariot force trampling enemies (see Figure 10). This is Canaanite-on-Canaanite warfare. While there is some martial imagery from Ugarit, I do not believe that anything quite like this scene is known from earlier LBA Palestine.

As for the ivories in general, many of them are scraps, decorative items from furniture but with no complete set reconstructible. A particularly interesting Egyptianising piece (Loud 1929, Pl. 63) was made for the *wr* or prince of Ashkelon, called Kerker, who also held the title ‘Singer of Ptah’, perhaps in the temple at Memphis (see Bryan 1996, 58-59). Perhaps in his younger days Kerker had been educated in Egypt. Yet what was a personal item made for the Egyptianised prince of Ashkelon doing in the treasury of the ruler of Megiddo? It seems we are looking at a collection made up partly from tribute or booty, taken from less powerful and subordinate cities.

I submit that it is entirely feasible that a powerful kingdom like the hypothetical ‘Dynasty J’ could have arisen in Palestine, incorporating Jerusalem, Megiddo, Lachish and many other centres. And one under whose hegemony we see a last flowering of Late Bronze Age ‘Canaanite’ civilization, from ivory and bronze working to temple and palace building and other monumental architecture.

The ‘Empty Years’ of Papyrus Harris I

Literary evidence from Egypt itself strongly suggests a political recession during this period. The historical retrospective at the beginning of the great Papyrus Harris, composed by Ramesses IV for his father Ramesses III, describes the parlous state of Egypt before the accession of Ramesses III and his father Setnakht:

Thus says King Usimare Meriamun, I. p. h., the great god, to the dignitaries, the leaders of the land, the infantry, chariotry, Sherden, ordinary troops, (and) every citizen of the land of Egypt. Listen! I will inform you of my benefactions that I have done while I was king of the people. The land of Egypt was abandoned, every man was a law unto himself. They had no leader (for) many years previously, until other times, when the land of Egypt had officials and city rulers, one (man) slew his fellow, great and humble. Then another time came after it consisting of empty years when Irsu, a Syrian [*Kharu*], was with them as chief [*wr*]. He made the entire land tributary under him. One would gather his companions and steal their property. They treated the gods just like men. No one proffered offerings within the temples. (Papyrus Harris I, 75, 1-11, tr. Peden 1994, 213.)

Of course, we should be wary of exaggeration here – for the purpose of glorifying Ramesses IV’s immediate ancestors. Indeed, Gardiner (1961, 281) saw the text as describing ‘a largely imaginary period of previous gloom’, painted as such to contrast with the ‘epoch of exceptional splendour [that] was about to dawn’ under Ramesses III. Yet Gardiner wrote without the advantage of the last half-century of archaeological research in the Levant which confirms the imperial recession under the successors of Merenptah. Further, the Elephantine Stela of Setnakht (Kitchen 2008, 8), discovered in 1971, clearly describes civil war within Egypt itself and the interference of Asiatics. Very likely Setnakht, founder of the 20th Dynasty, took over in a military coup (Kitchen 2012, 3). The dismal picture painted by the historical retrospect in the Papyrus Harris is now treated with far more seriousness than Gardiner allowed. So, for example Kahn (2010, 14):

The years prior to Sethnakhte’s reign were designated in Papyrus Harris as ‘empty years.’ Even though a propagandistic flavor cannot be denied, this designation was probably based on a kernel of truth.

Regarding the upstart Syrian Irsu, whose name possibly means ‘self-made (man)’, he is frequently identified with the powerful Chancellor and ‘kingmaker’ Bay who claims to have seated Siptah on his throne.

In the context of the present discussion it is hard to leave without mention a radically different interpretation of the

text presented some years ago by Hans Goedicke. He argued that the speech of the deceased Ramesses III was addressed to the army, officials and citizens of the land that *belonged* to Egypt, i.e. their Levantine empire. His translation runs as follows (Goedicke 1979, 1, 9):

[to] the rulers of the land, army, chariotry, Sherden, archery and commoners and all the citizens of Tamerly. The land belonging to Egypt was abandoned abroad and every man in his loyalty, he did not have a chief spokesman for many years first until the time of others when the land belonging to Egypt was among chiefs and city-rulers – one was killed, his replacement was a dignitary of wretches. Another of the family happened after him in the empty years, when Sw, a kharu with them, acted as chief [*wr*] and he made the entire land serviceable to him alone. He joined his dependant in seizing their property, when the gods were treated just like men, as one did not perform offerings inside the temples.

Goedicke read the name of the foreign trouble-maker as Su, and argued that the land he dominated was the erstwhile Egyptian territory in Palestine:

... according to Papyrus Harris I 75, 1 ff. a unification of the Syro-Palestinian territories, which had previously been under Pharaonic sovereignty, was accomplished by a native of the region contemporarily with the late Nineteenth Dynasty (± 1200 B.C.). It was apparently of short duration as the Pharaonic sovereignty over the area prevails again under Ramesses III and might have been re-established by his predecessor Sethnakhte.

Goedicke (1979, 14) went further and tentatively suggested that Su (whose name would have been ‘incomplete or abbreviated’) was the historical prototype of Saul, founder of the Israelite monarchy! He made no remark on the chronological repercussions of such an idea. But the reading of (Ir)Su as a personal name seems unlikely given the Egyptian propensity not to name major enemies; the standard interpretation, ‘he who made himself’, is preferable. Dodson (2011, 157, n. 49) edges towards this reading as it ‘fits better with Egyptian views on the importance of the name, and their preference for use of circumlocutions for enemies – for example “that Criminal” for Akhenaten.’

Yet the identity of Irsu aside, the general scenario drawn by Goedicke is very tempting as it would certainly match the conclusions drawn above from the archaeological evidence: that a powerful dynasty may have arisen in Palestine during the power vacuum of the late 19th Dynasty. Nevertheless, it must be noted that no other Egyptologist has accepted Goedicke’s reading here.^[18] For

[18] A senior and well-respected Egyptologist, Goedicke had his own distinctive way of reading Egyptian based on

example Dodson (2011, 157, n. 49) notes that Goedicke's interpretation 'seems to be against the Egypt-centric context of the Harris Papyrus as a whole, and the clear indication in Setnakht's Elephantine stela that he had to fight for the rule of Egypt – not simply to reassert Egyptian authority in Syria-Palestine ...'

Perhaps the best that can be said is that the very condensed account in Papyrus Harris might be describing events in *both* Egypt and the empire – in which case the upstart *wr* Irsu would remain a good candidate for the ruler of Dynasty J.^[19]

The Centuries of Darkness Model

Goedicke's reading of the Papyrus Harris aside, we of course lack clinching historical evidence for 'Dynasty J', due to the paucity of records. There is indeed none within the conventional chronology for the Levant, which is based on that of Egypt. But what if the Egyptian chronology is seriously in error? In 1991 four colleagues and I (including Robert Morkot and Nikos Kokkinos, participants in the 2011 colloquium and contributors to this volume) published *Centuries of Darkness* (hereafter *CoD*), arguing that Egyptian New Kingdom dates need to be lowered by up to 250 years.^[20]

The principal evidence we used (too vast to summarise) comprised anomalies in Egyptian, Nubian, Anatolian, Aegean and Italian archaeology, Egyptian and Hittite genealogies, Mesopotamian evidence, Phoenician epigraphy, estimates worked from Aegean and Cypriot pottery, and direct pottery synchronisms and art comparisons from the central Mediterranean to Mesopotamia and back again. Naturally, it did not elude us that if one lowers the Palestinian archaeology of 1200 BC by 250 years, it would bring us squarely into the 10th century and the reigns of David and Solomon.

It is pleasing that our Solomonic model seems to have had very good predictive power. When we wrote *CoD* we felt we were almost carrying a lone flag for the original Kenyon position, based on her work at Samaria, that Iron

strict attention to grammar. Yet his readings often seem overly particular and intuitive. For example, with respect to the historical section of the Papyrus Harris he interpreted the phrase he translated as 'one was killed' as a reference to the murder of Merenptah. This is surely extracting too much from a limited and hard to read text. I am grateful here for the advice received from my friend (the sadly late) David Lorton who, though a student of Goedicke, felt that his translation of the passage in question was far from proven.

[19] The usual identification with Bay is most uncertain, and there is no firm evidence of a Syrian origin for Bay.

[20] I am pleased to note that, by sheer coincidence, *CoD* was published almost exactly 20 years, to the day, before the third BICANE colloquium in 2011.

IIA pottery belongs to the 9th rather than 10th century.^[21] Israel Finkelstein has now made the idea more widespread and a steadily decreasing number of scholars look for the archaeological reflection of Solomon in Iron IIA strata. As the book was in press Barkay published his initial thoughts on the apparently 19th-dynasty Egyptian finds from Jerusalem. Then Steiner and Cahill redated the Stepped Stone Structure to c. 1200 BC and, from the 1990s Bryan and her school have put local rulers in late New Kingdom Canaan firmly back on the map.

If chronology were to allow us to translate the evidence from the LBA/IA transition by 250 years to the time of Solomon we find an extraordinary pattern of matches, at almost every site:

Comparison has often been made between the plan of

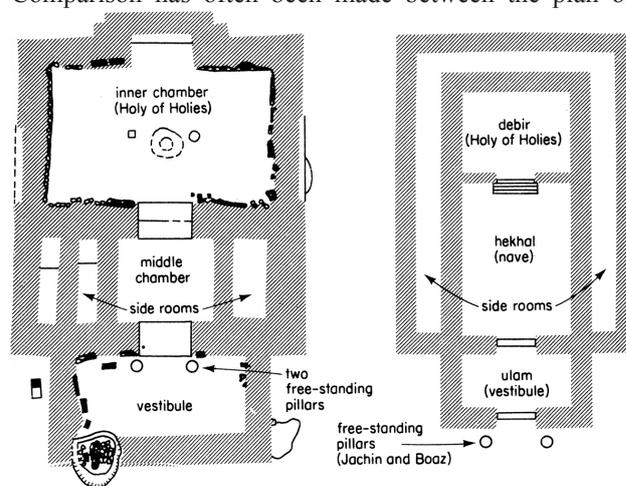


Figure 11. Comparison of the plan of the last Late Bronze temple at Hazor with a reconstruction of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem – see further Zwickel in this volume. (Illustration by Rosemary Burnard.)

Solomon's Temple, as described in the Bible, with Late Bronze Age temples. For example, Figure 11 illustrates the similarity in plan between Solomon's building and the last LBA temple from Hazor. The same applies to the temple of Lachish Stratum VI, as described by Ussishkin (2004, 63):

The structure's symmetrical ground-plan was based on three units: an entrancehall, a main hall and a cella, built one behind the other with the entrance to them situated along the central axis of the building (Fig. 6.1), features which appear in other contemporary Canaanite structures. Significantly, these are the principles of the ground-plan of the Solomonic temple in Jerusalem, built a few hundred years later, and it thus seems that the architects of the Jerusalem temple were inspired

[21] Wightman's 1990 paper, which provided important support for the Kenyon position, appeared as *CoD* was nearly in press.

by earlier, Late Bronze Age prototypes such as the temple at Lachish.

With respect to the building method employed for the Temple, Dever (2001, 146) remarked:

The dressed masonry with interlaced wooden beam construction seems odd at first glance; but we now know that it was typical of MB-LB construction in monumental buildings throughout Canaan, with particularly close parallels coming from palatial buildings at Alalakh and Ugarit, as well as at LB Hazor in northern Palestine.

Solomon used ashlar masonry in his finest buildings: the Temple, his palace and the ‘house’ that he made for his Egyptian queen were all built of ‘costly stones ... sawed with saws, within and without’ (1 Kgs. 7:9). While ashlar masonry is known from the Iron IIA period (for example from Megiddo) the last phase of the LBA was the period of ashlar masonry *par excellence*. The monumental palace complex of Ugarit (14th-13th centuries BC) incorporates some of the finest ashlar masonry known. Unfortunately the LBA levels at Tyre have barely been touched, though the magnificence of its palace, which rivalled that of Ugarit, was remarked on in one of the El Amarna letters (89:48-49). But it is just as likely that it was from Tyre, as much as Ugarit, that the Levantine style of ashlar masonry spread to Cyprus near the end of the LBA (see Voskos and Knapp 2008, 666). Prime examples of Cypriot ashlar from this period come from Enkomi and Kition; the latter, according to tradition, was subject to Hiram of Tyre (James *et al.* 1991, 146-147, 365, n. 12), Solomon’s ally and the supplier of builders and materials for his constructions in Jerusalem.

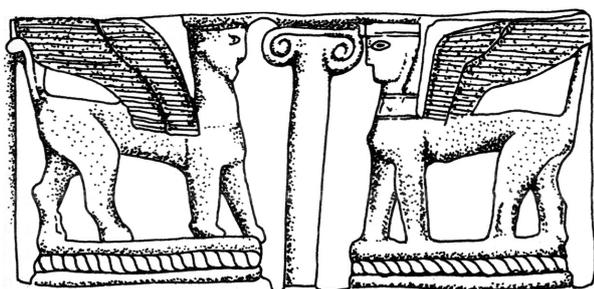


Figure 12. Panel from a Cypriot four-sided stand, currently dated to the 12th century BC, showing sphinxes flanking a stylised palm tree (after Shiloh 1979). The decoration of such stands is described in minute detail in the biblical account of the furniture commissioned by Solomon for the Temple in Jerusalem: ‘on the borders thereof, he graved cherubim, lions and palm trees (1 Kings 7:36) It has long been recognised that such ‘cherubim’ were actually sphinxes. (Illustration by Rosemary Burnard.)

There are also numerous and distinct Late Bronze ‘echoes’ in the detailed biblical descriptions of the furnishings of the Temple (see generally Dever 2001, 144-157). As Moorey (1988, 29) wrote, ‘to make best sense of the unique ... description of the bronze equipment made for Solomon’s Temple resort is commonly made to Cyprus or to the Canaanite sites of the Late Bronze Age’. As one specific example, the detailed biblical descriptions of four-wheeled stands decorated with scenes of animals and plants read like a blueprint for some intricate bronze stands known from Cyprus, though the latter are much smaller than those described in the book of Kings (see Zwickel in this volume). In Catling’s opinion the production of such complex stands ceased in the 12th century; nevertheless he felt that although their relationship to the examples made for Solomon’s Temple ‘raises a chronological difficulty, the relationship can hardly be denied’. Yet both the origin and cultural affinities of the stands remain controversial, partly due to the lack of well provenanced examples from Cyprus and internal difficulties in the dating of the LCIIIB-LCIIIA periods. Thus Catling’s opinion that the production of the stands ceased in the mid-12th century BC remains unproven and some small bronze wheels (assumed to be from a stand) come from an 11th-century context at Philistine Ekron (Dothan 2002, 4-5). Nevertheless it is certain that the stands belong to an LBA tradition which was flourishing *c.* 1200 BC (Papasavvas 2004, 489). The dating has been confirmed dramatically by the discovery of a new tablet dating from Ugarit’s last phase from the House of Urtenu (conventionally *c.* 1220-1185 BC). Written in alphabetic cuneiform, it describes the manufacture, from high quality bronze, of temple equipment including six *karkubbūma* six half-cubits in width and each with four wheels (Zukerman 2012). This gives us a firm *floruit* for the manufacture of ritual four-wheeled stands from the Levant itself; moreover these are on the same order of scale as those (four cubits wide) made for Solomon’s temple.^[22]

Solomon’s craftsmen, or rather those that he hired from Hiram of Tyre, cast the bronze furnishings for the Temple between Succoth and Zarethan in the Jordan Valley (1 Kgs. 7:46). Succoth and Zarethan are generally identified as Deir ‘Alla and Tell es-Sa‘idiyeh where considerable evidence of bronze-casting industry has been found from the LBA/IA transition. Questions have been raised about the exact nature of the metallurgical industry at Deir ‘Alla – for which see Tebes (2007, 82, n. 72), who discusses doubts (e.g. apparent differences from contemporary furnaces) that have been raised about its role as a copper-smelting site *per se* but adds: ‘An alternative explanation is that the furnaces were part of a casting workshop for very large objects – big bronze gates, huge vats, etc – and therefore unique...’. Though hypothetical, such a possibility cannot fail to remind one of the more elaborate furnishings said to have been made for the Temple by Solomon – such as

[22] See also Artzy 2012 for a wider discussion on the dating of Cypriot bronzework during the LBA/IA transition period.

doors overlaid with gold, pillars of bronze and a model 'sea' of bronze that could hold 'two thousand baths'.^[23]

At Tell es-Sa'idiyeh there is also evidence of 'egyptianising' burials and other foreign influence which Jonathan Tubb attributes to Sea Peoples in the employ of Egypt. Regarding the bronze-workers at this site, Tubb (1988, 261) says: 'It was surely these craftsmen, inheritors of a tradition which was ultimately Sea Peoples' in origin, who provided the skills for Hiram's great casting operations in the "clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan".' On the *CoD* chronology the two groups of craftsmen would have been the same. The Cypriot and Aegean influence on some of the bronzes found there could be due to the casting of the bronzes by the Phoenicians of Hiram, who (as noted above) seems to have ruled Kition on Cyprus.

On the *CoD* model, Solomon's temple and its furnishings belong to a living Late Bronze Age tradition, not a past one. The Stepped Stone Structure at Jerusalem, conventionally dated to *c.* 1200 BC, can also once again become the 'Millo' built by Solomon, as thought by Kenyon and others. The Egyptian-style sculptural remains from north of the Damascus Gate, first identified by Barkay, and now augmented with other Egyptian finds by Peter van der Veen's survey team (see van der Veen & Ellis in this volume) may well be – in the present writer's opinion – from the palace built by king Solomon for his Egyptian wife, away from the City of David (1 Kgs. 9:24).

Solomon was also said to have built at Megiddo (1 Kgs. 9:15). The level VIIA palace at Megiddo with its frescoes, imported pottery and most importantly the ivory collection would illustrate not only the opulence attributed to Solomon but his international connections. The kings of the Philistines were said to have brought him tribute (1 Kgs. 4:21), which could explain the presence of the ivory made for the prince of Ashkelon. Likewise, the presence of the Hittite-style pieces in the ivory collection which so surprised Singer (see above), would be explained by Solomon's trade with the 'kings of the Hittites' (1 Kgs. 10:29). The scribe's palette inscribed for an official of Ramesses III may reflect some diplomatic contact with that pharaoh early in his reign or – more likely – an Egyptian military 'protectorate' of the independent northern kingdom under Jeroboam, a protégée of 'Shishak'. Eventually it would appear that the 'treasury' was ritually closed (Feldman 2006), possibly due to the strong reaction against Solomon and his grandiose policies evident from the rebellion of the northern kingdom.^[24]

[23] While one has to allow for hyperbole, see Zwicker (in this volume) for discussion and defence of a reliable core text behind the biblical account of the Solomon's temple.

[24] For a discussion of how the breakup of Solomon's kingdom might be reflected in the Iron I settlement pattern in the central hill country, see Bimson, 'Ramesses III as Shishak', in this volume.

Solomon as Egyptian Viceroy

If we identify David and Solomon as the rulers of the hypothetical Dynasty J, how does this work in terms of the all-important question of its relationship with Egypt? Great weight is given in the Old Testament to Solomon's marriage with a daughter of Pharaoh, with whom he made an 'affinity' (1 Kgs. 3:1). As a marriage dowry he was given by Pharaoh the destroyed city of Gezer (1 Kgs. 9:16) which, as noted above, was conquered by Merenptah (very possibly then the father-in-law of Solomon). Marriage to a daughter of Pharaoh would have been an outstanding privilege, raising Solomon's prestige far above that of other Levantine princes. Though an unprecedented step, it would make good sense in the context of the recession of Egyptian power at the end of the 19th Dynasty. In short, it is suggested that Solomon was effectively elevated to the rank of Egyptian viceroy of the Levant, equivalent in some respects to the 'King's Son of Kush' who traditionally oversaw Egypt's Nubian territories. Whether such a one-off experiment was initiated under Merenptah or his son Seti II is a matter for further consideration. But such a step while Egypt was having internal difficulties would have been to its advantage.

As viceroy of Egypt's Levantine domains Solomon's responsibility would have been to safeguard communications with Egypt's allies further to the north (such as Hatti), and to protect and manage its trade routes. This is virtually stated in 1 Kgs. 10:28-29 (cf. 2 Chr. 1:16-17), where Solomon is described a 'middle man' in the arms-trade between Egypt and the kings of the Hittites and Syrians:

And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means.^[25]

Katzenstein (1997, 114) argues that such trade was likely a joint venture with Hiram of Tyre, an idea which draws 'support from the Septuagint, which translates "by sea" (*κατὰ θάλασσαν* = *bayyam*) instead of "by their means" (*b'yāddām*)'. Such trade was most likely carried out through Joppa (through which Solomon imported the timber for the construction of the Temple – 2 Chr. 2:16). Under Egyptian control during the 19th Dynasty (Burke & Lords 2010), this important port would seem to have been conceded to Solomon along with other territories. There would have presumably been other joint commercial ventures with the

[25] This passage is notoriously difficult to translate and has generated considerable controversy. I use here the traditional King James translation, preferable to modern versions in which the word for linen, *miqveh* (מִקְוֵה) is 'corrected' into a reference to Que (Cilicia). As Morkot (2007, 67) points out the translation 'linen', which was a royal Egyptian monopoly and a major Egyptian export, makes good sense.



Figure 13. Map illustrating the apparent contradictions in the biblical accounts of the territory under the rule of Solomon: that directly ruled by Solomon (after Miller & Hayes 1982, 215, Map 17) and that where his control was clearly notional – e.g. Phoenicia (Lebanon) which was ruled by his equally powerful (or senior?) ally Hiram of Tyre.

Egyptians, possibly including a shared exploitation of the copper mines at Timna in the southern Negev.

The suggestion that Solomon was an Egyptian viceroy would solve a major historical objection often raised against the existence of a ‘Solomonic empire’. This is the biblical claim that he reigned from Egypt to the Euphrates. The existence of such a mini-empire is often ridiculed as impossible. First we need to understand that there are two versions of the Solomonic empire in the Old Testament, apparently, though not necessarily in conflict. 1 Kings 4:21 states that Solomon ‘reigned over all the kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt’; verse 24 adds the details of the boundaries being Tiphseh, a city on the Euphrates and Azzah (Gaza) near the border of Egypt. Yet other passages make it clear that Solomon was not claimed to have *directly* ruled all this area but to have held suzerainty over it. Philistia appears to have kept its own kings (for example the Achish king of Gath mentioned in 1 Kgs. 3:39-40). Phoenicia, of course, was dominated by Hiram of Tyre, a monarch who was at least the equal (if not senior partner) of Solomon and to whom Solomon ceded the land of Cabul in Galilee. Otherwise there were clearly kings in Syria such as Hadadezer king of Zobah (1 Kgs. 11:23). Rezon rebelled from Hadadezer and made his base at Damascus, from where he was an adversary of Solomon all his days (1 Kgs. 11:23-25). A revolt in Edom also appears to have been led by the Egyptian protégée Hadad (1 Kgs. 11:14-22). These details concerning independent kings, even hostile ones, suggest a very different picture from one of a monolithic Solomonic empire stretching from Gaza to the Euphrates.

Solomon’s claim to this territorial extent was therefore clearly nominal. In which case, then, in what sense could it have been made? If we see Solomon as the viceroy of Egypt, the problem can be explained. While king David is said to have made aggressive inroads and seized booty from kings well beyond the Israelite heartlands, including in Syria, Solomon’s ‘empire’ was not entirely inherited from his father. If he was the Egyptian viceroy the wide dominion he claimed should be looked at in Egyptian terms. The pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty commonly referred to their northern boundary as being Naharin, the geographical equivalent of the state of Mitanni. The Egyptians claimed the rights to all the Mitannian territory south of the river Euphrates. In the words of Mizrachy (2012, 32):

Broadly speaking, rivers symbolized for the Egyptians the theoretical limits of the ordered world. In the case of the Euphrates, it was reputed as a definite border line, separating Mitanni from the West-Semitic territories. This notion is explicitly noted in the Gebel Barkal Stela, where Thutmose III defines the Euphrates as one ‘ . . . that constitutes (what is) between this country (i.e. Syria) and Naharin’...

Thutmose I, creator of the New Kingdom empire, placed his boundary stela at the Euphrates and his grandson Thutmose III repeated this symbolic act and ‘set his stela in Naharin, extending the borders of Egypt’; in order to outdo his grandfather it seems he actually placed two stelae by the river (see Mizrachy 2012, 38). Near the end of the 18th Dynasty the Egyptians lost control of Syria to the Hittite conqueror Suppiluliuma, who made the kingdom of Amurru a vassal state (Bryce 1998, 189-195; Beckman 1999, 36-41, 59-64). Yet despite this and other territorial losses the Egyptians continued to see the river as their notional (or legitimate) border. Seti I of the 19th Dynasty proclaimed his northern boundary to be the ‘marshes of Naharin’, i.e. the Euphrates region (Breasted 1906b, 56-58). Much later a foreign toponym list of the 25th Dynasty king Taharqa (690-664 BC) from his Sanam temple is accompanied by the expression: ‘Everything which the Euphrates encloses’ (*šnw nb phr wr*). Spalinger (1978, 24-25, 28) suggests that there may be a conscious harking back here to the claims of Thutmose III.

By the reign of Seti I’s successor Ramesses II, the Hittites had encroached as far south as the Damascus region. Yet in the famous treaty discussed earlier, which is as interesting for the things it does *not* mention as those that it does, there is not a single reference to frontiers. But surely, as the earlier claim by Seti I makes clear, the Egyptians would not have accepted the *de facto* situation and simply have given up their longstanding claim to ownership of all the lands as far as the Euphrates. If Solomon was acting as the viceroy of Pharaoh then he would have had a legal claim – in Egyptian terms – to rule all the territories from Gaza to the Euphrates. But, naturally, there is a world of difference between *de jure* and *de facto* possession.

The idea of Solomon as an Egyptian viceroy could also work within the conventional model, of course, but nowhere near as well, as it would lack any archaeological evidence of his Egyptian connections. In fact we pretty well lack any archaeological evidence for Solomon during the standard placement of him in the Iron IIA period (let alone during the Iron Age Ib period as suggested by Finkelstein *et al.*), except for the claimed ‘Solomonic’ gateways of Gezer, Megiddo and Hazor. The Dynasty J model could also work independently without any revision of Egyptian chronology. I think that the archaeological evidence and sheer historical likelihood argue that there would have been a dominant, local power in southern Canaan at this time, during the late 19th-dynasty Egyptian military recession, whether or not its centre was Jerusalem.

Without a chronological revision we are left with a remarkable picture: the very archaeological reflections we would expect for David and Solomon are found at the time of the LBA/IA transition, even down to specific details such as the building of the Millo and the bronze-casting in the Jordan Valley. If we do not revise the chronology it would appear that David and Solomon had some remarkable forerunners two-and-a-half centuries earlier.

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